



Strategies Toward the Equitable Implementation of PreK in Family Child Care

Curriculum, Assessment, Developmental Screening, and Monitoring | Issue 2 | March 2023

Authors: Susan Lewis,^a Rena Hallam,^a Jason T. Hustedt,^a Juliet Bromer,^b Samantha A. Melvin,^b Iheoma U. Iruka,^c and Jenille A. Morgan^c

a University of Delaware

b Erikson Institute

c University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Highlights

Many PreK systems that include FCC require educators to use designated curriculum, assessment, and/or screening tools and to participate in monitoring.

- Some PreK systems allow FCC educators to select a curriculum, assessment, or screening tool from the same approved lists offered to center-based preschools.
- PreK systems generally do not offer FCC-specific curriculum options that address mixed-age groups or are culturally representative.

Few PreK systems differentiate requirements for FCC educators or intentionally include FCC educators' voices and perspectives in decision making.

- Approved or vetted tools are often not available in providers' or children's home languages, nor represent the culture of the FCC educators and children they serve.
- Requirements for FCC educators implementing PreK are often the same as center-based PreK settings.

For a glossary of PKFCC terms (e.g. curriculum, assessment, PreK), please visit our website. www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc

ISSUE SERIES OVERVIEW

The PreK in Family Child Care (PKFCC) Project issue series explores strategies, successes, and challenges in the implementation of publicly funded PreK delivery in family child care (FCC) settings in the U.S. Intentionally (re)designing PreK systems to be more inclusive, equitable, and just can pave the way for transformative change across early care and education (ECE) systems that can result in enhanced outcomes for young children and families.

Guiding principles¹ for mixed delivery PreK systems that authentically include FCC programs:

1. Recognize that high-quality PreK occurs in FCC, whether it receives public funding or not
2. Value and learn from FCC strengths and assets
3. Intentionally design resources, standards, and compensation structures for the FCC context
4. Preserve continuity of care, infant and toddler care, and the broader birth-to-5 system
5. Make equity and justice top priorities for FCC educators, many of whom face inequities due to racism and sexism

This series is focused on identifying how publicly funded PreK programs are including FCC in their mixed-delivery models by focusing on the following areas:

- Qualifications and Compensation
- Curriculum, Assessment, Developmental Screening, and Monitoring
- Supportive Infrastructure and Professional Development
- Financing and Equity

A partnership of

Highlights continued

PreK systems invested in including FCCs, offer individualized supports to meet curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring requirements.

- Coaching and professional development are provided through some PreK systems to support FCC implementation of curriculum and assessment standards and requirements.
- Fiscal supports are provided in some PreK systems to offset the costs of curriculum, assessment, and developmental screening requirements, yet more supports are offered for curriculum implementation than for assessments and developmental screening.

Introduction

This brief report presents key findings about how PreK systems address **curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring** requirements to ensure FCC settings are equitably included in PreK delivery. Findings are based on data collected through focus groups in November 2022 with 14 state and local PreK administrators representing seven states and three cities/localities,² including those considering or more recently beginning implementation of FCC in their mixed-delivery PreK systems. A key foundation for this series is that state and local PreK administrators recognize the importance and benefit of including FCC in their PreK systems and communities to ensure equitable access, experiences, and outcomes for children and their families.

Key Findings from Focus Groups with PreK Administrators

Curriculum

Required curricula are rarely differentiated for FCC programs. Curriculum requirements vary and include a combination of the following: aligned with state early learning standards, research-based, choice offered from a vetted list of approved curricula, and approval process is in place for other curricula, including FCC educator-developed curricula (see Figure 1). Some states, such as California, do not require the use of curriculum within their PreK system, yet in a recent survey of FCC educators, 70% report developing their own curriculum.

Figure 1

Curriculum

Required in 9 of 10 Programs



Must be research-based

6 of 10 Programs

Must align to state early learning standards

7 of 10 Programs

State-vetted list to choose from

5 of 10 Programs

Note: Data collected from focus group and online document review; additional information in the Appendix.

Curriculum requirements are often not responsive to the distinct needs of FCC educators and the children and families they serve. Many FCC educators serve mixed-age groups and need to purchase multiple curricula to meet children's needs across ages, which can be cost-prohibitive. Required curricula are also not offered in the languages spoken by FCC educators and the families and children they serve.

“We are really finding that there’s an equity issue... we serve hundreds of family child care educators who serve mixed-age groups...focusing on PreK. And looking at a curriculum that is not in Chinese and Spanish is a barrier for many of our family child care educators”

—PreK Administrator, San Francisco, CA

PreK systems offer individualized supports to FCC educators for meeting curriculum requirements. Some systems offer fiscal support to purchase curriculum and training on curriculum as well as providing coaching and training supports.

“We have specific trainings on curriculum built into our yearlong program that we offer. So that comes with monthly in-person, face-to-face sessions, as well as that follow-up coaching and additional support based on individual needs.”

