



Alabama First Class Pre-K

GUIDELINES



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF

Early Childhood
Education

ALABAMA CHILDREN DESERVE A STRONG START!



Alabama First Class Pre-K GUIDELINES

Adjustments or modifications to the Office of School Readiness Guidelines
may be made at the discretion of the
Secretary of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education.

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**Alabama First Class Pre-K is a high-quality program of excellence that is continually improving. Suggestions are welcomed.*

FIRST CLASS PRE-K FRAMEWORK





INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL READINESS

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) and the Alabama Department of Children’s Affairs were created in the 1999 legislative session. In 2015, the department’s name changed to the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE). The primary function of the OSR is to support school readiness by fully administering Alabama’s state-funded pre-Kindergarten program. In the first year of operation, eight pilot pre-K programs were funded. Since then, state funding for Alabama First Class Pre-K (FCPK) has increased, and the program has expanded into all 67 counties. The Code of Alabama sections relating to the OSR are contained in Appendix L.

I.1: FIRST CLASS PRE-K GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORK

FCPK Guidelines and Framework are designed to support the growth and development of Alabama’s four-year-old children. These provide quality early learning environments with qualified teachers, appropriate practices, and needed materials. A successful program adheres to FCPK Guidelines and practices sound fiscal management to sustain ongoing high-quality learning opportunities for children and families. The FCPK Framework includes an OSR support team that works closely with programs to support quality and continuous improvements. All FCPK classrooms will be assigned a region director, a monitor, and a coach.

- **Region directors** support high-quality early learning and care for four-year-olds in a designated area. They recruit and establish FCPK classrooms to ensure access. Region directors build ongoing partnerships with providers to ensure program compliance for optimal child outcomes.
- **Monitors** work closely with program directors. They monitor and evaluate program progress during planned and random onsite visits throughout the year. They provide guidance, support, and resources to ensure program quality.
- **Coaches** develop an equitable learning partnership with teachers, relying on individualized strength-based observation and reflection for professional growth. It is a collaborative process that empowers teachers to reach their full potential and achieve their goals. It helps teachers improve their skills and knowledge, ultimately leading to better child outcomes.

I.2: HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K

Alabama’s state funded First Class Pre-K program has met the 10/10 National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Quality Benchmarks since 2006. The chart on page 7 outlines the quality criteria defined by NIEER as well as how Alabama implements the criteria in its FCPK classrooms. All FCPK classroom learning is based on the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELD). ASELD extends the community’s understanding of the way in which young children develop and learn, offering a set of shared expectations that reflect the state’s quality initiatives.

“School readiness involves more than just children. School readiness, in the broadest sense, is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Children are not innately ‘ready’ or ‘not ready’ for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.”

Alabama Transition to Kindergarten ToolKit



The OSR is dedicated to partnering with pre-K programs to ensure that Alabama’s four-year-olds have access to responsive, developmentally appropriate, relationship-based learning experiences to prepare them for school success. Community collaboration is essential to the success of these partnerships expanding access to FCPKs. Providers partner with their local Children’s Policy Council (CPC) to plan for successful implementation of FCPKs in their communities. The Children’s Policy Council early childhood education committees work to gather data about locations of educational programs and services available for four-year-olds in each county. The CPC website may be found at alpc.org.

I.3: NIEER QUALITY BENCHMARKS

QUALITY INDICATORS	OFFICE OF SCHOOL READINESS RECOMENDATIONS
Early Learning and Development Standards	Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELD)
Lead Teacher Degree	Lead teacher must have a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, at a minimum.
Lead Teacher Specialized Training	Lead teacher must have specialized training in early childhood and participate in on-going professional development in the learning of preschool-age children.
Auxiliary Teacher Degree	Auxiliary teacher must have a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or a minimum of 9 hours of approved coursework in child development and participate in on-going professional development in the learning of preschool-age children.
Professional Development, coaching, individualized plans for lead and auxiliary teachers	Lead teacher must have at least 30 hours of yearly in-service professional development and training; auxiliary teacher must have at least 20 hours of yearly in-service professional development and training.
Maximum Class Size	Maximum number of children per classroom is 20 or fewer; recommended number is 18.
Staff-Child Ratio	Lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in the classroom is 1:9. 1:10 is permissible only for Head Start classrooms.
Screenings and Referrals	Physical, vision, hearing, dental and developmental screenings and referrals must be provided.
Supports for Curriculum Implementation	Supports for curriculum implementation include, but are not limited to, the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework, the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development, and ADECE staff support.
Continuous Quality Improvement System	Site visits and monitoring will be provided by ADECE staff to ensure continuous quality and compliance. Assessments are administered to ensure the program is meeting children’s needs and high-quality standards.

Source: NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook, nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks

90% of a child's brain develops in the first 5 years.

Section 1: The Alabama First Class Pre-K Child and Family

Home and the early learning environment are the two most important worlds for a young child. When these two are bridged in positive and respectful ways, children feel secure. In FCPK, parents/families are engaged as partners and recognized as their child's first and most important teacher.

1.1: THE PRE-K CHILD

A high-quality, voluntary pre-Kindergarten is an effective early childhood educational program that prepares four-year-olds to succeed socially, emotionally, and academically in kindergarten and beyond. The intent of the First Class Pre-K (FCPK) program is to provide state-funded, voluntary pre-K for Alabama's four-year-olds. FCPK does not discriminate against any child or family based on race or color, national origin, religion, class, gender, disability, or income and encourages diversity in each of its classrooms.

1.1A: AGE REQUIREMENT

- Children must be four years of age on or before September 1*, based on acceptable documentation such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries.
- Children who are five years of age and are eligible for kindergarten may not enroll in Alabama First Class Pre-K.

**An opinion of the Attorney General states in effect that under the common law, one's age*

Ninety percent of brain development occurs during a child's first five years of life. Early childhood experiences establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for everything that follows.

Alabama School Readiness Alliance

is computed by including the day of birth so that a given age is attained the day before the birthday anniversary. (Authority: Ala. Code §16- 28-4 (1975) Interpretation based on Report of Attorney General of Alabama October-December 1963, Volume 113, page 20).

1.1B: RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

- The child must be an Alabama resident and maintain residency while enrolled.
- For purposes of this program, an Alabama resident is defined as a child who resides in the state of Alabama with proof of residence required (e.g., current utility bill).
- School systems may restrict residency to their school districts. A written policy adopted by the local Board of Education must be in place prior to the school year start date to restrict enrollment to that school district only.

1.1C: REQUIRED HEALTH INFORMATION

- Upon admission into a First Class Pre-K classroom, the pre-K provider ensures that an up-to-date immunization record or signed religious beliefs affidavits against such immunizations are maintained onsite for each child.

1.1D: CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires state and local school districts to educate preschool-age children with special needs in typical early childhood programs to the maximum extent appropriate.
- IDEA's least restrictive environment directive requires the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education program. Local education agencies are responsible for the identification and evaluation of children with disabilities and for the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children found to be eligible for special education and related services (Appendix O).

“When early care and education providers and families work together to share information, plan together, and support the child’s abilities, needs, interests, and progress, children are more likely to succeed in school and life.”
(Cairone & Mackrain, B11)



1.2: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

FCPK programs provide meaningful opportunities for families to be involved in their child’s education. Ongoing communication helps relationships grow and often prevents misunderstandings. Regular school-home communication (i.e., notebooks/folders, newsletters, emails, conferences, phone calls, etc.) should be provided in each family’s preferred communication mode and home language as much as possible. This is an opportunity to focus on positive accomplishments, to encourage review and discussion of daily school activities, and to share parenting resources.

- Annual family engagement activity plans, specifying ways parents earn a minimum of 12 participation hours, will be reviewed by the FCPK monitor.
 - A monthly calendar/flyer/newsletter outlining upcoming family engagement opportunities will be shared at the beginning of each month with FCPK families and the FCPK monitor.
 - Required Parent/Family Engagement Sign-in Sheet is Appendix I.

- Required Parent/Family Engagement Log is Appendix K.
- An onsite family orientation meeting is required within the first 20 working days of the school year.
 - A list of topics to discuss at this meeting is Appendix J.
 - Programs must have families complete the Parent/Guardian Contract, Appendix H.
 - At least two individual in-person conferences per year between the teachers and parent/guardian are required.
 - The first conference should be held after the October TS GOLD® checkpoint but prior to December 15. TS GOLD® Data, ASQ, and Health Screeners are shared during the first conference.
 - The second conference should be held after the final TS GOLD® checkpoint and prior to May 31.
- Conferences should be documented using the TS GOLD® Family Conference Form. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to use the TS GOLD® Development and Learning Report for parent conferences if finalization is not possible before holding parent conferences.
 - Monitors will verify signed family conference forms onsite.
- In-state field trips and onsite enrichment experiences are an important part of the education process and family engagement.
 - OSR funds may be used to pay for these experiences.
 - Field trips/onsite enrichments, and all accompanying costs, made during the day must be free and available to all FCPK children.
 - Programs develop their own policies regarding safety and transportation for in-state field trips.
 - Coaches and monitors will have ongoing communications regarding one minimum in-state field trip.
- A daily behavior log for each child is not considered family engagement nor an appropriate form of communication. Behavior logs are not to be utilized in FCPK Classrooms.
- Children may not be dismissed due to lack of parent/family participation.

