

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2015 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

New Jersey





U.S. Department of Education

PDG Grant Performance Report Cover Sheet

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

Check only one box per Program Office instructions. Annual Performance Report Final Performance Report

General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419B150020 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 34

3. Project Title: RTT- Preschool Development Grant

4. Grantee Name: New Jersey Department of Education

5. Grantee Address: 100 Riverview Plaza

City: Trenton State: New Jersey Zip: 08625

6. Project Director Name: Beth Ann Gardiner

Title: Director of Preschool Expansion

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Email Address: beth.gardiner@doe.state.nj.us

Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2015 To: 12/31/2015

8. Budget Expenditures (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

Budget Period	Federal Grant Funds	Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share)
a. Previous Budget Period		
b. Current Budget Period	\$3,781,090.00	\$4,773,000.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

9. Indirect Cost Information (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government? Yes No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:
- Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: 07/01/2011 To: 06/30/2016
- Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: _____
- Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only) Provisional Final Other Specify other: _____
- d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:
- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

10. Performance Measures Status

- a. Are complete data on performance measures for the current budget period included in the Project Status Chart? Yes No
- b. If no, when will the data be available and submitted to the Department? _____



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 #:

S419B150020

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.

BACKGROUND

New Jersey has a history of successfully creating and maintaining high-quality early childhood programs in communities throughout the State. As a result of the 1998 New Jersey Supreme Court decision in *Abbott v. Burke*, the State remedied educational inequities between low-income urban districts and wealthier districts by mandating, among other things, access to high-quality, standards-based preschool education for three- and four-year old children in more than thirty (30) school districts throughout the State. (Note that there are now 35 school districts participating in the high quality preschool program.) The State accomplished this by creating a mixed-delivery system of public preschools (44.1%), Head Start (10.8%) and community-based providers (45.1%). We have worked hard over the years to create the State Preschool Program, which is recognized nationally for its high quality and its ability to dramatically improve academic outcomes of high need children.

With the award of the Preschool Expansion Grant in December 2015, New Jersey began taking next steps toward the goal of serving preschool children from 17 additional high need communities in our model of high quality early education. This year, New Jersey was successful in reaching enrollment targets by adding a total of 883 new children to preschool classrooms and improving services and conditions for 753 additional preschool children (total reach is 1636 children). To achieve our goal and address the wide-ranging and diverse components of the grant, New Jersey developed five ambitious and achievable plans that are based on the same system that we used to create and expand the High-Quality State Preschool Program. The plans, when taken together, describe how we will enhance current programs and generate new high-quality preschool slots for eligible children, and support the implementation of each high-quality component, by employing the following strategies:

- Conducting a needs assessment of the current programs;
- Providing intensive support to elevate quality;
- Measuring program progress regularly;
- Monitoring fiscal practices regularly;
- Implementing strategies to enroll hard to reach families;
- Meeting children's particularized needs through comprehensive supports; and
- Aligning and coordinating transitions.

The five plans and associated primary goals are as follows:

1. **Plan for Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs** - Expand the implementation of the

components of the High-Quality State Preschool Program to 17 additional school districts by using a continuous evaluation and improvement cycle that defines the program and learning standards, provides support for implementation, evaluates implementation, and adjusts based on the results, with measurable benefits for children at school entry.

2. **Plan for Expanding and Improving High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community** - Expand the number of eligible children served by school districts in high-need communities while also improving existing slots already offered to both eligible children and other preschool-aged children in the community.
3. **Plan to Ensure That Each Subgrantee is Effectively Implementing High-Quality Preschool Programs** - Create a system of oversight and collaboration to ensure that the components of New Jersey's High-Quality State Preschool Program are in place.
4. **Plan for Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum** - Create a system that ensures a smooth transition for children and their families throughout the birth to third grade continuum, resulting in increased learning at third grade.
5. **Plan for Supporting a Continuum of Early Learning and Development** - Ensure that the early experiences of children are maximized, that transitions are smooth and that the benefits to children are sustained in kindergarten and the early elementary years.

This executive summary will provide a brief description of year one accomplishments, lessons learned, challenges, and strategies for addressing those challenges.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The New Jersey Department of Education (DOE), Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE), successfully managed all first year components of the grant in keeping with the approved Scope of Work (SOW). Year one accomplishments primarily focused efforts on three of the four projects, briefly detailed below:

Project 1: Grants Management and Administration

The director and staff at DECE began the year by soliciting and selecting 17 school districts to participate as subgrantees in order to develop new high quality preschool programs and improve conditions for children already attending state-funded preschool programs. Cooperative Agreements between the state Department of Education and each district were written and signed to formalize the details of the grant awards and requirements. All selected districts were required to submit Four-Year Preschool Program Plans and Budget Workbooks for review and approval before work could begin.

While work was being done to engage local school districts and support them in developing plans, DECE was simultaneously recruiting new staff to oversee and implement the grant. By September 2015, the State had hired four grant-specific staff including a project director, two district liaisons/specialists, and one administrative support person. The Preschool Expansion team is comprised of early childhood practitioners who bring to their work at DECE a wide variety of skills, expertise, and experience to contribute to the success of the grant. The project director and district liaisons are each assigned to work with specific districts to provide intensive and individualized support. District expenditures are being monitored by the project director and fiscal staff to ensure that monies are being spent in compliance with approved budgets and within the parameters of the grant.