—PreK Administrator, San Antonio, TX

Child assessment

PreK systems require FCC educators who offer PreK to use a child assessment tool to communicate with families and for program planning. Most PreK systems allow programs to select a tool of their choice (see Figure 2). Washington state's PreK system, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), requires all programs to use Teaching Strategies GOLD as their child assessment tool and pays for all programs to have access. The California State Preschool Program developed its own statewide assessment tool, Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), which is required across PreK programs and available free of charge.

Child Developmental Screening

PreK systems require FCC educators who offer PreK to implement a developmental screening tool, although more guidance is needed for participating programs. Most PreK systems require developmental screenings to take place within 45–90 days of a child's enrollment (see Figure 3). The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)³ and Brigance⁴ were the most often cited developmental screening tools. The ASQ has been selected by San Francisco's PreK system specifically due to its availability in multiple languages, including Spanish and Chinese. Focus group participants reported a lack of coordination among other systems (school districts, Head Start, health providers) as a challenge to FCC educators completing screenings, as well as a lack of access to training on how to administer screening tools and interpret results.

"It was a checkbox ... because they weren't then using what they gleaned from the screening to inform any interventions or needs necessarily for that child."

—PreK Administrator, Multnomah County, OR

Box 1

FCC Educator Perspective: Mixed Age Group Requirements

One PreK-FCC educator shared her experience that as part of changing curriculum and monitoring requirements in her state, PreK children would need to be taught in a separate room or space from infants and toddlers for part of the day. She explained how this policy would require educators to employ an assistant and change their environment. She emphasized that: "we want to prove that we can do PreK with mixed-age groups in FCC" rather than separate children by age group.

—FCC educator

Like not supporting the use of mixed-age curricula or using monitoring tools designed with FCC settings in mind, this is an example of a barrier that might make PreK implementation particularly difficult for FCC educators.

Figure 2

Child Assessment

Required in 10 of 10 Programs



Must be research-based

4 of 10 Programs

Must align to state early learning standards

3 of 10 Programs

State-vetted list to choose from

3 of 10 Programs

Specific tool required*

4 of 10 Programs

*Must use Teaching Strategies GOLD or a state-developed tool (e.g., California's DRDP)

Note: Data collected from focus group and online document review; additional information in the Appendix.

Figure 3

Child Developmental Screening



Required in 8 of 10 Programs

Must be research-based

3 of 10
Programs

State-vetted list to choose from

1 of 10
Programs

Specific tool required*

1 of 10
Programs

**Must use Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Brigance, or another tool*

Note: Data collected from focus group and online document review; additional information in the Appendix.

Monitoring

Some PreK systems are just beginning to develop a monitoring system, while others conduct regularly scheduled monitoring visits with frequency differences ranging from twice yearly to once every four years.

The Multnomah County, Oregon, PreK system is developing a monitoring system for FCC educators and is using coaches to gather relevant feedback to inform the process. The California PreK system reports using FCC-focused tools in its monitoring process, specifically the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS). Multnomah County, OR reports building FCCERS into its five-year monitoring plan beginning with voluntary participation. Mixed-age groups were often not accounted for in the monitoring process, and having mixed-age groups was noted as a challenge by all focus group participants.

“Coaches give us feedback ... on themes and issues that might be coming up.”

—PreK Administrator, Multnomah County, OR

PreK system-monitoring cycles and timing of monitoring visits may not be aligned across systems, such as quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) and licensing, creating potential extra burden on FCC educators and duplication of efforts. Some states coordinate efforts. For example, Washington and California report that citation alerts are shared between licensing and PreK monitoring systems.

Promising Approaches

Some approaches to supporting implementation of PreK curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring in FCC settings that could inform future (re)design efforts:

- including the FCC educator voice in the decision-making process related to curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring standards and policies to ensure they are both meaningful and achievable
- differentiating PreK requirements for FCC compared with center-based settings
- providing curriculum options that are responsive to mixed-age groups
- making curriculum and assessment tools available in multiple languages to reflect the contextual, cultural, and linguistic diversity of FCC educators and the families they serve
- aligning QRIS and PreK requirements, to allow for coordination of coaching and monitoring supports and increase communication across monitoring systems to ease the burden for FCC educators and eliminate duplication of efforts
- training monitoring specialists in culturally responsive approaches to monitoring as well as in understanding the unique context of FCC settings

Methodology

PreK administrators from the 26 states, 12 cities, and 6 counties that allow FCC to deliver public PreK were contacted via email to participate in a one-time focus group on implementation of curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring regulations and policies for PreK in FCC. A total of 14 administrators (100% women) representing 7 states and 3 cities/localities participated. More than half (62%) of the focus group participants identified as White, 23% as Black, 8% as Latine, and 8% as multiracial.

Administrators had been working in their PreK system for between 1 and 20 years. Focus group sessions lasted 90 minutes, and participants were divided into 3 groups: (1) those from states implementing PreK in FCC; (2) those from cities or localities implementing PreK in FCC; and (3) those from states/cities and localities that are considering implementation of PreK in FCC or have only implemented PreK in a small number of FCC programs.