1.3: STUDENT ATTENDANCE

There is a strong connection between attendance and long-term school success. Regular attendance ensures pre-K children benefit from participating in quality early learning experiences. To support children’s regular attendance, providers formulate written procedures for addressing issues regarding attendance and tardiness.

The goal of the attendance policy is to assist families in establishing and maintaining regular school attendance patterns. Attendance issues are best handled before they reach chronic levels. Daily attendance records should be maintained onsite and include the dates when a child is absent and the dates/times when a child arrives late or leaves early. Program attendance expectations will be reviewed by the FCPK monitor.

When forming program attendance policies:

Children’s attendance in early learning programs can impact their school readiness and school success. Children who are chronically absent, or who miss 10% of the school year, are less likely to read on grade level by third grade and are more likely to be chronically absent in later grades. Family engagement can make an impact! When families understand the importance of regular attendance, and when professionals track and follow up with families when children are absent, attendance improves and so do children’s opportunities to learn.

Attendance Works

- Providers will consult the current Alabama Attendance Manual.
- Attendance policies include procedures such as: the teacher/program director contacts the family or caregiver on the first day of absence; after 3rd consecutive absence, the teacher/program director provides home learning resources such as ReadyRosie, etc.
- Teacher will notify program director and monitor of irregular attendance patterns. Examples of irregular attendance may include: *missing consecutive days, missing same day every week, frequently leaving early, frequent tardiness, etc.*
- Dismissing a child due to irregular attendance should only be used as a last resort. Programs must demonstrate multiple efforts to engage parents to encourage attendance with the goal of helping parents keep children in the program.
- The Attendance Works Handout in Appendix G will be provided to families.

1.4: FIRST TEACHER HOME VISITING

The First Teacher Home Visiting program delivers parent education and support through home visits with families. Programs use evidence-based home visiting models to educate and assist families in finding appropriate social services to help them with any unmet needs. There are First Teacher Home Visiting programs available in nearly all counties across the state. Models vary, but some programs may choose to enroll women prenatally and continue to stay involved with the family until the child enters kindergarten. Other programs work specifically on school readiness with preschool-aged children. For more information on home visiting programs, see Appendix M.





Research shows that teachers are the single most important classroom factor in a child's learning. (Hattie 2017; Hattie 2015)

Section 2: The Alabama First Class Pre-K Classroom

The FCPK classroom is inclusive of the teachers, the children, and the environment. The environment becomes another teacher in the classroom when learning areas are welcoming and well-organized, allowing children to interact and learn together. The social environment (schedules, responsibilities, expectations, and routines) works in tandem with the physical environment (space, materials, displays, learning areas, furniture, and maintenance) to create a supportive learning community. When teachers establish a positive learning culture, it helps improve attention, reduces anxiety, and supports emotional and behavioral regulation of children. The OSR Team supports the classroom by providing coaching, professional development, and recommendations for continuous improvement.

2.1: THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS

A child's development and skill mastery are dependent on a caring adult who nurtures and supports their growth. Teachers provide experiences that help children gather and build knowledge about their world. All FCPK classrooms are required to have a qualified Lead and Auxiliary teacher that share this responsibility. Teachers may not be taken out of the First Class Pre-K classroom to fill any other role or duty in the program.

2.1A: TEACHER/CHILD RATIO

Classrooms maintain a 1:9 teacher/child ratio at all times with the exception of nap. Head Start classrooms that choose to have an enrollment of 20 shall maintain a 1:10 teacher/child ratio.

2.1B: LEAD TEACHERS QUALIFICATIONS

- All lead teachers must be at least 21 years of age.
- All lead teachers must possess one of the following degrees:
 - Early Childhood Education degree (B.S., B.A., or M.A./M.S.)
 - Human Environmental Science degree with a concentration in Early Childhood Development or Child Development.
 - Special Education degree in Early Childhood with a minimum of 18 credit hours in early childhood/child development coursework.
 - Elementary Education degree with a minimum of 18 hours in early childhood/child development coursework.
- All non-public school lead teachers should be paid at least the minimum salary according to the Alabama State Department of Education website, www.alabamaachieves.org. Public School systems should follow their local school system salary matrix. Programs may choose to pay above the minimum salary requirement and may use ADECE/OSR funds to do so.

**ADECE does not require teacher certifications. Teacher certification requirements are governed by the Alabama State Department of Education and Local Education Agencies. Questions about obtaining an Alabama Teaching Certificate need to be directed and answered by ALSDE only. Having an Early Childhood teaching certificate does not necessarily meet OSR teacher qualification requirements.*

2.1C: AUXILIARY TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

- An auxiliary teacher must meet all of the following minimum requirements:
 - Must possess a high school diploma or GED.
 - Must have 9 hours of Early Childhood Education College Coursework; or a Preschool Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential through Council of Professional Recognition; or an Early Childhood Education Associate Degree; or Associate Degree Child Development
- Auxiliary teachers are required to be paid in accordance with ADECE yearly guidance. The base salary does not include benefits. Programs may choose to pay above the minimum salary requirement and may use ADECE/OSR funds to do so.

2.1D: SUBSTITUTES/VOLUNTEERS/INTERNS

A substitute lead and/or auxiliary teacher is required when the regular teacher(s) is/are absent. Volunteer parents may not be left in the classroom unsupervised by classroom personnel.

- OSR funds may be used to compensate substitutes.
- Criminal background checks are required for all substitute teachers.
- Long-term absences, which are defined as longer than 3 weeks, require substitutes who meet the credentials of the teacher they are replacing. If a long-term substitute is required, the region director should be notified prior to the sub placement.
- The FPCK program director must contact the region director before the placement of interns and field experience students. Interns and field experience students cannot be counted in teacher/child ratio.

2.1E: TEACHER CREDENTIAL VERIFICATION PROCESS/ BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Credentials
 - Prior to hiring, credentials are reviewed and approved by the OSR Credentialing Officer. This step is critical to having qualified lead and auxiliary teachers.
 - Unofficial transcripts may be used for review in the hiring process. However, the unofficial transcript is not acceptable documentation of coursework. All lead and auxiliary teachers must have official transcripts on file.
 - Official, unopened transcripts for all new teachers must be submitted to the OSR within 30 days following hire date.
 - All coursework/degrees must be earned from a regionally accredited institution.
 - Reference Appendix F - Teacher Credential Verification Process
- Every effort must be made to find a qualified teacher candidate. Prospective teachers that do not meet qualifications must have OSR approval to be placed on a waiver.
 - Waivers are an exception and are not automatically granted. All waiver requests are reviewed for approval. The hiring process should not be completed until final approval from the OSR is received.
 - Teachers on waivers should satisfy the requirements of the waiver in a timely manner. If needed, the applicant must re-apply for a waiver each school year and show significant progress and justification for a continuance of the waiver.
 - Teachers in the apprenticeship program must work closely with the region director and the Workforce Development staff of the ADECE.
- Background Checks
 - All FCPK program personnel must have a satisfactory criminal background check, Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) background check and fingerprinting, with documentation on file with their employer.
 - Criminal background checks are required of all FCPK program personnel including substitute teachers and any other person having regular contact with the classroom children.
 - All classrooms must have a notarized Background Check Verification Form (Appendix C) submitted by mail to the Montgomery Office within 10 days of the first day of school and throughout the year as new employees are hired.
 - If an OSR grantee personnel is arrested or convicted of criminal behavior during employment in the FCPK classroom, the program must promptly inform the OSR.

2.1F: TEACHER DAYS/HOURS OF SERVICE

- Teachers are funded for 187 days of service.
 - 180 days of classroom instructional services provided to children.
 - Seven days of pre/post planning and/or professional development.
- Teachers are compensated based on 7.5 hours of work per day - 6.5 hours of instruction and 1 hour of joint planning time.
- If a program provider requires teachers to work more than 187 days, the provider cannot use First Class Pre-K program funds for this expense. If a First Class Pre-K program teacher is required to work more than eight hours per day, the teacher must be paid using non-FCPK funds.
- Teachers must be paid their normal salary during a governor-declared state of emergency and or pandemic event.

- Teachers may not occupy more than one position during the 7.5 hour teacher workday (e.g., program director and teacher; director and auxiliary teacher).

2.1G: COACHING

An integral development tool for both lead and auxiliary teachers is coaching. FCPK coaches are assigned to classrooms and are supports for teachers. It is important that the teaching team have a willingness to receive feedback and use it to improve one's practices. Region directors will have ongoing conversations concerning nonperforming teachers. Coaching is provided for continuous improvement of effective teaching practices for child outcomes. Programs should consider replacing teachers not showing satisfactory progress.

2.1H: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The OSR provides required annual professional development for both lead and auxiliary teachers throughout the year. Provided trainings and opportunities for professional growth will contribute to a teacher's acquisition of developmentally appropriate teaching practices. Examples of required trainings include: new teacher development, assessment tools, conferences, etc.