In April, DOE entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) to conduct baseline needs assessments within the high needs communities to determine availability and quality of early education settings. Those reports were used to help districts determine what options they had available for partnering with local Head

Start and community child care providers. In the fall, a second MOU was developed between DOE and NIEER to conduct a baseline evaluation of quality within each district's preschool classrooms. Quality was measured through the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (ECERS-3). The results of the study will help guide quality improvements in the coming year and will serve as a baseline score from which to measure future changes in the classrooms and program overall.

Project 2: Birth to Third Grade Connections

New Jersey has implemented a collaborative partnership approach that spans the birth through third grade continuum and goes across multiple sectors, including the Department of Education (Division of Early Childhood Education, 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, ensuring continuous and consistent high-quality early learning and development opportunities throughout the prenatal/birth to age eight continuum.

In year one of grant implementation, school districts began developing "transition teams" comprised of district staff and members of the community. Each transition team is responsible for developing transition plans to help ensure smooth transitions of children from birth to grade three. While the transition plan will focus on preschool to grade three, it will also explain how children will be identified from Early Intervention and Home Visiting programs. Transition teams have begun meeting and are in early stages of working to address issues surrounding the transition of children through various programs and grade levels. To support this work, the state's First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines are now completed and available for use by the expansion districts. Professional development sessions will be held in the year ahead to support successful integration of the Guidelines into children's teaching and learning. They joined the Preschool and Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines already available.

Districts were also required to develop and distribute surveys to identify educational and social services needs of families in the community. District supervisors and Community Parent Involvement Specialists (CPIS) have begun to help families connect with Central Intake (a single point of access to health care resources and local social service agencies) and local County Councils for Young Children (CCYC). The CCYC are designed to recognize, support, and encourage parents as decision makers and leaders in order to inform local (and state) policies, services, and/or practices to become more responsive to the needs of families in New Jersey.

Project 4: Expansion of the High-Quality Preschool Program

To lay the foundation for expansion of the high-quality preschool program, each school district subgrantee was required to submit a Four-Year Plan and budget that addresses all structural elements of high quality as outlined in the grant. Districts were provided support in drafting the plans to help ensure that they also followed the State-specific components of high quality as outlined in the New Jersey Administrative Code, 6A:13A: Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs. In summary, the components of quality that are provided by the High-Quality State Preschool Program are as follows:

- A certified teacher and assistant for each class of 15 children (provider and Head Start teachers will receive scholarships to support their certification);
- Instructional salaries that are comparable to school district salaries;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant comprehensive curriculum (HighScope, 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 New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards;
- Professional development that is based on results of evaluations and supported by coaches;

- District and private/Head Start provider collaboration (via district/provider contracts);
- A full-day (6-hour educational day), 180-day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities, with individual accommodations;
- Support for home languages of English language learners (ELL) providing dual language classrooms whenever possible;
- Coaches (Master Teachers) for in-class follow up, including those with specializations such as inclusion and ELL coaches;
- Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) to provide support for preschool children with potential learning difficulties and for children with disabilities;
- Partnerships that promote families' access to services that support learning and development (family-led CCYCs, Family Success Centers, Central Intake Hubs);
- Comprehensive services for diverse families (via family workers, CPIS, and social workers);
- Fiscal monitoring and supports;
- Support for healthy children including the use of evidence-based health and safety standards (with supports from health professionals); and
- A continuous quality evaluation and improvement cycle.

After plans were approved by DECE, the districts began recruiting to hire new staff including supervisors, teachers, teacher assistants, Master Teachers (coaches), and various support staff such as nurses and PIRT. Classroom space was secured (both in-district and private providers) and equipment and materials (including curriculum) were purchased to prepare for the beginning of the school year in September. Throughout the process, DECE staff stayed in close contact with the districts through on-site visits, email, and phone communications.

In the fall, district programs began enrolling in New Jersey's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) which is being used to assess program quality across five levels and five categories:

Category 1: Safe, Healthy Learning Environment

Category 2: Curriculum and Learning Environment

Category 3: Family and Community Engagement

Category 4: Workforce/Professional Development

Category 5: Administration and Management

The GNJK tool is used as a self-assessment at the lower levels and later in the process involves ratings from an outside entity, William Paterson University. With the support of liaisons, districts have begun completing the self-assessment and determining areas needing improvement. A variety of resources are available to the districts through GNJK including free professional development, teacher scholarships, and enhancement funds.

Supervisor meetings are being held on a bi-monthly basis to share information with the group regarding the various requirements and components of the grant, including fiscal matters, data collection, and reporting requirements. District expenditures are being monitored through the state's Electronic Web-Enabled Grant (EWEG) System and through submitted quarterly expenditure reports. A fiscal specialists' meeting was held before the start of the school year (in August) to explain how to submit reimbursement requests through EWEG and to review expenditure and enrollment reporting requirements.

