

Pre-kindergarten Approval Guidance

Updated May 1, 2019

Annual approval is no longer needed as the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) will conduct yearly desk audits. School districts will be notified in the Annual Desk Audit Monitoring memo if any changes are required. Please be sure to keep STARS and NDTEACH updated with your pre-kindergarten information.

In order to initiate a new pre-kindergarten approval process, the interested school district must submit the [SFN 60869](#) School District Pre-kindergarten Program Approval form along with the following items:

- A copy of the school board minutes documenting school board approval of the program
- A copy of the most recent fire marshal's safety report

Once the approval form and documentation are reviewed, grade level organization will be updated, and the program will be approved by the NDDPI to operate as a pre-kindergarten program.

To assist you in completing the approval form, the NDDPI has created the following guidance:

Section A: Highly Qualified Teacher(s): The NDDPI requires that early childhood programs employ highly qualified staff. The Education Standards & Practices Board (ESPB) requires that to be highly qualified, the teacher must have one or more of the following:

- B-3 license;
- Elementary education major and a kindergarten endorsement. A plan of study may be granted for the kindergarten endorsement which will allow a teacher two years to complete the required coursework for the endorsement;
- Elementary education major and an early childhood endorsement;
- Elementary education major and a minor in early childhood education;
- K-8 and K-6 licenses (both K-8 and K-6 licenses are no longer issued by ESPB; however, those who already have a K-8 license may teach pre-kindergarten); or
- If you have held a valid North Dakota teaching license for at least two years and would like to teach in a content area that you are not currently highly qualified for, you may be able to take the Praxis test to become highly qualified.

Be sure to enter highly qualified teacher information on your MISO3 in STARS. For any questions regarding these qualifications, please contact ESPB at (701) 328-9641.

Section B: Board Approval: Pre-kindergarten programs within the public school system will enter the date of board approval and submit school board minutes approving the grade reconfiguration. Programs, which are separate from the public school systems, will enter the date of agency approval.

Section C: Fire Inspection Report: Enter the date of your most recent fire and safety report completed by a fire marshal or city fire department.

- If your pre-kindergarten program is located outside of your school building, a new fire inspection report must be submitted.
- If your program resides in the school building, please submit the most recent fire inspection report.

Section D: Program Operations: The NDDPI requires programs operate at a minimum of 400 hours over the course of 32 weeks to meet state requirements. Please enter the days per week, hours per week, or both.

Section E: Assurances: Provide a brief description for each assurance.

- Description that your program is willing to admit children of all learning abilities into the program.
- Description that ensures use of the North Dakota Early Learning Standards.
- The NDCC requires 10 hours of research-based parental involvement per year. Please list all activities your program incorporates to reach 10 hours such as Gearing Up for Kindergarten, in-class parent reading participation, parent workshops, field trip involvement, etc.
- Describe that if using Title I funds, the program meets the Head Start Education Program Performance Standards. The [Head Start Education Program Performance Standards](#) address how programs must provide high quality early education and child development services, including for children with disabilities, that promote children's success in school. The Head Start Program Performance Standards are the foundation on which programs design and deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness of children from low-income families. For additional guidance, please see our website.

Please note: Parent/Teacher conferences, parent meetings, PTO, assessment meetings, or open houses do not demonstrate the NDDPI's approved research-based parental involvement.

Section F: Funding: The NDDPI voluntarily collects this information for the North Dakota Legislature as they inquire how school districts and other early learning entities financially support their programs. Enter a percentage next to each funding source your program uses. The total of all funding sources should equal 100%. Please answer this question to the best of your knowledge.

Additional Pre-kindergarten Program Guidance

Data Collection: The NDDPI collects pre-kindergarten enrollment data in STARS. All pre-kindergarten students, regardless of how the program is funded, must be enrolled in STARS. Districts that receive the Early Childhood Commerce Grant, please remember to update your enrollment monthly. If you need access to STARS, please contact [Tara Fuhrer](#) at (701) 328-4646.

Enrollment: The NDCC Chapter 15.1-37(d) limits the enrollment to children who have reached the age of four before August 1 in the year of enrollment.

Three Year Olds: Communities across the state are looking to school districts to offer pre-kindergarten to three-year-olds not already served through their individualized education program (IEP). This is allowable through the Department of Human Services. Please contact your local county social services office to speak with the county licenser.

Pre-kindergarten Students Can Participate in NSLP Programs: Pre-kindergarten students enrolled in your school are eligible to participate in school breakfast and school lunch programs. These students are also eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. All students must be allowed to participate if they are in the school during meal times.

If your school offers the After School snack program or Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program (FFVP), the pre-kindergarten-aged students can also participate. If you are thinking of applying for the FFVP, be sure to include the pre-kindergarten-aged students in your enrollment.

If you are running a pre-kindergarten program with a morning snack or milk break, please consider offering breakfast in the classroom instead of the snack/milk. This is a great convenience for the parents instead of thinking about what to send for a snack every day. We also find that when schools with poor breakfast participation start offering breakfast in the classroom, they see nearly 100% participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [Tara Fuhrer](#) at (701) 328-4646.