- OSR funds may be used to pay for training costs, travel, and substitutes.
 - In addition, the providers pay staff salaries and expenses for all required OSR trainings (up to 7 days).
- Lead Teachers must have a minimum of 30 hours per year.
 - 15 hours of OSR-sponsored training each year
 - 15 hours of training offered by local or regional programs
- Auxiliary Teachers must have a minimum of 20 hours
 - 10 hours of OSR-sponsored training each year
 - 10 hours training offered by local or regional programs.
- Selection of online professional development must have prior OSR approval.
- Teachers are required to document all local and OSR training attendance using PowerSchool. Teachers will keep copies of training certificates onsite for verification of attendance.

2.2: THE CLASSROOM SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The FCPK classroom social environment is equally as important as the physical environment. It encompasses teacher-child interactions which support children achieving social and learning goals. It is crucial to the whole child development and fosters life skills of living in a community. A classroom community is a place where children have a sense of belonging, share interests, and experiences. Positive classroom communities set the stage for a child's development and learning, such as executive function skills leading to self-regulation and autonomy. Creating this environment is a shared responsibility of the lead and auxiliary teachers, the program director, and all staff members (food service, custodial, special area teachers, volunteers, etc.) who work with the pre-K child in the FCPK classroom.

2.2A: BUILDING A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

FCPK teachers build a classroom community by supporting peer relationships and providing a predictable environment where all children are contributing members.

Classroom routines and procedures are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced supporting the child in successfully meeting expectations. Routines and procedures are regularly reviewed to make needed adjustments and scaffold children's understanding. Learning areas and materials should be gradually introduced taking great care to teach all procedures. The coach will support and guide teachers through this process.

To build the classroom community:

- Lead and Auxiliary teachers share and plan for instructional and assessment responsibilities, child supervision, and other classroom duties.
- Teachers build relationships by speaking to children in a pleasant tone, using words that convey care and respect.
- Teachers model desirable behaviors such as negotiating, sharing, and learning from mistakes.
 - Teachers use role-play to help children learn to communicate appropriately and work through peer conflicts.
 - Teachers engage all children in cleanup, transitions, celebrations, and other cooperative and community building activities.
 - Teachers interact with the children during Learning/Free Choice time and Gross Motor time to facilitate children's play.
 - Teachers sit with the children during meals and snacks to facilitate appropriate conversation and to model respect, social skills, manners, and healthy nutritional habits.
- Teachers develop classroom rules with the children, not posted before the children enter the classroom. The rules are displayed in the classroom for continual reference throughout the course of the day.
- Refer to pages 37-78, of the ASELD for additional information on Relationships and Connections.

2.2B: RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOBS

All children have a job that contributes to the caring for the classroom. When children share the responsibility of taking care of the classroom, it builds community, encourages independence, and organizational skills. The process of explicitly teaching jobs at the beginning of the year so children are familiar with the job terms and responsibilities takes time. The coach will support and guide teachers through this process.

To support classroom community:

- Children are involved in deciding which jobs are needed and understand the importance of each to the classroom community.
- Job assignments are inclusive, rotated daily or weekly, and consistent, allowing all children to participate. They are not used as a reward or punishment.
- A classroom helper/job chart is displayed where it is visible and can be referred to throughout the day. Using photographs of children performing the jobs fosters ownership within the community. Other templates or commercial photographs are acceptable.

“A preschool learning environment includes outside spaces, indoor places, and everything in between— toys, learning materials, wall displays, and equipment. It also includes the children and adults who interact in these spaces. The learning environment has an important impact on children’s efforts to build relationships, play and learn, eat, and rest.”

(Cairone & Mackrain, 107)




2.2C: DAILY SCHEDULE

The daily schedule establishes a time and sequence for routines and experiences. Consistently following a schedule makes daily experiences predictable for children. It supports children's individual and group needs thus helping the entire classroom community run smoothly. The schedule should include a balance of activity groupings that are child and teacher directed, as well as flexible enough to allow for children's interests and needs. The coach will provide support in developing an appropriate schedule and must be notified of any permanent schedule changes. A written schedule, including times, is posted outside the classroom door for program directors, coaches, monitors, administrators, and visitors to view.

The Daily Schedule includes:

- Whole groups:
 - will last no more than 20 minutes at one time and may occur several times per day
 - build a sense of community and provide opportunity for children to communicate
- Small groups:
 - occur at least once per day
 - may last up to 20 minutes at one time based on the interest and learning of children. Small groups may occur several times per day
 - give children an opportunity for new skills and focus on content areas
- Free choice:
 - must be uninterrupted and should last for at least 1 hour 10 minutes one time per day, not including clean up
 - both teachers, moving around the room provide opportunities for student-led learning, individualized interest, and peer relationships
 - children are not to be pulled from free choice for small group instruction
- Read Aloud:
 - purposefully planned and occurs at least twice a day
 - book is developmentally appropriate, held and read by a teacher in front of the children. This is not a time to use an electronic device
 - teachers should introduce vocabulary, encourage discussion, and foster an appreciation for quality children's literature
- Gross Motor:
 - occurs daily for 60 minutes which can be broken into two times a day if needed
 - teachers are engaged and actively supervising during this time with the children
 - at least 30 minutes of the 60 minutes should be outdoors
- Music and Movement:
 - thoughtfully planned and is embedded throughout the day
 - teachers do not solely rely on a smart board or similar technology to meet this daily requirement
 - teachers should learn a repertoire of songs, chants, and fingerplays for enjoyment and mastering recall of both melody and lyrics. This type of quality music and movement encourages appropriate social interaction, teaches underlying literacy and math skills, and improves spatial awareness (crossing the midline)
 - a variety of resources and materials should be utilized to guarantee exposure to multiple musical genres and movements. See Appendix P
 - both teachers should actively engage in music and movement with the children, encouraging participation and enjoyment

- Rest Time:
 - occurs daily for 45-60 minutes
 - provisions should be made for children that indicate a need to rest during anytime of the day
 - appropriate accommodations should be made for early risers and non-nappers
 - cots and cot sheets are required in the FCPK classroom. Cot sheets and towels/blankets are required to be regularly laundered and sanitized
 - all children must be within sight and sound of the teacher during rest time
- A science experience is planned and occurs weekly to strengthen children’s understanding of the world and how things work.
- Lunch, snack, and transitions should be planned and accounted for when creating the schedule for the pre-K day.

	DAILY SCHEDULE CHECKLIST
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule reflects at least 6.5 hour instructional day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Whole groups are scheduled multiple times daily and do not exceed 20 minutes each.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Two planned and purposeful read alouds are scheduled daily.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music and movement is embedded throughout the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small group is scheduled daily and does not exceed 20 minutes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uninterrupted, free choice is scheduled for a minimum of 1 hour and 10 minutes daily, not including clean-up.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rest time occurs daily for 45-60 minutes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transitions, lunch, and snack have been planned and accounted for in the schedule.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gross motor is scheduled for 60 minutes daily and may be broken into two blocks of time throughout the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	A science experiment is planned and occurs weekly.

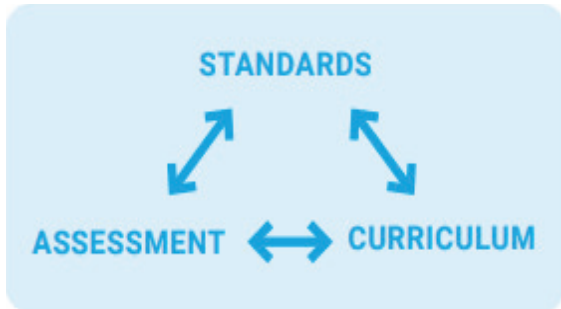
2.2D: PICTURE SCHEDULE

A picture schedule gives children a consistent opportunity to engage and participate in the monitoring of the daily activities. The labeled daily routine picture schedule with words is accessible and posted near the whole group area so it can be referenced often. Children consistently participate in monitoring the schedule (such as “moving the clothespin” to the next activity) and discussing the daily plans. The daily schedule is proven to be an effective tool in helping children navigate transitions from one activity to another.

- Photos of the children in various activities are ideal; commercial or teacher made photos are acceptable.
- The picture schedule includes daily activities and routines. Special events or weekly activities are added as appropriate.

- It is not necessary to include “clock times” in the picture schedule. The purpose of this schedule is to provide the children with a visual chronological reminder of the pre-K day.

2.2E: PLANNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT



Teachers facilitate children’s learning by observing, assessing, and intentionally developing experiences that build on children’s current knowledge and developmental level. Intentional teachers interact directly with children. They ask questions to encourage thinking and problem solving and adapt experiences to meet individual children’s learning styles, interests, and needs. Coaches assist teachers with meeting the expectation of establishing a planning, teaching, and assessment cycle.

The Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELD) is a critical component of the state’s early childhood system and offers shared expectations and a unified vision for responsive and developmentally appropriate, relationship-based learning experiences for all the state’s young children, birth to age 5.

- guide teachers’ understanding of what children can know, learn, and do
- support intentional learning experiences to facilitate children’s learning, decide the way in which those experiences will be provided, and the way in which they will be shared with other professionals and families.
- reflect the state’s quality initiatives and extend the community’s understanding of the way in which young children develop and learn
- additional copies of the ASELD document may be purchased (at <https://store.walker360express.com/corp.cgi>) using OSR funds.