LESSONS LEARNED

With New Jersey's history and familiarity with the development of high quality preschool programs, most of the results and day-to-day experiences of bringing new districts into the system were

expected. We were reminded, though, in this first year of implementation, that school districts in the beginning stages of preschool development need much more intensive support and time to incorporate new elements into their programs. Staff at DECE had become accustomed to a high level of functioning in the former Abbott districts and had expectations that expansion districts could come in at a relatively high level (putting all components into place simultaneously). Expectations had to be modified, though, based on the reality of various levels of district and supervisor capacity and ability. Accommodations have also had to be made for several of the smallest districts where the level of funding (and district size and capacity) doesn't justify the need for hiring full-time staff for all positions. This has required DECE to be flexible in defining how each district meets the grant requirements which includes allowing for shared positions (e.g., one person sharing the supervisor/ Master Teacher role).

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The primary challenge that we experienced in the first year of grant implementation relates to the delayed start-up of some grant activities. While the DECE quickly began outreach and preliminary supports to districts in January, intensive work with districts did not begin until after Four-Year Plans and budgets were submitted and approved in June. As with the start of any new initiative, building capacity at both the state and local levels required time for recruitment, hiring, and orientation of qualified staff to do the work of the grant. Consequently, all parties were slow to begin spending funds that had been allotted for the first half of the contract year. Staff have provided intensive supports to help districts through this start-up phase of grant implementation and appropriate levels of spending have been achieved across most districts. DECE staff will continue to monitor budgets and expenditures to ensure proper spending in all districts.

A second challenge (not entirely unexpected) relates to the preschool supervisors' wide range of experience, education, and expertise in managing preschool classrooms. In addition, many of those same supervisors are wearing a variety of "hats" and have to split their time between the management and oversight of preschool classrooms and other duties. This has meant that some supervisors need additional support to complete tasks and submit reports in a timely manner. Professional development for early childhood supervisors is being added to bi-monthly meetings in order to support the continuing education of this group. Issues of capacity are exacerbated in the smaller districts (as noted above) where supervisors and staff may be fulfilling more than one role that's required in the grant (e.g. teacher/Master Teacher). District liaisons are encouraging some districts to collaborate for shared services and positions to alleviate some of the burden and to ensure that all grant components are being implemented successfully. Division staff will continue to work closely with district supervisors to gauge their individual needs and provide support as needed.

Many of the districts have a long history of enrolling children with special needs into self-contained classrooms. This presents challenges since the concept of inclusion is relatively new to some and, in some cases, requires a cultural shift on the district level. Special education staff including teachers, supervisors, and child study team members are sometimes resistant to the notion of moving children with special needs into general education classrooms. This will require concentrated time and effort to be devoted to working with individual districts to support them through this transition to higher rates of inclusion. In year one of grant implementation, district liaisons have worked to connect supervisors and their staff to special education professional development opportunities as well as to pair up low inclusion districts with those that have been successful in maintaining higher rates of inclusion. New Jersey looks forward to building on year one successes in the coming years.



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 #: S419B150020

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, 2015.

In January 2015, the NJDOE Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) began recruitment and outreach to 17 high-needs local school district subgrantees. Those individual districts, in turn, developed recruitment and marketing strategies to begin outreach to hard-to-reach families while simultaneously assessing community needs and capacity to serve additional preschool children. This year, New Jersey successfully enrolled 883 new children into preschool classrooms and improved preschool services and conditions for an additional 753 children. Throughout the spring and summer of 2015, DECE completed the following activities in an effort to increase enrollment of eligible children into high-quality preschool programs:

- Developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) to conduct needs assessments in subgrantee districts in order to gain an understanding of the specific needs of each community, available resources and to determine where children will be served;
- Supported districts in locating appropriate classroom space to serve additional preschool children either in-district or in private provider locations;
- Recruited and hired staff at the DECE to support the work of the grant;
- Provided resources and support to all districts in developing Four-Year Preschool Program Plans 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 new classroom set-up to prepare for the start of the school year.
- Incorporated expansion district staff into already established activities including a training seminar for Master Teachers and professional development events offered by the state.

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

- Participated in the needs assessments and fall study of quality conducted by NIEER;
- 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 were required of all districts until enrollment targets were 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 nonresident 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 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 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 2015-2016 school year, the overall expansion district average inclusion rate is 12.5%. 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.

While progress has been made to include children with special needs in general education classrooms, improved numbers of inclusion students has been 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 and our 619, Part B Coordinator 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.

This year New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, through the Learning Resource Center Network, is offering a state training series to administrators, supervisors and teachers who support classrooms serving preschool children with disabilities. The series provides both training and coaching to district early childhood/special education leadership teams. The goal of the training is to improve the quality of preschool classroom environments serving young children with disabilities, as measured by ECERS-3. Two expansion districts, Berkley Township School District (Ocean county) and Lindenwold School District (Camden county) were selected and are actively participating in *Improving the Preschool Classroom Environment for Young Children with Disabilities Pilot, 2015-2016*.

New Jersey requires all subgrantee districts using Title 1 funding for preschool programs to follow coordination activities described in the USDOE's non-regulatory guidance document "Serving Preschool Children through Title 1". Subgrantees are required to contribute funds from IDEA, 619 Part B, in order to cover the costs of including children with disabilities, which is reflected in their Four-Year Preschool Program Plan and Budget.

