



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

November 30, 2016

Ellen Wolock
New Jersey State Department of Education
100 River View Plaza, PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ
08625-0500

Dear Ellen Wolock:

On September 12-16, 2016 a team from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) (the Department) conducted a desk monitoring of the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDE) implementation of its approved Preschool Development Grant (PDG). This monitoring aims to continue the collaborative relationship that began at the grant award and development of the scope of work. It provides the Department with a deeper understanding of each State's overall performance; the successes, challenges, and strategies for the implementation of its plans for its PDG Development grant; and the fiscal management of the grant funds. It also helps us tailor technical assistance to each State's specific needs.

The desk monitoring included presentations and discussions related to all projects in the approved scope of work, including grants management, high-quality preschool programs (including both new programs and programs enhanced with PDG funds), early learning standards, comprehensive services, workforce development, and sustainability. During the onsite monitoring, ED project officers discussed PDG implementation in New Jersey's subgrantees.

Enclosed is a summary report based upon this review. The report includes highlights of New Jersey's implementation of PDG and a snapshot of New Jersey's progress under each PDG key area. This report will be posted on the PDG website. The report includes "next steps" to ensure that New Jersey implements PDG consistent with its approved application, scope of work, and timelines identified in its project plans.

We want to thank you and your staff for your cooperation during the desk monitoring, and for your efforts in providing high quality preschool opportunities through the Preschool Development Grant. We hope you will continue to communicate any needs or concerns to your ED project officer(s).

We look forward to continuing our work with you and supporting New Jersey's technical assistance needs to ensure successful implementation of PDG. Thank you for your commitment to New Jersey's youngest children.

Sincerely,

/s/

Libby Doggett
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Early Learning
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

Enclosure

Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Site Visit Report

Monitoring Information	
State Lead Agency	New Jersey Department of Education
State Participating Agency(s)	New Jersey Department of Education
Grant Period	January 1, 2015-December 31, 2019
Current Year of Grant	January 1, 2016-December 31, 2016
PDG Monitoring Period	May 2016 – September 30, 2016
PDG Monitoring Activity (Desk or Onsite)	Onsite
Monitoring Review Date(s)	September 12-16, 2016
State Participants/Project Leads	Ellen Wolock, Beth Gardiner, Karin Garver, Vincent Costanza
U.S. Department of Education Project Officer(s)	Shevine G. Holeman and Deborah Spitz

Overview of PDG Monitoring

The Department of Education is committed to supporting States as they implement the expansion of high-quality preschool programs for eligible children through their PDG grant. Consistent with this commitment, the Department has designed a monitoring process to assess a State’s implementation of the program requirements and its approved Scope of Work for PDG and the State-level systems and processes needed to support implementation.

During the recent desk monitoring, New Jersey’s implementation of PDG was reviewed across several key areas: Capacity Building and Increasing Slots, Subrecipient Monitoring, Birth to Third Grade Continuum, Budget and Sustainability, and Fiscal Accountability which represent the core priorities for implementation as outlined in the PDG Monitoring Tool. In each area, the Department identified key elements that are required under PDG and are likely to increase the access to and quality of State Preschool programs and lead to increased high quality opportunities for young children and their families.

New Jersey was identified for a desk monitoring review based on the following factors:

- New Jersey is a PDG Expansion State and the Department is conducting desk monitoring or onsite monitoring visits of all PDG grantees; and
- New Jersey had not been monitored previously during the grant period.

The report contains the following sections:

- **Summary of Visit.** This section describes, in brief, the topics covered, the lead agency and subrecipients visited, as well as personnel participation in any meetings or activities.
- **Highlights of the State's Implementation.** This section identifies key accomplishments in the State's implementation of PDG as identified during the site visit.
- **Status of Implementation of PDG.** This section indicates the State's implementation progress based on the monitoring and information collected.
- **Elements Requiring Next Steps.** This section identifies any elements for which the State is not on target for meeting its timelines outlined in the approved scope of work and includes next steps that the State must take to meet the grant outcomes, as identified during the monitoring.
- **Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation.** This section provides recommendations to support the State in continuing to meet the goals and timelines of its PDG grant, as identified during the monitoring.
- **Additional Comment.** As appropriate, this section includes any additional information related to the State's implementation of PDG not included elsewhere.

Summary of Visit

The PDG onsite monitoring visit for New Jersey was conducted during the week of September 12-16, 2016. The Department held a joint meeting with PDG and the RTT-ELC State teams regarding the grant implementation of both programs. During the first day of the visit, ED project officers discussed a variety of topics mostly (not all) associated with the RTT-ELC grant. The activities discussed were the Grow NJ Kids program, professional development, KEA implementation, data systems, and sustainability.