Teaching Strategies™ GOLD® (TS GOLD®)

TS GOLD® is the state assessment tool used to measure child growth and outcomes on the state’s early learning standards. Professionals use observation, the collection of artifacts such as children’s work samples, photos, videos, and family input to establish goals and determine children’s progress towards meeting goals.

- Children demonstrate learning all throughout their day. Teachers develop a plan to collect, record, and enter the documentation. Documentation and preliminary levels are entered daily by both teachers to inform future learning opportunities. TS GOLD® reports are used for planning.
- Documentation taken over time is used to set levels and data finalized at Fall, Winter, and Spring checkpoint periods. This might be 1, 2, 3 or more pieces per objective depending on the child’s learning. The focus should be on the quality of documentation, not just the quantity.
- It is required for all lead and auxilliary teachers to collect and enter documentation daily.
- It is required that all lead and auxiliary teachers obtain and keep current Gold Interrater Reliability (IRR) certification.

2.2F: CURRICULUM

The Alabama First Class Pre-K framework is an effective model, supporting young children as they develop and learn. Teachers use the ASELD to define the specific learning experiences and content that will be taught to children. Curriculum is built on


feedback from the children themselves, family interests, and professionals’ knowledge of child development. Each teacher adapts the environment, activities, and interactions to guide children’s growth and learning.

- Programs that choose to purchase a curriculum, must select one that is aligned with the ASEL.D.
- FCPK teachers and administrators work closely with coaches and/or monitors to choose a curriculum.
- Religious instruction or other religious activity is permitted during the 6.5-hour FCPK day except insofar as it would prevent compliance with other program guidelines.
- All curricula must promote appropriate instructional practice and be used as a supplement to the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework.

2.2G: LESSON PLANNING

Professionals facilitate children’s growth by intentionally planning learning experiences that build on children’s current knowledge and developmental level. Plans identify a theme or study topic to be investigated in depth. The length of time dedicated to this study depends on the topic and the interests of the children.

- All plans will be based on the ASEL.D. TS GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions will be used to assess children’s growth on the ASEL.D. Teachers are required to reference both resources in lesson plans.
- Weekly lesson plans are accessible in all FCPK classrooms. The coach will support the lesson plan format.
- Evidence that themes are incorporated in learning areas are noted in lesson plans.

	LESSON PLAN COMPONENT CHECKLIST
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesson plan format is submitted to coach.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesson plans identify a theme or study topic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Whole group activities are planned to include music and movement and shared writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small groups are planned with specific skills identified.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Two read alouds are planned daily.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plans include incorporation of themes in learning areas and materials are rotated regularly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly science experience is planned.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evidence of planned gross motor activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	ASELD and TS GOLD® are documented in lesson plans
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resources are identified: books, songs, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesson plans are current and accessible.

2.2H: WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION

Whole group strengthens classroom community. This time includes shared writing experiences such as daily news/morning message, opportunities for children to share, and learn respect for others. Teachers will be mindful of the amount of time they are expecting children to sit and engage as part of a large group. Teachers develop strategies to capture valuable TS GOLD® documentation during this time.

- Whole group instruction should be based on ASELD and TS GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions.
- Whole group occurs multiple times daily for up to 20 minutes per occurrence.
- Whole group may last five to eight minutes at the beginning of the year and increase up to no more than 20 minutes by the end of the year.
- Whole groups include music, movement, finger plays, read alouds, discussion of the picture schedule, job chart, etc.

2.2I: SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Children enter FCPK with different strengths, interests, and experiences. Small group learning allows a teacher to meet children where they are, customizing lessons that support, and encourage growth for each child. Back and forth conversations are easier in small groups and allow questions based on individual children's imaginations and understandings. Small groups are not a part of free choice time. The coach will assist with planning appropriate small group learning as needed.

- Small group instruction should be based on ASELD and TS GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions.
- Small groups of no more than nine children take place at least once daily. The composition of the groups is flexible based on the needs of the children.
 - Teachers may divide the children into three groups with both teachers conducting a small group simultaneously with two of the groups while an independent group of children work with materials previously introduced.
 - The independent group must be always in full view and in supervision of both teachers.
- Time spent in small group is flexible based on children's needs and learning. A small group may last five to eight minutes at the beginning of the year and increase up to no more than 20 minutes by the end of the year.

2.2J: TRANSITIONS

Teachers should minimize wait times with thoughtful planning and preparation:

- Conduct transitions (hand washing, water breaks, bathroom, etc.) in small groups or individually when possible.
- Model and practice how you expect a transition to happen by giving children cues and establishing predictable routines with consistent goals.
- Purposeful scheduling and preparation minimize the need for unnecessary transitions throughout the day. Transitions should be accounted for when creating the classroom schedule.
- Embedded learning experiences into transitions keeps children engaged during unavoidable wait times.

2.2K: TECHNOLOGY

Please note that updated guidance regarding screen time requirements will be released soon following the passage of recent legislation during the 2026 legislative session. Details will be shared as they become available.

Technology and media should be used to support learning - not an isolated activity and to expand young children's access to new content. Screen time has been linked to increase anger/aggression and other behaviors. Teachers monitor the use of electronic devices to support children's digital citizenship. For more detailed information about digital citizenship, please refer to pages 114-115 and Appendix Six of the ASELD document.

- Technology may be used for up to 15 minutes of individual use and 15 minutes of group use for a total of no more than 30 minutes per day.
 - Individual use of technology is limited to 15 minutes per day. Program required technology programs (i.e., Hatch, Waterford, Lexia, etc.) must be included in the student's 15-minute independent use of technology.
 - Supplemental use of technology to enhance group times should not exceed 15 minutes per day.
- Opportunities for using computer labs (located away from the classroom) should be limited to one time per week for no more than 30 minutes.
- Children should be redirected to other activities rather than waiting for electronics to be available.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 110-117, and Appendix Six for additional information on Technology in Early Learning Programs.

2.2L: WRITING/HANDWRITING

The classroom should be a print-rich environment with alphabet charts, writing models, morning messages, daily news, letters, labels, etc. to demonstrate the purposes of writing. Lined paper can be available in the Writing Area and throughout the room for exploration, but it is not used for instructional purposes. Formal, rote handwriting instruction and letter formation in large or small groups (tracing or copying) are not developmentally appropriate.

- Explicit instruction is provided to children on an individual basis in response to expressed interest.
- Children should have authentic ways to write their names. For example, signing-in is a daily part of the arrival process. This is a progression of skills: from recognition of the child's picture, to recognizing name, to tracing name, to copying name, to ultimately writing name independently by the end of the school year.
- Child-created stories, writing, and dictation should be exhibited to encourage writing.

The infographic is titled "The Difference Between Writing and Handwriting" and features a central list of eight differences. On the left, there is an illustration of a hand holding a pen, and on the right, there is an illustration of a sign with the letters "ABC". The differences are presented in two columns of rounded rectangular boxes.

Writing	Handwriting
Support Stages of Writing	Tracing Letters and Words
Developmental Spelling	Penmanship
Different Writing Tools and Paper	Use Only Lined Paper
Assist Child in Own Efforts to Write	Stress Correct Letter Formation

2.2M: WORKSHEETS

The development of fine motor skills is best accomplished through experimentation with suitable materials such as playdough, puzzles, manipulatives, various drawing and writing instruments, paper and scissors, beads and laces, etc.

- Pre-made data collection, graphing, or recording sheets where children can document their own ideas and solve problems may be used.
- Coloring pages are closed ended and should not be used. Please consult the FCPK coach for guidance.
- Photocopied worksheets which require a child to match items (i.e., upper-lower case letters, rhymes, etc.), fill-in-the-blanks, trace or write repeated shapes, letters or numerals, use lines for handwriting, or any similar activity that demands one correct answer, are not developmentally appropriate in FCPK.

The amount of space is important because it influences the number and types of activities that children can effectively engage in at the same time. Insufficient space can lead to conflicts due to crowding. ECERS

“Children are less likely to run and get in others’ way if traffic paths go around interest areas rather than from one end of the room to the other.”

(Cairone & Mackrain, 125)



2.3: THE CLASSROOM PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

FCPK programs provide an environment which is clean, safe, and conducive to high-quality learning. A setting that is well designed supports goals for children and allows teachers to observe and interact with them in positive ways to support development and learning. Smaller, defined spaces allow children to concentrate on work and engage in complex play. Additionally, it allows for young dual language learners to demonstrate what they are learning across languages.