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

New Jersey has a long history of public and legislative support for public preschool programs beginning in 1998 with the New Jersey Supreme Court decision in *Abbott v. Burke*. Since that time, the state has been successful in establishing and maintaining high-quality, standards-based public preschool programs in our highest need communities throughout the state. With a robust infrastructure already in place, New Jersey has been able to make swift progress in increasing the number of children served in high-quality preschool programs funded through the grant. In 2015, subgrantees were successful in enrolling a total of 883 children into new slots and 753 in improved slots, totaling 1636. 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 that have been added in the past year are working to 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 Birth to Three Early Learning Standards and Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines were also recently completed through the Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC).

The recent statewide roll-out of New Jersey's tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, Grow NJ Kids (GNJK), has increased the visibility of new high-quality early care and education standards for preschool programs across all sectors, including school districts, community-based providers and Head Start programs. GNJK materials have been developed to aid in marketing the program to the broader community raising awareness of high-quality standards and contributing to a better understanding of the availability of early care and education programs in New Jersey. Participation in GNJK, which is required of all expansion district programs, provides an additional mechanism for engaging districts in a continuum of continuous quality improvements across all levels of programming, including health and safety, curriculum and learning environment, family and community engagement, professional development, and administration.

The expansion grant has afforded many new opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of high-quality preschool at the highest levels of government and in local municipalities. Preschool education enjoys bi-partisan legislative support and the preschool expansion grant has been the topic of public hearings through the NJ Senate Education Committee where the DECE director testified on the benefits of preschool education for the children, families, and communities of New Jersey. With the state's work on the RTT-ELC Grant, much dialogue has taken place across state departments and in public forums including the New Jersey Council for Young Children (NJCYC). In addition, NJDOE staff have met with business leaders, foundations, and advocacy organizations to seek opportunities for state and public partnerships to support the work of the department and the future sustainability of preschool education.

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 Department of Education 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 2015-16 school year.

The fully-funded High Quality State Preschool Program (former Abbott) is currently serving 43,597 three- and four-year-old children. We also serve 8,129 children (mostly 4-year-olds) in our partially funded program. Partially funded programs use state Preschool Education Aid (PEA) and are required to meet less stringent quality requirements; for example, classes can have up to 18 children and many are on a half-day schedule. The preschool universe of high-needs 4-year-olds in New Jersey is 41,014 (using eligibility for free and reduced price lunch). Of those children, we serve 23,042 in the high quality, fully-funded (former Abbott) preschool program, 7,657 in our PEA-funded program and 1,636 served in the 17 school districts with Preschool Expansion Grant funds. The total number of 4-year-olds served is 32,335, which is 79% of high-need four-year-olds. No 3-year-olds are served with grant funds.

New Jersey has not had trouble meeting enrollment projections for the 17 participating expansion grant school districts, since the demand for the program is generally greater than what the school districts can support. Most of the expansion grant school districts have met or exceeded their target enrollments for year one.

Our projections for the state-funded programs next year are down by .8% (this does not apply to the 17 districts participating in the expansion grant) due to a slight dip in enrollment this year. There are many factors that could have caused this change including the program having plateaued or that there has been a demographic shift in some communities. We have identified several districts where we think that recruitment and outreach should be strengthened and we are currently working with those districts to boost enrollment.

Our early childhood specialists are working closely with those districts with decreased enrollment numbers. The school districts that are under-enrolled are submitting plans to increase numbers of children and are actively working with local county councils and other community organizations to increase enrollment. Districts that are under-enrolled will employ such strategies as increase the amount of information disseminated to families via multimedia public service announcements, billboards, and face-to-face outreach as well as incorporate radio interviews and promotional videos to be aired via district websites, TV stations and social media outlets (Facebook/Twitter). They will also continue creating partnerships with community agencies and participating in community events throughout the city in an effort to reach more families and children.

We are also developing a relationship with Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to both get preschool children in seats and focus on attendance as well. With the inclusion of the preschool expansion grant enrollment, our overall numbers exceed last year's. Despite slightly lower projected enrollment, New Jersey is not proposing to lower its appropriation of Preschool Education Aid for FY17.

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 154 school districts in a mixed delivery system of private providers, Head Start and school districts (former Abbott, Early Childhood Program Aid, Early Launch to Learning Initiative districts, and Preschool Expansion Grant districts). Each education specialist works with two to three counties to support optimal preschool programs and child outcomes.

In addition to working with the districts, each program specialist has an area of specialization related to early childhood education, e.g., early literacy, assessment, math, science, dual language learners, transition, intervention and referral, inclusion of children with special needs, and community/social services. Specialists provide supports to a specific district staff position (e.g., Preschool Intervention and Referral Teams, supervisors, nurses, community parent involvement specialists and designees).

The DECE reviews preschool budgets to guide the use of Preschool Education Aid. 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. The 17 Preschool Expansion Grant school districts get funds from several sources. Most of them use their Preschool Education Aid to pay for both 3- and 4-year-olds regardless of income. The districts use Preschool Expansion Grant funds to cover the eligible 4s. School districts also contribute local funds, and special education funds (for children with disabilities). Districts that contract with Head Start have a lower per pupil because of the Federal contribution.

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); Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) and Curriculum-specific fidelity tools)

Site/Program level

- In the fall, providers and schools in the State Preschool Program began participating in GNJK. The roll-out will be over 6 years, with a target of 140 new providers and schools (from the State Preschool Program) enrolling each year. 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:

- A self-assessment (with a validation component); the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) 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 (in the future).
- 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 1 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.