The second day of the visit ED and NJDE PDG officials traveled to the Mount Holly School District to visit four PDG classrooms located in John Brainerd Elementary School serving 60 students. These 60 children include 30 children funded through the grant in addition to inclusion and state-funded slots to comprise the 60. Mt. Holly has already reached their year 4 projected number of 30 PDG students.

ED and NJDE were very impressed with both the staff and student progress after only five days of school. ED officials discussed the pending plans for the inclusive model of including preschool students with disabilities into the classroom. In the afternoon, ED and NJDE officials discussed subrecipient monitoring, grants management and fiscal management for both RTT-ELC and PDG.

The third day of the visit ED and NJDE officials traveled to the Lakewood School District to visit eleven classrooms located in Piner Elementary School serving 165 students. Ninety-nine of those students are funded through the PDG grant. The total number of children served by the grant district-wide is currently 168. Lakewood intends to add 26 additional slots over the next two years for a total 4 year target of 194 slots.

ED officials noted the subgrantees' commitment to professional development for teachers and the commitment to inclusive preschool environments. Finally, ED noted the school's decision to provide either a native Spanish speaker or a fluent Spanish speaker in each classroom to address the needs of the

Spanish speaking students and community. In the afternoon, ED and NJDE officials discussed building capacity and increasing slots and birth to third grade continuum.

The fourth morning of the visit was used by ED PDG officials to review documentation to ensure all monitoring queries were addressed.

Highlight of the State's PDG Implementation

- NJDE staff who wrote the grant to obtain PDG funds work together on the PDG grant. Based on their work in drafting the PDG grant, they are able to provide historical basis and other valuable insight while implementing the grant.

Status of Implementation of PDG

In the onsite monitoring, the Department used a monitoring and accountability rubric to help determine progress of the State's implementation. The rubric includes three implementation status levels:

- **Level 1 – *Developing***: the State is in the process of developing this activity, or the activity is very new. The State may be facing challenges in implementation, roll-out, or communications with subrecipients and other stakeholders.
- **Level 2 – *Implementing***: the State has developed and implemented the activity, although the activity might still benefit from adjustments, training, or communications with subrecipients and other stakeholders.
- **Level 3 – *Sustaining & Continuing Improvement***: the activity is well-established in the State, and may be undergoing a process of evaluation or program improvement. Subrecipients, stakeholders and users have been trained and/or communications strategies have been established.

Element	Status
Capacity Building and Increasing Slots	
The State public awareness and recruitment activities are targeted towards eligible 4 year old children in high need communities and families 200 percent below poverty.	Level 2-Implementing
The State's expansion efforts are targeted towards increasing the access to high quality preschool programs for 4 year olds.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has a plan to ensure that existing State Preschool slots met the twelve standards of a High Quality Preschool Program under the PDG funding.	Level 2-Implementing
Subrecipient Monitoring	
The State Lead Agency has a process to monitor grant and sub-recipients activities to ensure implementation of the goals and performance measures outlined in the approved PDG State Plan.	Level 2-Implementing
The State is on schedule with its monitoring of subrecipients to ensure that all of the high quality standards for Preschool are met within PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 3-Implementing
The State is providing access to comprehensive services to all children enrolled in the PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 2-Implementing
Birth to Third Grade Continuum	
The State has aligned the PDG funded program within the Birth to Third Grade Continuum of early learning standards and activities that help prepare children for kindergarten thru third grade.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is implementing a data collection system for tracking student outcomes from prekindergarten to kindergarten entry through third grade.	Level 2-Implementing
The State is implementing a transition protocol to ensure that children transitioning from early care and education environments to kindergarten to third grade settings receive the supports necessary for a smooth transition.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
Budget and Sustainability	
The State has policies and procedures to track the State and Subrecipient budget activities to ensure that funds are expended according to State, Local and Federal procurement laws.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has in place a system to track the "use of funds" under the PDG grant.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has a plan to ensure that High Quality State Preschool Programs will remain of high quality after federal funds are no longer available.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
Fiscal Accountability	
The State has policies and procedures in place to ensure the grant funds are expended according to the federal laws outlined in the federal Super Circular and EDGAR.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State has a system in place to ensure that its Subrecipients are meeting the federal laws of the Super Circular and comply	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement

with the “supplement not supplant” requirements.	
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Elements Requiring Next Steps:

- None

Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation:

- NJDE should work to strengthen and formalize the monitoring activities of its subgrantees. Although NJDE was able to provide some evidence of the monitoring and corrective action activities of its subgrantees, the process should be strengthened and formalized to ensure consistent program compliance.
- NJDE should work to increase the inclusion efforts among its subgrantees. Although NJDE was able to show some evidence of its inclusion efforts in the classroom and through professional development plans, NJDE should work to increase the implementation of inclusive settings in preschools receiving PDG funds.