- Each classroom has space for 18 children.
 - A minimum of 35 square feet per child (630 square feet total)
- Classrooms are arranged to allow appropriate supervision of all children at all times.
 - Classrooms should be clean, organized, and free from non-instructional clutter.
 - Teacher areas are clutter free and must not intrude on children’s workspace. Teacher desks/filing cabinets are not recommended in FCPK classrooms to ensure a child-centered environment.
- Pre-K providers maintain appropriate equipment, materials and supplies for each pre-K classroom.
 - Classroom furnishings are to be in place at the beginning of the school year. Worn-out furnishings/non-functioning equipment are to be replaced/removed.
 - Consumables are replenished as needed and budgeted for annually.
 - Consult with FCPK coach and monitor prior to purchasing.
- Learning and Free Choice areas have required items that are in Appendix P. Consult FCPK coach about items.
- Refer to the ASELD for environment and material suggestions across domains.
- If a classroom is to be relocated for any reason, you must contact the region director for approval prior to the move.

2.3A: DISPLAYS AND BULLETIN BOARDS

Displays and bulletin boards serve a purpose. Children’s work being displayed honors their progress, interest, and development. Displaying photographs of the children and their families honors their culture and creates classroom community. Bulletin boards can be another teacher in the classroom, supporting instruction, pre-literacy, and interaction.

- To support the child’s visual ability display should be eye level.
- To value and respect child’s work each child should have their own display space.
- To support child’s learning, displays reflect current theme and/or interest and on the developmental level and abilities of children.

2.3B: REQUIRED LEARNING AND FREE CHOICE AREAS

Area arrangement is thoughtfully planned, clearly defined, and identified with a label or signs to support universal learning. These areas are accessible to all children. Routines for learning areas should be explicitly taught and modeled.

- Quiet and noisy areas are separated so they do not interfere with or distract from adjacent areas.
- Shelves and storage bins are labeled with words and photographs/pictures to support universal learning, easy access and independent clean up.
- Materials are rotated to support learning and children’s interests.
- Books and writing materials are available in all learning and free choice areas.



2.3C: SAFE PLACE

The safe place supports the child when they experience big feelings such as anger, sadness, frustration, too much excitement, etc. With the support of a teacher to co-regulate the big feelings, the child learns to handle the emotions in an appropriate way. The safe place is not a time out and is not used as a punitive space. This space is a protected area that teaches children that big feelings come, and they can be regulated. While this particular space is not in Appendix P, children have shown that they benefit from such a space in the classroom. A few points of guidance are provided below.

- This is the only learning area that is to support one child at a time and not a free choice center.
- The safe place is established in a visible, and accessible area of the room.
- This area contains soft furnishings, books, writing materials, sensory materials, and quiet puzzles or games.

2.3D: ART

The art area gives children the opportunity to create, represent, and communicate their ideas to others. It is intended for free exploration not dictated crafts. This area is located near a water

 ART	VS	 CRAFT
Creative, unique, original	vs	Similar or identical to other children’s
Comes from within the child	vs	Directed by an adult
Open-ended, end results unknown	vs	Direction-oriented resulting in end product
Process is valued over end product	vs	Finished product valued over process
Allows for self-expression	vs	Copying and imitating expected

source, with a variety of materials stored on open shelves in containers, allowing for easy access, and clean up by the children. A variety of materials should always be available.

- Children will have easy access to art material for exploration, interaction, and creative expression daily.
- Paint is out for daily use and easel is set up.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 171-182, for additional information on Creative Art.

2.3E: FINE MOTOR AND MANIPULATIVES

Fine motor activities encourage the development of eye-hand coordination which is important as preschool children learn self-help skills and become ready for future skills such as writing. These skills do not naturally emerge, they involve coordinated efforts between the brain and muscles. Fine motor materials help practice the skills needed to handle small objects with fingers, especially the fingers and thumb working together. For example, children use sight to guide finger movements, such as looking to see where the hole is in a bead in order to push through string.

- Some classrooms combine the math and manipulative areas due to space limitations.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 188-189, for additional information on fine motor development

2.3F: LISTENING

The Listening Area models fluent reading, introduces new vocabulary, and supports listening skills. This center is in a quiet area of the room with comfortable seating and includes a CD player/listening device, headphones, recorded stories/books. Appendix P has specific requirements for items. One of the goals of the Listening Area is to allow children to become familiar with print materials. Use of an electronic device in place of a printed book is not encouraged.

“Most young children are uninhibited, enthusiastic performers and lovers of music and movement, both of which enrich children’s lives and learning in many ways.”

(Copple & Bredekamp, 177)



2.3G: MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

When preschool children dance, they are using rhythm and space to learn more about their body’s ability to move, express ideas, and convey feelings. Listening to and producing various kinds of music while exploring instruments develops an appreciation for musical expressions.

- This area needs access to a CD player/music source separate from the Listening Area.
- A variety of songs from other countries and languages will be available.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 174-177, for additional information on Music, Movement, and Dance.

2.3H: BLOCKS

In block play children learn math and science concepts. Block play also helps with problem-solving and developing gross and fine motor skills. Children use blocks as a representation of their world such as a house, street, or a farm. They begin to understand relationships as they work together cooperatively or as an individual. Blocks are building materials that children carefully place and balance to build structures. They are materials that do not restrict children by having to fit pieces together in a special way.

- Plastic interlocking blocks that fit together and small table blocks are considered fine motor materials and should be placed in Fine Motor area.
- The Block area has enough floor space for a minimum of three children to be able to independently build large structures.
- This area needs a large rug (for many classrooms the whole/large group area) located in a space that is out of the traffic flow.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items. Refer to ASEL D pages 81-97 for additional information on Approaches to Plan and Learning.

2.3I: DRAMATIC PLAY

When children invent dramatic play scenarios, they use oral language and cognitive skills which support reading comprehension. Dramatic play occurs when children act out roles and use figures such as small toy people in a dollhouse. During this time, children practice the most language skills in the classroom and develop social skills. Children who are successful in dramatic play have a good chance for success in school because of their language and social skills.

- The Dramatic Play area is large enough for at least three children to engage in self-created make-believe play and includes the following:
 - Theme related props for transforming the Dramatic Play area into imaginative play environments such as fantasy (capes, hats, costume jewelry), seasonal (scarves, mittens, raincoats, umbrella), beauty shop, camping, pet store, doctor's office, department store, restaurant, etc.
 - The Dramatic Play area can be enhanced with "found" objects such as a real mixer, iron, or hair dryer with the cord removed, keys, phones, purses, baskets, shopping bags, etc.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASEL D, pages 178-181, for additional information on Drama and Acting.

“Research shows that pretend play strengthens cognitive capacities, including sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, and the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking, inhibit impulses, control one’s behavior, and take another person’s perspective.” (Copple & Bredekamp, 132)

2.3J: SENSORY AND DISCOVERY TABLES OR BINS

The sensory area allows children the opportunity to manually experiment with a variety of materials, including but not limited to sand and water. Children should have the opportunity to dig, scoop, pour, and naturally compare and measure materials of different textures, volumes, and weights. In this learning area, children become little scientists. They ask questions and wonder why as they investigate and gather information. For many, sand and water activities are relaxing and stress-reducing. Very active children tend to calm down while running their fingers through sand or pouring from one container to another.

- Some classrooms combine the Sensory and Discovery area with the Science area due to space limitations.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.

“Understanding the mechanics of the writing system has a moderate correlation with reading in the primary grades. Writing originates from drawing and is supported by make-believe play.”

*TS GOLD® Objectives for
Development and Learning
ODL 106*



2.3K: WRITING

The Writing area supports the development of the stages of writing. As emergent writing skills develop, young learners often mimic what they see in the world around them such as writing a shopping list and making notes. An important component of literacy involves connecting that print carries meaning.

- This area is separate from the Art area.
- Writing materials (paper and pencils) are available in all learning areas.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- See the ASELD document on page 268 for the Stages of Writing.

2.3L: READING/LIBRARY

Helping young children develop an enjoyable relationship with books is a vital step towards early reading skills. Early childhood professionals have an important role in preparing a child for lifelong literacy. Children need access to books to develop book handling skills, such as holding a book right-side up and progressing from front to back. Joining a child in this area to read a book together supports the child’s understanding that written word can be spoken. Reading to a child is also a vital step in building vocabulary in children, which has a direct correlation to later literacy. The Library is in a quiet section of the room with comfortable furnishings.

- The Library area has class-made books displayed.
- Additional language materials should be available such as: puppets, felt/flannel board story characters, and stuffed animals to enhance storytelling experiences.
- A minimum of one face-out display storage unit is required for visibility and easy access to books. Additional books should be organized in baskets or bins by themes or genres and rotated on a regular basis.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 158-165, for additional information on Emergent Reading.

Science is not just a set of facts for children to learn; it is a process or a way of thinking and understanding the world.

ASELD



2.3M: SCIENCE/NATURE

Young children are curious about the natural world around them. Children need safe, hands-on opportunities to explore their surroundings using their senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. By exploring materials, children learn about weight, shape, color, and how things work, move, and change.

- To support children's curiosity, a teacher-directed science experience occurs at least once a week.
- Reference books related to themes or seasons should be available.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 100-109, for additional information on Science Concepts.

2.3N: MATH

Just as early childhood teachers support children's literacy, they use many opportunities during the day to promote competence in math. Young learners need many hands-on opportunities to explore quantity, size, and shape to build the foundation for later abstract mathematical learning. Math encourages children to analyze problems, create solutions, and encourages alternative approaches to problems. Through this process, essential skills are developed that will aid in school and lifelong success.