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 eight 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® will be used with entering kindergartners.

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).

Area	Raw Score for K GOLD Readiness
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 will be required to use the KEA in the coming years.

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

The tool is administered in kindergarten. School districts that use Creative Curriculum also use it in preschool.

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

There was a pilot starting in September of 2013, and the state continues to expand enrollment. Currently it is being used by 703 teachers with 7,651 children.

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

The expansion districts will be required to use the KEA over the coming two years. Ultimately, we plan for the tool to be used statewide.

Training and Test Quality

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

Teaching Strategies conducted 3-day in-person training sessions this past summer, in 3 regions, reaching 703 teachers and 233 administrators. Training topics included: Observing and Documenting, Scoring Reports, Family Communication, and Reliable Assessments. Similar training will be provided to the expansion districts in 2016 and 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 eight weeks of school. They use the information collected to assign a score in each of the 6 areas. Throughout the roll-out, KEA teacher training will be supported by the training of district administrators as well as professional learning communities that help to embed principles of assessment in every day practice.

We have developed a set of guidelines and checklists to guide the interpretation of the portfolio collections, which will help 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, and social/emotional skills when they enter kindergarten to be successful in school and in life (as defined by the cut scores above). However, we also maintain that only age should determine whether or not a child enters kindergarten, and that the teacher is responsible for ensuring that the kindergarten learning environment is ready for the child, regardless of the child's competencies when they transition.

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 have not been trained yet in the KEA. Half of them will be trained in the system this coming summer and throughout the fall and the other half will be trained in the summer of 2017. At that time we will have information on the performance of the four-year-old children that participated in the preschool expansion grant program and will be able to disaggregate by subgroup. Once the teachers assign the scores, Teaching Strategies will upload the data into NJ SMART.

Plans for Year Two Reporting

Once expansion programs begin to use the KEA, we will be able to report data from our NJ Smart data system. State-funded preschool children are already included in NJ SMART, allowing us to track the impact of our programs. Soon we will have information about children's performance on TS GOLD® at kindergarten. Upon completion of an assessment period and the assignment of scores, the vendor will upload the scores into NJ SMART. We will be able to link the kindergarten readiness data to prior early 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 Kindergarten Entry Assessment 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 and Head Start, 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.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page below the text. It is intended for data entry or reporting.

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 2015, 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 expansion of high quality preschool programs in 17 districts throughout the state. Grant funds in year one were used primarily to support four project staff (one project director, two district liaisons and one administrative support staff), subgrantee needs assessments and quality studies through NIEER.

- a) **Early Learning and Development Standards** - With funding from RTT-ELC grant, work over this past year continued on further development of early learning standards and associated documents. Through the NJCYC, the NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards and Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards were aligned and a guidance document created. First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines were also completed this year.
- b) **Program Standards consistent with a High-Quality Preschool** - Individual districts' implementation of program standards was monitored by district liaisons who reviewed and approved Four-Year Preschool Program Plans, budgets, and professional development plans to ensure compliance with grant requirements. In addition, districts enrolled in GNJK and began assessing their programs across five categories and five levels. Results of initial self-assessments are being used to develop district level quality improvement plans to address quality indicators. Grant funds were used to hire project staff who are responsible for overseeing implementation of quality elements. In addition, grant funding supported a baseline 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 be measured annually (each spring) to gauge progress in improving scores on the ECERS-3.
- 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 PIRT to provide targeted strategies for positive behavior supports. The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) is being used to improve children's learning environments, 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. Professional development in both ELL and inclusion was offered through NJ Early Learning Training Academy (NJ-ELTA) in an effort to build workforce capacity.

- d) Methods to determine availability of High-Quality Preschool Programs** - An MOU was developed between the NJDOE and NIEER in the spring of 2015. This MOU was an agreement to complete needs assessments in the larger districts to help identify early learning providers (including Head Start and community-based providers) and district facilities in which to house new classrooms. Each report detailed the numbers and quality levels of different providers as well as each community's capacity, quality of facilities, staff qualifications, professional development needs and parent needs. Reports were shared with districts to inform decisions about placement of children and new classrooms for the 2015-2016 school year. Four of the 17 districts contracted with private providers (including child care and Head Start programs) and all other school districts housed students in district buildings.
- e) Preschool teacher education, training programs, and professional development** - Teachers in programs participating in Preschool Expansion are required to possess at least a bachelor's degree, and a P-3 certificate or equivalent. Despite projections made in our NIA, most teachers that were hired to staff grant classrooms already had the appropriate degrees and certification. Any teachers or teacher assistants wishing to obtain a degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential are eligible for scholarships through GNJK. In 2015, a wide variety of professional development opportunities were available through NJ-ELTA and DECE.
- f) Improvements to teacher and administrator training programs and professional development** - Through funding from RTT-ELC grant, the state created the NJ-ELTA which became the primary vehicle for delivery of professional development throughout the state. 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 have recently begun to plan professional development for 2016, specifically targeted to the needs of the preschool supervisors and held in conjunction with bi-monthly support meetings.
- g) Use of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System to link data** - Children enrolling 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. RTT-ELC grant funding is supporting the development of an early childhood integrated data system to link NJ SMART with early care and education data systems in other state agencies. Development began on the new system, NJ Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning (NJ-EASEL), in 2015. NJ-EASEL is poised to begin integrating early childhood data related to child, family, classroom, program, and workforce characteristics in order to answer critical questions about early care and education programs and services in New

Jersey.

