

**2020-21 VPK Flexible Options
Guidance Highlights
August 25, 2020**

2020-21 School Year VPK Flexible, Innovative Option Application

- This option is an added feature to in-person instruction, but not a replacement. Providers must be open, offering in-person VPK, in order to leverage this innovative option for families who choose it. (There will be special considerations for the counties in Phase 1 of reopening and Monroe County.)
- The Flexible, Innovative Option must align with the school district's approved K-12 Reopening Plan.
- This option is available through December 31, 2020 for VPK providers that submit the Assurances and receive approval to offer the Flexible, Innovative Option.

Submission of Assurance for Approval

Private providers will submit their signed assurances, with the requested additional information, through EFS Mod, to the Office of Early Learning (OEL) and their local early learning coalition (ELC) for review and approval.

1. The required Assurances will be posted to EFS Mod beginning August 26, 2020 for a period of three weeks (until September 17).
2. Providers will complete the assurances and upload any requested documentation by September 17.
3. ELCs and OEL will review the submitted information.
4. Providers will be notified of their status by the ELC.

School districts will submit their signed assurances, with the requested additional information, to OEL for review and approval. The completed assurances document may be sent to melinda.webster@oel.myflorida.com or shan.goff@oel.myflorida.com.

1. The required Assurances will be emailed to the districts.
2. Districts will complete the assurances and provide any requested documentation by September 16.
3. OEL will review the submitted information.
4. Districts and ELCs will be notified their status.

All approved providers will designate the specific VPK classes implementing the approved program in EFS Mod within OEL's prescribed timelines.

Provider Eligibility

- School districts must have an approved K-12 Reopening Plan.
- Private providers must be "in good standing" and have no Class 1 violations within the past two years.

Flexible Innovative Option Hours of Instruction

- VPK providers must ensure that the 2020-21 School Year program delivers the required 540 hours of instruction by qualified staff ([s. 1002.63, F.S.](#)) including daily contact with the enrolled student and their family. The portion of the VPK program implemented through a flexible, innovative model shall not exceed a total of 270 hours. To be eligible, each provider must also offer a face-to-face option for their families.

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Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratio

- The VPK provider may determine the optimal class size for the innovative learning option as long as the class size is composed of at least 4 students but not to exceed 20 students. ([S. 1002.55, F.S.](#) and [s. 1002.63, F.S.](#))
- Student-teacher-ratio currently defined in statute is 1:11, 2:20. Providers should consider the innovative learning option platform and format in use for the appropriate class size that will meet children's needs.

Progress Monitoring Assessment

- VPK Providers must use the VPK Assessment for student progress monitoring. Assessment Period 1 (AP1) will be implemented within the first 30 calendar days of the VPK program's start date. The VPK Assessment will be provided in a virtual format so that teachers can administer the assessment with students participating in an innovative learning option. More information will be provided for providers regarding this assessment format. ([6M-8.620, F.A.C.](#))

Student Enrollment and Attendance

- The VPK provider must allow students attending the flexible, innovative program in fall 2020 to return to the face-to-face delivery model for the remainder of the school year program. The provider will ensure that parents are reminded of the opportunity to withdraw and transfer to another VPK program if they choose to do so.
- Given the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no restriction on how many times a child may reenroll in another VPK program. When a child reenrolls more than once, it is called a subsequent reenrollment exemption.
- The provider must track daily attendance of students in EFS Mod, per the current OEL attendance reporting process. Parents will continue to need to certify attendance complete the monthly attendance form. ([s.1002.71, F.S.](#) and [6M-8.305, F.A.C.](#))

Curriculum

- VPK providers approved to utilize the Flexible, Innovative Option for delivery of instruction have flexibility to use the curriculum, platform or innovated delivery of educational content of their choice. Any materials or content delivered must be aligned with the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4 Years Old to Kindergarten](#) and be developmentally appropriate. ([s. 1002.67, F.S](#))

Health and Safety

- It is strongly recommended SR and VPK providers adhere to the [CDC's guidance](#) for higher-risk populations in face-to-face delivery models and guidance from the [Florida Department of Health](#). More COVID-related information is available from the Department of Children and Families [here](#).

Questions and Answers

Classrooms and Number of Students

1. **Q: Can a classroom be organized so that face-to-face instruction is available along with flexible instruction?**

A: Yes. There does not need to be a separate class for each.

2. **Q: Are VPK providers required to apply to offer the flexible instructional option if currently planning for in-person instruction classrooms only?**

A: No. The VPK Flexible Option is available as an opportunity to apply to offer instruction in another format but is not required.

Providers on Probation and Use of Approved Curriculum

3. **Q: Are providers on probation eligible to apply to offer the VPK Flexible Option?**

A: Yes. A provider on probation may apply if they are “in good standing” with their VPK contract and have no Class 1 violations within the past two years.

4. **Q: If a provider on probation opted to use a curriculum from the approved VPK curriculum list as an improvement plan strategy, must the provider use their approved curriculum with classrooms utilizing the VPK Flexible Option?**

A: Yes. All flexible, innovation options must meet the existing statutory and regulatory requirements.

Class 1 Violations

5. **Q: How is a Class 1 Violation defined?**

A: For counties that are governed by a local licensing agency, a Class 1 Violation designation follows the local licensing agency definition. For all other counties, the state rule applies.

VPK Instructor Qualifications

6. **Q: Must the instructor teaching the VPK Flexible Option classrooms meet the VPK instructor requirements?**

A: Yes. The VPK instructor credential requirement remains unchanged.

School District Approved Reopening Plans

7. **Q: Where are the Department of Education’s approved district reopening plans posted?**

A: The district reopening plans may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/em-response/index.stml>.

Monitoring

8. **Q: Will the ELCs or OEL monitor the VPK Flexible Option programs?**

A: Yes. One of the application assurances requires that the provider will ensure that the ELC and OEL staff will be provided access to the innovative learning program/online platform implementation for monitoring purposes.

Funding

9. **Q: Will additional funding be provided for implementing the VPK Flexible Option?**

A: No. Funding for the VPK program remains the same based on student attendance as recorded in both the VPK in-person model and the VPK Flexible Option model.

Resources

10. **Q: What resources are available to support online supports for providers and families?**

A: Please visit the OEL’s website [here](#) for information on family engagement, online resources and more!