- Some classrooms combine the math and manipulative areas due to space limitations.
- Appendix P has specific requirements for items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 123-144, for additional information on Mathematical Thinking.

Research tells us that children's early math achievement is a bigger predictor of school success than reading!

ASELD

2.3O: OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT/OUTDOOR PLAY

As children demonstrate balance, coordination, and strength, they are showing school readiness skills to do things such as balance in a chair and pay attention. The outdoor learning environment is an extension of the indoor classroom. Children develop their large muscle coordination through active outdoor play and need many opportunities to develop competence and confidence in their gross motor skills. While children develop many of their physical capabilities through play, they also need planned movement activities and structured physical skill development opportunities. The outdoor play area is arranged so children can be supervised by sight and sound at all times. Teachers practice active supervision, meaning they are moving around supervising, engaging in play with the children as well as monitoring all play.

- Sixty minutes of gross motor activity is required daily which may be broken into two blocks of time throughout the day if needed. At least 30 of the 60 minutes should be outdoors.
- A minimum of 60 square feet per child (1,080 square feet total) on the playground.
 - An age-appropriate, fenced-in, playground with shade should be made available each day and cannot be shared

Young children are able to focus and pay better attention during and after physical activity.

ASELD

with younger or older children at time of play.

- Children should not be denied access to outdoor play due to weather conditions.
- Provisions are made to ensure that children have the proper outerwear to engage in outside play year-round. For example, raincoats for drizzly days and coats/gloves for colder days.
- Other opportunities for outside activities are encouraged (e.g. tricycle trail, green space, gardens, art, music, etc.)
- Children with disabilities should be provided opportunities to participate in the outdoor curriculum and activities.
- The OSR has at least one certified Early Childhood Playground Safety inspector per region to provide guidance and resources for safe environments and playground quality enhancement.
- See Appendix Q for Playground Safety and Recommendations and Appendix P for Gross Motor items.
- Refer to the ASELD, pages 185-187, for additional information on Physical Development

2.4: POSITIVE, SOCIAL EMOTIONAL APPROACHES

Children need safe nurturing environments to learn to interact with others. When challenging behaviors arise, the impact is far-reaching not only for the teacher and child, but also the classroom community and their families. Preschool expulsions and suspensions have long-term implications. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns that “when young children are expelled or suspended from childcare or early education settings, they are deprived of both the positive opportunities offered by early care and education and the opportunity for remediation” (Williams & Yogman, 2023).

2.4A: CHILD BEHAVIOR

The OSR supports interventions for promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children in FCPK by:

- Promoting consistent community, positive experiences, and clear expectations of acceptable behavior.
- Working with program directors and teachers to create a plan for scenarios involving serious social-emotional and behavioral concerns.
- Collaborating with multi-disciplinary teams that promote the social emotional well-being of children.

In the event challenges occur, the goal is to keep everyone safe and help all children build skills to be successful. In severe instances, when a child is in danger of harming themselves or others, then safety, empathy, understanding, and other specific strategies are needed to support the child through the challenges. Coaches should be contacted when challenging behaviors arise in the classroom to seek additional resources for support.

Parents should be notified immediately of a challenging behavior incident and a conference scheduled. During this conference:

- Teachers should share effective, positive behavior strategies with the child’s parents to ensure continuity between the classroom and the child’s home.

- Program directors and teachers collaborate with the coach to request support from the CONNECT team and Mental Health Consultation.
 - To request support for the classroom or a specific child with behavior challenges, the teacher and/or program director must communicate the need to the coach and/or region director.
 - The coach or region director completes the request on behalf of the teacher.
 - A parent seeking support may complete a confidential request which goes directly to a mental health team member. The link is found on the ADECE website.

FCKP Program providers and teachers:

- Should never use any form of physical or mental punishment. This includes, but is not limited to paddling, striking, pulling, pushing, swatting, placing hands on, hitting, shaming, or threatening.
- Should not impose time-out or isolation, threats, closing learning areas and/or withdrawal of playtime.
- Should not use behavior charts, stoplights, and/or other displays of behavior documentation publicly to shame children.
- Should not use stickers, candy, treasure boxes, and other extrinsic rewards for the purpose of singling out children to reward good behavior. Refer to ASELD pages 47-61 for additional information on Social Emotional Development.

2.4B: MODIFIED DAY

- In some instances, it may be necessary for a child to have a modified school day to be successful. If a child is placed on modified attendance, this is a temporary placement. The goal is to ultimately have the child fully return to the classroom. Programs must contact their coach and region director to discuss requests for modified attendance and the submission of the necessary documentation (Request for Modified Attendance Laserfiche form).
- Any form of modified attendance (i.e., less than 6.5 hours of instructional time) requires prior approval from the region director.
- Modified attendance should be used in conjunction with child-specific interventions and documented responses to the intervention. Child-specific interventions may be provided in the form of home visiting and/or mental health consultation and should be discussed with the coach.



“Alabama’s economic future depends on early investment in its kids,” said NIEER Director Steve Barnett. “Ensuring that every child has access to high-quality preschool can help pave the way for their success in school, on the job, and in Alabama’s communities.” ADECE website

Section 3: The Alabama First Class Pre-K Program Administration

Successful FCPK program administration ensures that developmentally appropriate practices are maintained, qualified teachers are in place, and that all children have access to quality care and instruction. Administering a FCPK program encompasses equal access, daily operations, and fiscal responsibility. The OSR expects quality care and education for Alabama’s four-year-old children and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars. Therefore, adhering to the FCPK Guidelines is critical to staying in good standing and in partnership. Non-adherence to the FCPK Guidelines puts a program at risk of disciplinary action, including but not limited to, the termination of funding by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education’s Office of School Readiness.

3.1: FIRST CLASS PRE-K PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Program directors are essential to the administration of a quality FCPK program. They are tasked with adhering to all aspects of the FCPK Guidelines. The OSR offers support and professional development throughout the year. Monitors regularly meet with program directors to review expectations in support of quality assurance and fiscal management including, but not limited to, the review of financial documentation of the program expenditures. Further guidance is given in the budget section of these guidelines.

It is the expectation that the program director:

- Ensures that their program has well-developed policies in place that are aligned with FCPK guidance

- Regularly visits and observe the FCPK classroom to ensure FCPK Guideline compliance
- Adheres to the FCPK credentialing process
- Maintains staff management and development
- Attends required trainings throughout the year
- Manages all FCPK data systems (i.e. Foundant, AlaCEED, ECEDData, TS GOLD®)

3.2: FUNDING AWARDS

The OSR funds FCPK classrooms in a variety of delivery systems (public schools, private childcares, faith-based programs, community partnerships, etc.) through a competitive funding process. All funds granted to programs are to provide a fully enrolled, high-quality pre-K classroom experience. Funding is contingent on adherence to FCPK Guidelines.

- Programs should have at least two month's operating costs in reserve as a sign of fiscal health. Fiscal health of the grantee organization is an important condition of receipt of state funds. ADECE reserves the right to assess fiscal health and risk of current and potential grantees.
- All programs are expected to receive and spend funds in accordance with state requirements.
- Funds are disbursed in three or four payments based on program choice.
- FCPK programs will pay the lead and auxiliary teacher salaries and make required purchases according to established guidelines even if expenditures must be made prior to the first check disbursement.

3.2A: SELECTION AND AWARDING OF FIRST CLASS PRE-K CLASSROOMS

Interested applicants, new or existing, will go through an application process.

The criterion for selection includes:

- The need for four-year-old access in the community served by the applicant.
- The ability to offer high-quality early learning and care as stated in the FCPK guidelines.
- The program design and existing suitable facility.
- Demonstrated sound fiscal management practices.
- DHR licensing if applicable.

Process for awarding:

- Approved programs will receive electronic notification via email of the funding decision. Please note that such notification may come from the ADECE funding management system and may be caught in funded organization's spam filter. Efforts will be made to contact the recipient organization, but it is incumbent on the recipient to access the funding system for updates and notifications.
- In order for the State of Alabama and the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education to issue a payment:
 - A valid Vendor Code and Address Code must be provided through the State of Alabama Accounting and Resource System (STAARS) Vendor Self Service Portal.
 - Direct deposit of First Class Pre-K funds is required for all grantees.
- The legal signatory for the program entity must sign and submit the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The grantee organization is responsible for ensuring the building administrator and other relevant parties within the grantee organization receive copies of the MOU. The MOU may be accessed by the grantee organization's designated official to download copies as needed.
- The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) must endorse the agreement.

3.2B BUDGET GUIDELINES

Funds are to be used for the expressed purpose of meeting quality benchmarks. If funds are not utilized for the intended purposes, the recipient will be in non-compliance. It is important that programs demonstrate sound fiscal management. The following guidelines have been established to support programs in meeting the expectation:

- All private childcare providers will have a separate bank account solely dedicated for FCPK electronic deposits and expenditures. This account should be set up before first check disbursements are made and should be used solely for FCPK transactions.
- All budgets are completed and submitted by the program administrator in accordance with the timeline.
- Any budget change greater than 10% per line item will need approval.
- All expenditures must be documented through the use of the Expenditure Documentation Form within 30 days of expenditure.
- In order to purchase a single item of more than \$300, a Permission to Purchase Laserfiche form will be completed. Grantees must receive permission prior to such purchase or expenditure may be deemed ineligible for OSR funds.