- 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 assessment, environmental measures, and measures of teacher-child interaction) is done by GNJK (for all early learning providers) and the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) is designed specifically for school districts. In year one of the grant, participating districts began using 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). Other assessments including the SAVS and TPOT will be required in subsequent years.
- i) Building preschool programs capacity to engage parents** - As part of the GNJK self-assessment, expansion districts are required to use the Strengthening Families self-assessment to gauge effectiveness in parent engagement and supports. Training in Strengthening Families Protective Factors was offered by NJ-ELTA and additional sessions will be held in 2016 through GNJK and DECE. Expansion districts are required to have active parent advisory groups and were introduced to the 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 from preschool to kindergarten and helps 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 supervisors provide opportunities for networking and exchange of information and strategies amongst school districts. In addition, some districts have made connections with state High-Quality Preschool Programs in their county in order to seek guidance and benefit from experience.

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 used to elevate the quality of the 35 school districts currently in the state's High-Quality Preschool Program (former Abbott districts). By participating in the preschool expansion, 17 school districts have agreed to follow the high-quality program and learning standards used in the state's High-Quality Preschool 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 working 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 (above) contain the following required quality structural elements that were addressed with preschool expansion grant districts in 2015:

- 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 by NJ-ELTA during 2015 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 2015, 12 expansion districts sent 17 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 will be 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 2015 was the ECERS-3 which is newly developed and in early stages of widespread use. 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.

- Developmental screening instruments are required to be administered by classroom teachers within the first few weeks of school. 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 2015 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) were conducted during this school year. All expansion districts were invited to attend the four-day training in order to become oriented to the Pyramid model of positive behavior supports for children. The most recent Pyramid training was attended by 30 new PIRT team members from 11 expansion districts. PIRT members that have not yet been trained in the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) will be invited to training once they have completed the Pyramid training. The TPOT will be used to gauge teacher effectiveness in implementing the Pyramid positive behavior supports in the classroom.
- 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 are working 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 will also be using 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. Training for expansion districts in the Strengthening Families approach is scheduled to be held in the spring.
- 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 are also working 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 are working 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 were 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, bi-lingual 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 2015, the state's Early Learning Training Academy (funded through RTT-ELC) 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 their participation in GNJK and the DECE:
 - ECERS - 3 Overview
 - Creative Curriculum
 - High Scope Curriculum
 - Teaching Strategies Gold
 - Developmental Screening Tools (ESI-R, ASQ, Brigance)
 - Inclusion Strategies
 - Pyramid Model Positive Behavior Supports
 - Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool
 - Strengthening Families
 - Health and Safety
 - NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards

o Overview of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

- 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 began meeting in the fall to establish goals and plan 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 in at least the beginning stages of all elements.

Table 6 - Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

Describe the number and percent of Eligible Children served and the cost per slot. Please explain if *Year 1 Target* from the application and *Year 1 Actual* in **Table 6** differ, and any approved changes in targets for Years 2-4.

As noted in Table 6, the total percentage of Eligible Children being served by the grant across 17 school districts is 49%. The numbers of new children targeted to be served in year one of the grant was exceeded by 134 additional new slots. The cost per slot for year one was \$18,828 which is higher than it will be in subsequent years due to initial start-up costs. There are no planned changes to targets for Years 2-4.

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.

Early outreach to school districts began before the start of year one; this laid the foundation for establishing strong partnerships with DECE staff. District administrators were invited to meet in January 2015 for an overview of grant requirements and benefits of participation. Elements of high-quality preschool were reviewed and districts were encouraged to collaborate with private providers and Head Start programs in their communities.

1. Establishment of roles and responsibilities -

State responsibilities included oversight of all district activities and grant components. Four dedicated staff oversee the work of 17 expansion districts. Grant staff are housed within the DECE and enjoy the benefits of many years' experience to support the development of new high-quality preschool programs. Staff are assigned to specific districts and were responsible for the following grant activities completed in 2015:

- Reviewed and approved Four-Year Plans and Budgets to ensure that districts met requirements outlined in the grant.
- Conducted on-site visits to meet with school personnel; visits were used to conduct observations in preschool classrooms and give guidance on quality indicators.
- Assisted districts in assessing selection of classroom space and setting up new rooms.
- Provided support and resources on specific topics (e.g., inclusion, curriculum, math, developmental assessments, screening tools, etc.)
- Assisted districts in negotiating relationships, contracts, and budgets with private providers.

School district roles and responsibilities:

- Developed plans and budgets for year one activities.
- Determined locations for new classrooms.
- Developed contracts with private providers, as applicable.
- Recruited, hired, and supervised appropriate staff.
- Oversaw the implementation of required quality components.
- Recruited and enrolled children.
- Completed enrollment and quarterly expenditure reports
- Enrolled in GNJK and began enrolling staff into the NJ Registry for Childhood Professionals

2. Increasing organizational capacity and infrastructure - In 2015, the DECE hired four additional staff to oversee the preschool expansion grant and work closely to support the 17 subgrantees. The

infrastructure for the development of new high quality programs was in place within the DECE. The NJDOE also houses Offices of Title One, Migrant and Homeless Education and Special Education which provided access to resources and opportunities for collaboration. Through work done in recent years on the RTT-ELC grant, DECE has developed close working relationships with state administrators at the Departments of Health, Children and Families and Human Services (the IPG group). Expansion grant staff are working across departments to ensure compliance with GNJK and to expand opportunities for professional development.