Limitations. Our focus group conversations were limited to administrators from PreK programs that allow (but do not necessarily currently include) FCC in their system and from states and localities that signed up to participate in the focus groups based on having an interest in PreK in FCC settings. Thus, we cannot generalize to PreK programs not represented in our focus groups, such as those that do not allow and exclude FCC participation at all levels. While we note many ways that public PreK programs are creating pathways and opportunities to include FCC, they may

not look the same given the diversity of contexts across state and local communities. Finally, the information collected was from PreK administrators and not FCC educators who may have different perspectives about the supports and barriers related to curriculum, assessment, screening, and monitoring regulations and policies in state or local community PreK programs.

Endnotes

- 1 Melvin, S.A., Bromer, J., Iruka, I.U., Hallam, R., & Hustedt, J. (2022). *A transformative vision for the authentic inclusion of family child care in mixed-delivery PreK systems*. Erikson Institute.
- 2 Opinions, quotes, and anecdotes shared by participants do not represent the views of their larger state/city, agency, or organization.
- 3 Squires, J., & Bricker, D. (2009). *Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: A Parent-Completed Child Monitoring System* (3rd ed., ASQ®-3). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- 4 Brigance, A. H., & French, B. (2013). *Brigance Early Childhood Screens III*. Curriculum Associates.

Appendix: Data from Curriculum, Assessment, and Developmental Screening Requirements

This table reflects information specifically about PreK program requirements and does not account for possible aligned requirements from other systems (e.g., QRIS).

PreK Location	Curriculum Required in 9 of 10	Assessment Required in 10 of 10	Screening Required in 8 of 10
California		▲	
Illinois	■ ●	■	■
Maine*	■ ● †	■ ●	■
Maryland	■ ● ◆		
North Carolina*	■ ◆	◆	◆
North Dakota*	■ ●	▲	
Washington	■ ◆	■ ▲	■
Multnomah County, OR	●	●	▲
San Antonio, TX	● ◆	◆	
San Francisco, CA	● ◆	■ ● ▲	

Notes: Data collected from focus group and online document review.

*These states/cities currently allow but are not actively implementing PreK in FCC.

†Maine curriculum: One curriculum option is PreK for ME, a state-created, open-source curriculum for PreK.

■ Must be research-based

● Must be aligned to state early learning standards

◆ State vetted list to choose from

▲ Specific required tool (i.e., must use TSG, ASQ, or state-developed tool)

About the Partners

The PreK in Family Child Care project is a collaboration of Erikson Institute's Herr Research Center, the University of North Carolina Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute's Equity Research Action Coalition, and the University of Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood.

Home-Based Child Care Research at Erikson Institute's Herr Research Center

www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc

Erikson Institute educates, inspires, and promotes leadership to serve the needs of children and families. As part of that mission, the Herr Research Center develops original scholarship and research that shapes the early childhood field. Since 2008, the Home-Based Child Care (HBCC) Research focus area has conducted rigorous and actionable research to inform early care and education policy and program design and decision-making. Through national, multistate, and local projects and participatory approaches, Erikson's HBCC Research group partners with professionals and communities to highlight promising strategies for supporting equity for the home-based child care workforce and quality for children and families who use home-based child care.

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood at the University of Delaware

www.dieec.udel.edu

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) strives to improve the quality of early care and education throughout the state and beyond by providing exemplary professional development and program-level supports to all sectors of the early care and education community. DIEEC conducts policy-relevant research that helps advance equity, promote the early childhood workforce, and enhance the lives of young children and their families.

Equity Research Action Coalition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

pfg.unc.edu/equity-research-action-coalition

The Equity Research Action Coalition, a university-based collaborative, focuses on co-constructing with practitioners and policymakers actionable research and evaluation to support the optimal development of Black children and other children of color prenatally through childhood. The coalition works at the intersection of research, program, and practice through anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks. The coalition focuses on developing a science-based action framework to eradicate the impact of racism and all its consequences on the lives of Black children, families, and communities and other children and families from marginalized communities, and to ensure their optimal health, wealth, and well-being.

Acknowledgments

This issue series, focused on family child care (FCC) in PreK by the PreK in Family Child Care Project, is funded with generous support from the Foundation for Child Development and the Home Grown Funding Collaborative.

Additional contributors to this brief include:

Patricia Molloy, Leanett Reinoso, Annette Pic, and the Educator Advisory convened for the PreK in Family Child Care Project at Erikson Institute.

Suggested Citation

Lewis, S., Hallam, R., Hustedt, J., Bromer, J., Melvin, S.A., Iruka, I.U., & Morgan, J.A. (2023). *Strategies toward the equitable implementation of PreK in family child care: Curriculum, assessment, developmental screening, and monitoring, Issue 2*. The Family Child Care in PreK Project Brief Series. Erikson Institute, University of Delaware, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

For more information about the PreK in Family Child Care Project, visit our website!

www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc

A partnership of