3.2C: TUITION/PARENT FEES

It is the intent of state policy makers that parents do not bear the burden for paying for state funded First Class Pre-K.

- Programs where the state funds are the primary funding source are not allowed to charge tuition, parent fees, nor require monthly donations.
 - No child may be denied enrollment due to the family's inability to pay requested tuition/parent fees in programs where FCPK funds are a supplemental funding stream. All children must receive the same opportunities during the pre-K day regardless of ability and/or willingness to pay tuition/fees.
- No additional fees (other than meals) may be required of any child (e.g., registration, uniforms, field trips, curriculum fees, classroom supplies, photographs, t-shirts).
- Voluntary donations and/or supplies may be requested. No child may be denied participation if families do not give requested donations and/or supplies.

3.3: PROGRAM DELIVERY

A successful program delivery has sound practices, adheres to licensing requirements and operating timelines. Children learn best in programs that are an extension of their community, where they feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Early childhood professionals are able to provide support to the family and create a safe, caring learning environment when they have an understanding of a child's development.

3.3A: DHR LICENSING

Programs must hold a current DHR license and abide by DHR Performance Standards. For licensing information, contact the Department of Human Resources Child Care Services at dhr.alabama.gov.

- Public school systems, military schools, colleges, and universities are not required to be licensed by DHR. However, all programs receiving OSR funding must adhere to DHR safety requirements for both the classroom and the playground.

- FCPK programs that are suspended or placed on probation by DHR are automatically suspended by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Office of School Readiness.
 - Program directors are required to report such suspension via the DHR Probation/Suspension Notification Laserfiche form within 24 hours of notification by DHR. If the ADECE receives notice of violations and/or probation before notified by the grantee, such grantee may be deemed ineligible for continuation of funding.
 - Funds are forfeited during the period of the DHR probation or suspension.
 - Funding is not automatically reinstated if the program’s license is reinstated by DHR.
 - The OSR reserves its right to review the program upon reinstatement of the DHR license to determine whether to reinstate funding, continue the OSR suspension, or terminate funding.

3.3B: CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

It is required by law for anyone associated with the FCPK program to report suspected abuse or neglect. See full text of Alabama’s Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect reporting law in Appendix N. The program director must notify the OSR director in writing immediately anytime there is an open abuse or neglect investigation involving the FCPK classroom or any classroom at the site and when resolution is completed.

3.3C: DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

FCPK programs are expected to complete, submit, and file all required documents. Examples of required documentation include student information, teacher credentials, assessments, health records, budgets, etc. Failure to maintain and submit required documentation places a program out of compliance and may result in disciplinary action.

- Documents and records, for each program year, are retained by grantee for six years after the end of the grant year per the requirements outlined in the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Records Disposition Authority.
- OSR documentation is confidential and must be stored in a locked, secure, and compliant manner. Child records must be kept confidential in compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations.
- The ADECE Incident Report Laserfiche form is completed within 24 hours of a serious accident, injury, or medical situation.
- Appendices contain a timeline of required online and on-site documentation as well as specific guidance on document retention.
- Programs are required to have a photo/video policy in place prior to the beginning of the school year. Copies of the policy containing parent signatures indicating agreement/disagreement with the policy must be kept on site and parents/guardians must be given a copy of the policy as well.
- Programs shall distribute the ADECE Photo Release Form, Appendix V, to all FCPK families and affiliated staff. Signed forms must be collected and retained on-site for documentation and compliance purposes.

Complete and accurate recording of information standardizes processes, reduces oversights, and supports consistency in providing quality care for children.

3.3D: ACCREDITATION

The OSR encourages all programs to obtain accreditation from professional organizations. If a FCPK Program is accredited by a professional accrediting organization, please give accreditation documentation to your monitor within 30 days of the program start date.

3.3E: OPERATING TIMELINE

The FCPK program provides high-quality, developmentally appropriate activities, and instruction in the following timeline:

- First day of attendance begins no later than September 1. Contact region director for support in beginning school structures as needed.
- Full enrollment in each classroom is 18 students by September 30.
- Head Start classrooms should follow the current *Head Start Performance Standards* enrollment requirements.
- The child’s instructional day begins no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and runs at least 6.5 hours. Drop off and pick up are not included in the 6.5-hour instructional day. Providers may choose to run longer than the 6.5 hour day to meet the needs of parents and families they serve.
- Classrooms operate 5 days per week and OSR recommends 180 days per year. (Each classroom is funded for 187 days to include 7 days of professional development for staff.)
- All delivery systems are encouraged to coordinate with the local school calendar.
- Days missed due to inclement weather must be made up unless a state of emergency was declared for the corresponding school system in which the site exists. Days may be added to the end of the year or taken from previously identified breaks i.e., spring break, etc. A revised calendar with dates must be submitted to the monitor and provided to all participating parents/families.
- E-Learning days are inclusive of instruction and assessment opportunities. Please contact your coach for specific, acceptable e-learning lesson plans. It is the intent of the OSR that e-learning is an exception and only occurs on rare occasions.
- OSR does not require, provide, or fund extended day services. Grantees may choose to operate such wrap-around services and may fund these activities through parent fees or other funding sources as available. Extended day may provide families with the tools to keep children enrolled in the First Class Pre-K program.

3.3F: MEALS AND SNACKS

Lunch and snack time must be in the daily schedule. Programs may offer meals or parents may provide meals or snacks. Children who have healthy eating patterns are more likely to perform better socially and academically. FCPK providers are strongly encouraged to participate in The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

3.3G: ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

First Class Pre-K program providers must adhere to state licensing standards and federal and/or state law when administering medication to children (e.g., the Baby Douglas Law).

3.3H: TRANSPORTATION

Individual program sites that choose to provide transportation must adhere to local transportation guidelines, laws, and DHR Performance Standards, including restraints, harnesses, and/or car seats.

3.3I: UNIFORMS

Centers with uniform policies may request that parents dress children in uniforms. FCPK program directors are urged to provide uniforms for those who cannot afford them or work with community resources to secure uniforms.

3.3J: REQUIRED HEALTH SCREENINGS

All FCPK Providers must offer on-site physical, hearing, vision, and dental screenings.

- Screenings are to be completed by October 31.
 - Screenings are strongly encouraged for any new children who enroll in the classroom after the initial screening deadline has occurred.
 - If a teacher has concerns about a child's physical health prior to the screening, it is strongly suggested to schedule a conference to discuss concerns with the child's parent or guardian.
- Screenings must be offered by trained professionals onsite. Programs may choose to partner with local providers in their area.
- Health screenings should be documented on Appendix E. However, other forms may be accepted as long as they contain the same information.
- The Health Screenings Permission and Review Form (Appendix D) is used for parental/guardian permission for screenings and acknowledgement of receiving results.
 - Parents or guardians have the option to opt-out of all or some of the screenings offered.
 - If a child has been screened by the family's health care providers within the last year, the parent may attach a copy to Appendix D.
 - Teachers review screeners at parent conferences and provide appropriate resources.

3.3K: DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

Developmental Screening and Assessments are components of high-quality early childhood programs. They provide valuable information about each child's interests, strengths, and needs. Developmental screenings involve a partnership with families to provide a snapshot of a child's motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills. Assessment is an ongoing process that includes observation and provides information about development over time.

OSR screenings and assessments are based on current practices/needs. They may change as needed to support children and families.

- The Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) - measures development in 5 domains: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social.
 - Completed by parent/guardian either online or hard copies.
 - Completed hard copies are entered into the ASQ system by teachers.
 - It is the responsibility of the program to provide computer access and assistance to

families if needed.

- ASQ-3 results are shared with families.
- Teachers share results during the 1st semester family conference.
- Scores in the gray/black areas on the screener will be shared by the teacher with the parents as soon as possible. The Universal Referral Form (Appendix R) will be shared at this time. Teachers email or fax completed forms to the intake specialist with the Alabama Partnership for Children. Coaches and/or monitors assist with this process.
- The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers, 2nd Edition (DECA-P2) is used in FCPK as a strength-based approach to promote resilience in children.
- The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 5th Edition (PPVT)
 - Administered annually by ADECE staff to randomly selected FCPK classrooms/ students throughout the state.
 - PPVT assessment is utilized to show growth in the area of receptive vocabulary and is a component of on-going research.
- TS GOLD[®] is the state assessment tool used to measure child growth and outcomes on the state's early learning standards. Then under that, an indented bullet that reads: TS GOLD[®] data is taken throughout the year and finalized for Fall, Winter, and Spring Checkpoint periods.

3.4: RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

The FCPK program must be open and non-discriminatory. A public random selection drawing will be used to choose the children in the FCPK classroom unless otherwise mandated by Federal law.

3.4A: EQUAL ACCESS

Children cannot be denied participation on the basis of income, sex, race, color, or national origin, or disability (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964): (TITLE IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title 11 of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs. Income may not be used as a consideration for enrollment unless a program is federally mandated to do so.