3. Minimizing local administrative costs - Budget workbook instructions were given to all subgrantees to guide development of year one budgets. Budgets were reviewed and approved by DECE staff with the support of the Office of Academic Initiatives and Fiscal Accountability. With assistance from project staff, school districts that contracted with private providers developed and reviewed budgets to ensure compliance and to address specific allowable and non-allowable expenses. Quarterly expenditure reports were submitted and reviewed to ensure appropriate expenditure of funds. Funds to districts were paid through the state's Electronic Web-Enabled Grant System (EWEG) as requests were made. This provided another opportunity to monitor expenditures and track spending by district.

4. Monitoring to ensure delivery - District liaisons worked with individual districts to monitor quality components to determine the status of implementation through on-site visits and District Activities Tracking plans. GNJK was used to measure additional quality standards that are tracked across five categories and five levels. Classroom quality is being tracked by Master Teachers and supervisors (using the ECERS-3) to inform day-to-day changes needed to improve quality. A study of classroom quality was done by NIEER in the fall of 2015 to determine baseline program quality using the ECERS-3. Annual follow-up studies will be conducted each spring to gauge progress in improving quality standards.

5. Coordination of plans - New Jersey uses four primary tools to guide coordination of plans across all components of high-quality:

Grow NJ Kids is a site-level tool that is designed to assess programs across five categories. Assessments, family engagement, curriculum implementation, and workforce development are among the many areas addressed through GNJK. As districts have begun to assess their programs, they are determining areas for further development and improvement.

N.J.A.C. 6A:13A, Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs 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.

Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines describes more detailed recommendations for high-quality components including such things as community collaboration, recruitment and outreach, and administration.

Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) is a district-wide assessment used in the state's High-Quality Preschool Programs to ensure consistency of quality across school districts by measuring the effectiveness of each component. It takes into account the results of classroom quality measures, child performance-based assessments, staff and parent surveys, and practices across all areas of quality. The SAVS was not used with the expansion districts in 2015 but will be used in subsequent years.

District liaisons worked closely with individual districts to develop professional development plans and access free training available through the state and GNJK. Regular meetings were 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 presentations on pertinent topics such as the role of the Master Teacher and PIRT, GNJK, the NJ

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. Districts were encouraged to combine children served by both grant and state funding with other children from the community, allowing 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. DECE staff provided resources and support to district staff to give strategies for inclusion of preschoolers in general education classrooms.

8. Delivery to eligible children in need of additional supports - Each district submitted Four-Year Plans that included a section on outreach and recruitment strategies for hard-to-reach families. Districts employed a wide variety of techniques including public service announcements, door-to-door distribution of flyers, leaving information at local pediatricians' offices, translation of materials into home languages, mass mailings to families, newspaper advertisements, and outreach to family resource centers. In addition, districts developed relationships with school homeless liaisons and early intervention staff to communicate the availability of new preschool programs in the district.

9. Outreach and engagement of diverse families - Outreach to diverse populations was done as noted above. Districts 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 RTT-ELC and preschool expansion grants, New Jersey is improving and expanding initiatives to ensure smooth transitions for children and families across the birth through third grade continuum. In 2015, New Jersey state departments worked 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. This year, the NJCYC conducted a retreat that provided an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the group and plan priority areas to be addressed in the coming year. Issues that were discussed centered around working to improve social services and supports to families and early care practitioners. The council agreed to work toward improving collaboration, communication, and coordination of programs to improve effectiveness and minimize inefficiencies. Efforts undertaken at the NJCYC and the IPG continue to support a strong continuum of learning for children from birth through third grade.

1. (a/b) Transitions for programs serving children from birth to five - By requirement of the expansion grant each district has on staff someone in the role of the CPIS. The CPIS is responsible for assessing parent needs, planning parent engagement events, and helping connect families with available community resources. School districts participating in the expansion grant were introduced to Central Intake, New Jersey's single point of entry comprehensive early childhood system, during a meeting of preschool supervisors. Written information about Central Intake was shared with families upon enrollment into the preschool program and/or during the school year. Central Intake 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 are positioned to 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, CCR&R, 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 as 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 State Preschool Program in the schools and providers in the 17 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 are also required to 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 2015 through NJ-ELTA; 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 underway and planned for the current school 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 will be 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 will provide 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 will provide 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 will also be engaged through the use of the Strengthening Families program and will be surveyed using the 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. First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines were also completed this year.

(ii) Teacher preparation and workforce competence - The Kindergarten Seminar will be

available to all districts in the coming years and will include sessions that will introduce the key features of the Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines and the KEA. Classes will 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 will work 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 will be provided through the RTT-ELC and expansion grants. Support will be offered 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 - Once implemented, KEA data will be 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 1 Target* differs from the *Year 1 Actual*.

