

6M-8.621 Program Assessment Requirements for the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program.

(1) Definitions. The following definitions are applicable to all rules under Chapter 6M-8, F.A.C.

(a) “Classroom” means a private provider’s or public school’s VPK class that includes a child in the VPK program, as defined in Rule 6M-8.100, F.A.C.

(b) “Composite Program Assessment Score” means an average of all Division of Early Learning (DEL)-adopted program assessment dimension scores from VPK classrooms, omitting the negative climate score if included in the tool.

(c) “Contract Minimum Threshold” means the minimum composite program assessment score, as defined in subsection (4) of this rule, that a provider must achieve on the program assessment to be eligible to contract for the VPK program pursuant to Section 1002.68(5)(a), F.S.

(d) “Early Learning Coalition” or “coalition” means the entity charged with administering the VPK Education Program pursuant to Sections 1002.53, 1002.68(2), and 1002.73, F.S. “Early Learning Coalition” or “coalition” includes applicable Florida Department of Education (FDOE) contractors.

(e) “Negative Climate Score” means the measure of the level of expressed negativity shown by teachers, children, or both in a classroom.

(f) “Observer” means a certified reliable prekindergarten observer that meets the requirements outlined by the vendor to conduct a classroom observation with validity and reliability.

(g) “Program Assessment” refers to the measurement of the quality of teacher-child interactions, including emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support for children ages three (3) to five (5) years in accordance with Section 1002.68(2), F.S.

(h) “School-year program” means a school-year prekindergarten program consisting of five-hundred and forty (540) instructional hours delivered by a private provider under Section 1002.55, F.S., or by a public school under Section 1002.63, F.S.

(i) “Summer program” means a summer prekindergarten program consisting of three-hundred (300) instructional hours delivered by a private provider or public school under Section 1002.61, F.S.

(2) Program Assessment Requirements. Beginning with the 2022-2023 VPK program year, all private and public school VPK providers must annually participate in a program assessment of each VPK classroom for both the school-year and summer VPK programs. All program assessments must occur during VPK instructional hours and with the ELC-approved lead VPK instructor present. All program assessments must occur with at least one (1) enrolled VPK student present.

(3) Program Assessment Administration. Early Learning Coalitions shall be responsible for the administration of the program assessments.

(a) All program assessments will be conducted by coalition observers or approved FDOE vendor observers.

1. For school-year programs, program assessments shall be conducted no earlier than fifteen (15) instructional days after the program start date.

2. For summer programs, program assessments shall be conducted no earlier than five (5) instructional days after the program start date.

3. Each coalition must ensure all program assessments, including second program assessments, are conducted before the scheduled program end date.

(b) All observers shall have a current certification required by the vendor to conduct a classroom observation with validity and reliability. Only coalition staff, FDOE vendors, or coalition designees may conduct classroom observations. Observers shall have the ability to speak, understand, and write in the language of the classrooms they are observing.

(c) Observers shall enter and save all dimension scores and notes into the FDOE-approved vendor system within three (3) business days of conducting the classroom observation.

(d) The FDOE shall notify private and public school VPK providers via the Provider Portal of their score for each observed VPK classroom within fourteen (14) calendar days of the observation being completed. An observation is considered complete, when the observer has entered the classroom observation data into the FDOE-defined system.

(e) VPK classrooms organized as a multi-class group, as defined in Rule 6M-8.400, F.A.C., shall have one (1) classroom observation completed, and the resulting classroom observation score shall be duplicated for each classroom in the Composite Program Assessment Score calculation.

(4) Contract Minimum Threshold. The minimum Composite Program Assessment Score a VPK program must achieve is 4.00. School-year and summer VPK programs are considered separately. For private and public school VPK provider’s programs that

score below the Contract Minimum Threshold, the private or public school provider may not participate in the VPK Education Program beginning in the consecutive program year and thereafter until the private or public school provider meets the Contract Minimum Threshold.

(a) Private and public school VPK programs below the Contract Minimum Threshold based on their Composite Program Assessment Score may request from the Early Learning Coalition a second program assessment within the same program type and year at the provider's expense. Providers must provide payment to the Early Learning Coalition for the second program assessment prior to the program assessment being conducted.

(b) A single classroom will be observed, and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score if the VPK instructor previously observed is still actively teaching in the classroom being observed. If the previously observed instructor is not active in the classroom and the newly assigned instructor is hired after the previous program assessment was completed, the single classroom will be observed, and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score.

(c) A second program assessment must be requested from the coalition in writing within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Composite Program Assessment Score.

(5) Frequency.

(a) In the event of a change of ownership, sale, sale of assets, conveyance of ownership, or other transfer of ownership interest that requires a private or public school provider to execute a new VPK Provider Contract per subsection 6M-8.301(9), F.A.C., the provider may request to retain the existing Composite Program Assessment Score if at least 50% of VPK classrooms and their assigned instructor who were previously assessed remain the same. If the provider elects not to retain the existing score, the provider is required to obtain a program assessment pursuant to subsection (2) of this rule. If 30% or fewer of the VPK program hours remain at the time of the ownership change, a program assessment is not required until the consecutive program year.

(b) Observations conducted in VPK classrooms during participation in the School Readiness Program Assessment in accordance with Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., that meet requirements as defined in Section 1002.68(2), F.S., may be used for meeting contract minimum threshold requirements, provided the observation was conducted within the VPK program hours.

(6) Composite Program Assessment Score Calculation.

(a) All the active VPK classrooms registered in the Provider Portal for each private and public school provider must be observed to calculate the Composite Program Assessment Score.

(b) The Composite Program Assessment Score shall be calculated using the combined average of the dimension scores, excluding negative climate scores, from each VPK classroom's observation and will be rounded to two (2) decimal places.

(7) Program Assessment Administration Notifications.

(a) Early Learning Coalitions or their designees shall provide notification via email to private and public school providers of upcoming program assessments at least two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled program assessment date.

(b) If the provider experiences a temporary closure, as defined in Rule 6M-8.204, F.A.C., on the day it is scheduled to be assessed, the provider shall request to reschedule the program assessment within two (2) weeks of the original program assessment.

(c) If a VPK instructor has an extenuating circumstance which causes an absence from a classroom on the day it is scheduled to be observed, the observer shall reschedule the program assessment within two (2) weeks of the original program assessment date. A provider should notify the observer as soon as the provider is aware of any circumstance which would cause an instructor to be absent from a VPK classroom that the instructor is scheduled to be in for an observation.

Rulemaking Authority 1002.79, 1002.82(2)(n) FS. Law Implemented 1002.68(2), 1002.73(3) FS. History—New 9-20-22.