The McKinney-Vento Act, reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, applies to homeless children attending LEA-administered preschools. 1 42 USC §11432(g)(i)(F)(i); US Dept. of Education (July 2016). Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance, N-4. States must ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the state or local educational agency (SEA or LEA), as provided to other children. 42 USC §11432(g)(i)(F)(i). Children experiencing homelessness must receive priority and be provided a seat in the classroom. These children are not placed in random selection.

Random selection is used to ensure equal access for enrollment. For the following situations, contact your region director for guidance:

- Federal programs, such as Head Start classrooms, which must follow federal enrollment requirements.
- Programs that currently have 3-year-old children, that will be age eligible for First Class Pre-K.

“Systematic, ongoing child assessment provides information on children’s development and learning. It helps inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualizing for each child.”

Head Start ECLKC

3.4B: RECRUITMENT

Notices for recruitment must be publicly posted at least one month in advance of the random selection drawing in locations such as childcare centers, pediatrician offices, health departments, Children Policy Council meetings, newspapers, and/or social media, etc. where appropriate.



Timeline of Recruitment Events for Existing Classrooms

**Newly selected program sites will be notified of their timeline during the grant award process.*

January 15 - Pre-Registration Opens

- Programs should advertise by placing recruitment notices around the community. Recruitment notices must include: (a) date, time, location and required information needed for application, (b) non-discriminatory and equal opportunity statements, and (c) the date, time, and place of the random selection drawing (the OSR will send a flyer to all program directors).
- Programs will conduct pre-registration via the online AlaCEED platform after recruiting at least one calendar month prior to the random selection drawing. (See Appendix S) The program is responsible for providing computer access and assistance to families if needed.

March 1-31 - Random Selection

- Programs will hold a public random selection drawing. Social media platforms should not be used. Programs should verify all pre-registrants prior to start of the drawing. Contact region director for guidance.
- After children are drawn to fill all available positions during the random selection process, the remaining pre-registered children will continue to be drawn and numbered in the order they are drawn. This will be the order of the waiting list when new children are added to the classroom.
- Unique considerations for random selection:
 - If a program has multiple birth siblings (twins, triplets, etc.) all names should be placed in the drawing separately.
 - If one multiple birth sibling is drawn, all multiple birth siblings are added to the classroom.
 - In circumstances of children with shared addresses, please consult the region director.

April 1-30 - Child Status

- April 2-15 - Program directors mark status
 - Children selected are marked in AlaCEED as “pending.”
 - Children drawn after classroom is filled are marked in AlaCEED as “waitlisted.”
- April 16-18 - Emails to Families
 - Automated emails are sent notifying families of *pending* or *waitlisted status*. Pre-K programs that want to opt out of automated emails must notify region director in writing by April 14th.
 - *Families* are asked to accept or decline the *pending* position by contacting the program director within 7 days.

- April 19 - Change *status* in AlaCEED
 - *Completed* if the position is accepted and assign to classroom.
 - *Dropped* if the position is declined.
- May 15 - No student should be left *enrolled* after this date.

3.4C: MAINTAINING ENROLLMENT AND WAITING LISTS

Recruitment and advertising for the classroom should continue throughout the year in order to maintain enrollment and waitlist. If a child withdraws from the classroom at any time during the year, the next child on the waiting list should be added to the classroom within 3 school days.

The OSR expects that all classrooms will maintain full enrollment throughout the school year. Programs must apply for an enrollment waiver if a classroom has fewer than 18 children. Classes with continued low enrollment may have disciplinary actions.

3.5: TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN PLANS

Early childhood providers, schools, and community agencies work together to create seamless kindergarten transitions. To help guide this work, the OSR requires all funded FCPK programs, to use the Alabama Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit (ATKT) to develop their annual transition plans. (*See Appendix T) Once plans are fully developed, programs should submit a copy of the transition plan to their respective monitor.

3.6: PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION NONCOMPLIANCE

The FCPK Guidelines have been created and published by the OSR to ensure that programs provide a safe and high-quality learning environment for the students in Alabama’s FCPK programs. If programs do not use state and federal funds as outlined in the FCPK Guidelines and MOU, these programs will be in noncompliance and at risk of losing funding. Disciplinary action will be imposed on pre-K classrooms that do not meet FCPK Guidelines and stipulations.

Noncompliance may result in a warning, probation, suspension, and/or immediate termination. Depending on the type of non-compliance, some disciplinary actions may rise to the level of probation, suspension, or immediate termination of partnership. The disciplinary actions may or may not be used in sequential order. The determination of the disciplinary action may be determined by the OSR director and region director.

3.6A: WARNING

When noncompliance is found, programs will be notified they are out of compliance in a memo, letter, or other means of communication by the region director.

3.6B: PROBATION

On-going and repeated noncompliance issues may lead to programs being placed on probation for a specified amount of time and/or incur a fine. During this time, the FCPK team will provide continued onsite support.

3.6C: SUSPENSION

Suspension may occur when a program has been placed on probation by OSR due to repeated occurrences of noncompliance. No funds will be disbursed to a program during suspension proceedings.

- Grounds for Immediate Suspension:
 - First Class Pre-K programs that are placed on probation by DHR are automatically suspended by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Office of School Readiness.
 - Program directors are required to report probation via the DHR Probation/Suspension Notification Laserfiche form within 24 hours of notification by DHR.
 - Funds are forfeited during the period. Funding is not automatically reinstated once DHR probation is lifted. The OSR reserves its right to review the program once DHR probation is lifted to determine whether to reinstate funding, continue the OSR suspension for a period of time, or terminate funding.
 - Immediate suspension may apply to DHR exempt programs in cases of child endangerment.
 - LEA program directors are required to report child endangerment to their region director in writing within 24 hours of incident.
 - Depending on the LEA's course of action, funds may be forfeited during the period of the LEA's investigation. Funding is not automatically reinstated. The OSR reserves its right to review the program to determine whether to reinstate funding, continue the OSR suspension for a period of time, or terminate funding.
 - The region director will notify the program director, in writing, of his/her recommendation to suspend funding.
 - The suspension notice shall include:
 - The reason(s) for the proposed suspension
 - The effective date of the proposed suspension
 - Information which states that the program has the opportunity to submit written material in opposition to the recommended suspension and/or request a hearing

3.6D: TERMINATION/DEFUNDING

Programs may be defunded, and partnership immediately terminated if violations are considered severe.

- Grounds for Immediate Termination:
 - The Department of Early Childhood Education may immediately terminate funding in cases of child endangerment or gross negligence. Termination of pre-K sites is immediate when the facility and/or campus is found to pose any safety risk to the children. Aid will be terminated, and students will be removed from the facility. Thereafter, all unused funds must be refunded to the ADECE. Equipment, furniture, classroom materials and supplies as well as playground equipment shall be returned to ADECE if purchased with First Class Pre-K funds, and grantee will incur the cost of removal and delivery of said items. Alternatively, the program may keep said items and refund cost of said items to the department.
- Funding may be terminated for any or all, but not limited to, the following reasons:

- Child neglect and endangerment
- The program has misused or lost program funds.
- The program is no longer a licensed center.
- The program provides false data in submitted reports.
- The program has failed to comply with the required guidelines and reporting requirements that are outlined in the First Class Pre-K Guidelines.
- The program has failed to correct deficiencies identified by the assigned monitor in an evaluation or documented during a site visit, in a timely manner.
- Termination Recommendation:
 - The OSR director will notify the program, in writing, of his/her recommendation to terminate funding.
 - A formal hearing may be scheduled upon request. If the program director does not appear at hearing, the hearing process will continue. The OSR hearing committee may terminate funding.
 - The decision of the hearing committee is final. No funds will be disbursed to a program during termination proceedings.
- Formal Hearing Regarding Termination
 - When a recommendation for termination of funding is made, a formal hearing may be requested by the program. The presiding officer (Secretary of Early Childhood Education) shall conduct a full and fair hearing upon request, maintain order, and make a sufficient record of the facts and issues. To accomplish these ends, the presiding officer shall have all powers authorized by law and may make all procedural and evidentiary rulings necessary for the conduct of the hearing. The hearing shall be open to the public unless the presiding officer for cause shown, otherwise determines.
- Formal Hearing Process:
 - The formal hearing committee will be composed of the Secretary of the ADECE, the OSR director or designee, and the region director.
 - The region director and program director are entitled to present their cases by oral and/or documentary evidence, to submit rebuttal evidence, and to conduct such examination and cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of all facts bearing on the issues. The issues shall be those stated in the filed notice.
 - The decision of the formal hearing committee regarding suspension or termination of funds will be based on evidence provided during the hearing process and made within five (5) business days after the conclusion of the formal hearing.
 - The written decision of the formal hearing committee will be promptly transmitted via certified mail to the program director.

If a decision is made to terminate, thereafter, all unused funds must be refunded to the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. Equipment, furniture, classroom materials and supplies as well as playground equipment must be returned to the department if purchased with First Class Pre-K funds, and the program will incur the cost of removal and delivery of said items. Alternatively, the program can keep said items and refund cost of said items to the department.