As can be seen from our increase in funding from FY 2013 to FY 2014, our initial match started off with a significant boost. As shown in Table 7(a), we met our projected Year 1 (FY 2015) increase of \$4,773,000 to New Jersey's already substantial preschool program budget of over \$650 million annually. For FY 2016, we expect to exceed our initially projected match of \$5,773,000 by over \$1.67 million (for a total match of \$7,447,000 in Year 2). In spite of our flat enrollment for FY 2017 (which we are addressing), we are not projecting to decrease state preschool funding for Year 3. Instead, we are projecting to maintain our Year 2 matching level of \$7,447,000. If we conservatively project to maintain that same matching level for Year 4 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. As shown in Table 7(a), New Jersey continues to provide a substantial amount of Preschool Education Aid. Years 2, 3 and 4 are each predicted to provide a matching level of \$7,447,000, which ultimately amounts to a total matching contribution of \$41,514,000. This amount represents a 60% 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.

Over the past five years, New Jersey has implemented a collaborative partnership approach (the IPG) that spans the birth through third grade continuum and goes across multiple sectors, including the Department of Education (Division of Early Childhood Education, 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). Our cross agency collaboration has resulted in a more coordinated delivery of services starting prenatally, and we are continuing to find 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 County Councils for Young Children (see 4, 1 a/b above) provide a mechanism to streamline families' access to comprehensive services. New Jersey is in the early stages of rolling out information about these valuable community resources to the 17 school districts implementing the components of preschool expansion. 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 also now up and running in all counties and district staff were encouraged to attend meetings and/or events to gather information about the availability of community resources and to make connections with local stakeholders. Individual school districts are at various stages of implementing this grant requirement with some having already established relationships with local community agencies and others conducting outreach for the first time. DECE district liaisons are working with their assigned districts to help facilitate development of relationships and collaboration in their local communities.

All districts are in the process of building, or improving upon, in-district transition teams to include staff from various early grade levels and across disciplines. Each team is responsible for creating a transition plan 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 worked closely with district special education program coordinators to seek children for enrollment into the preschool general education settings. Placement of children with IEPs into the general education setting was 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 with low inclusion rates have been paired with their more successful neighbors to better understand effective strategies for inclusion of more children with special needs. Districts have been provided with resources and professional development to learn more about strategies for inclusion of children with special needs. All 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, all kindergarten teachers (and administrators) in the participating school districts will be asked to use the New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines. The kindergarten teachers will be enrolled in the NJDOE Kindergarten Seminar, focused 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 recently developed First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines. Funded through our RTT-ELC grant, the guidelines include information on pedagogy and young children, best practices in assessment, reading interventions, center- and project-based learning, in addition to specific guidance on implementing and assessing the Common Core using developmentally appropriate instructional practices and will highlight strategies for teacher evaluation. District liaisons will work closely with individual districts in the coming years 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.

Overall, New Jersey was highly successful in creating new high quality preschool slots. We have a total of 1636 new or improved slots. Of these, 753 are improved and 883 are new. We estimated for the first year that 749 would be new and 485 would be improved. While the proportion of new and improved slots was different than predicted, we still exceeded 50% (54% of the slots are new). Three of the communities, Absecon, Berkeley, and Clifton, have general education preschool for the first time, so all of their slots are new.

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, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

New Jersey's Year 1 approved budget was under-expended by a total of \$13,717,025. Approximately \$549,432 of this funding is attributable to our state-level infrastructure expenditures (including indirect costs and grantee technical assistance). The remaining unexpended portion of \$13,130,767 is funding budgeted for our high-quality preschool programs.

State-level infrastructure expenditures were lower than expected due to delays in hiring grant-funded staff and developing several MOU's for grant related-work. However, these things are now in place, and we expect grant expenditures to increase as a result.

Funding for the high-quality preschool programs was under-expended because all of our subgrantee school districts used the first nine months of the grant as a planning period, and began serving children at the start of the 2015-16 school year. As a result, expenditures were lower than initially budgeted. District programs are now well underway, and grant expenditures have become more regular.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016).

All substantive changes to our year two budget involve carrying forward unexpended year one funding, but no changes are proposed in the nature of how funding will be expended. Our subgrantee school districts will continue to expend year one grant funding to close out the 2015-16 school year. We expect the majority of the school districts will not begin to spend year two funding until at least July 1, 2016.

State-level infrastructure funding will also be carried forward into year two, with no substantive changes to our expenditures. We do expect that direct and indirect costs from one of our larger year one MOUs will be charged to the budget during year two. In addition, we anticipate salary and benefit expenditures will increase during year two since all grant personnel will be on staff for the full year. Related expenses (travel, supplies, indirect) are also expected to increase above year one levels.

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 (2015-16), 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 2016-17 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, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

As stated above, our subgrantees' total expenditures for year one were significantly under expended. Unspent funding was a result of subgrantees needing time to develop high-quality program plans, hire qualified staff, identify appropriate classroom space, register children, and train staff. Each of our subgrantees chose to start serving children at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. While some funding was needed during the summer months to train staff and equip classrooms, most subgrantees did not begin spending grant funding in earnest until September of 2015. Subgrantees will continue to use year one grant funding to close out the 2015-16 school year. After that point, they will begin using year two grant funding to support the costs of the 2016-17 school year.