

Using Administrator Documentation to STEP Forward with Data

Van-Kim Lin

Introduction

The [System Transformation for Equitable Preschools \(STEP\) Forward with Data Framework](#) is a tool to help preschool system leaders understand the experiences of preschool-aged children, their families, and early childhood workforce members. The Framework includes 20 essential questions and is flexible so that users can focus on one or more questions with one or more metrics, depending on their unique goals and context.

The Framework identifies six types of data sources to answer the 20 questions and associated metrics: administrative data, administrator documentation, community family surveys, preschool family surveys, program documentation and surveys, or workforce member surveys. One data source may be used to answer multiple questions, and one question may be answered with more than one data source. **In this resource series, we focus on how preschool system leaders, or those who oversee or can influence system-level decisions about preschool programs, can use individual data sources to answer multiple questions from the Framework**, which offers valuable insights into various aspects of their preschool system.

This specific resource highlights how different types of administrator documentation, or documents that preschool administrators develop as guidance for preschool programs, can be used to understand what is happening in their preschool system. We describe three types of administrator documentation, offer state spotlights, and then outline which Framework questions can be answered by document type.

Overview of Administrator Documentation

Within the Framework, **administrators** are a subset of preschool system leaders who have direct oversight of more than one preschool program within their system (see Box A). These administrators, along with their teams, are responsible for setting policies that regulate the administration of preschool programs in their system.

Part of the direct oversight of programs within a preschool system includes the development of documentation, which can fall into three broad categories: system operation documents, policies and processes, and guidance documents. This resource describes each of these categories and includes examples of how states have organized and

Box A. Who is a preschool administrator?

Administrators may hold titles, such as early learning lead, child care subsidy administrator, superintendent, deputy commissioner, Head Start Collaboration Office Director, or tribal early childhood lead. Within states, tribes, or communities, they may lead teams in offices, such as the Head Start Collaboration Office; the pre-K, early learning, or early education office within a larger department or agency; a separate state agency focused on early education; or a tribal educational agency.

presented these types of documentation. Then, the resource identifies which documents can be used to answer essential questions from the Framework.

It is important to note that these are recommended data sources only, and preschool system leaders can use alternative or additional data sources to best address each question. Additionally, this could be an opportunity for preschool system leaders to update and refine their administrator documentation if information does not exist to answer essential questions about the preschool system.

Types of Administrator Documentation

The Framework recommends that preschool system leaders leverage administrator documentation to address specific questions and metrics. The following section describes three types of administrator documentation and spotlights examples from states:

- **Systems operations documentation:** High-level overview documents communicate how the preschool system is governed, including how policies and processes work together.
- **Policies and processes documentation:** Detailed documents provide information about individual policies, processes, rules, and regulations that align with information described in system operation documents.
- **Guidance documentation:** Reference documents provide recommendations for preschool programs around specific topics, such as recommendations or guidance on monitoring children's development.

Spotlight on systems operations documentation: Georgia



Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) provides resources about its state-funded public pre-K program on a public [website](#). The site includes system operations documents that outline how the preschool system functions, offering guidance for program operators, workforce members, and families. For example, Georgia has a section on [Workforce Supports and Learning](#) where viewers can read about various professional development supports for the workforce (e.g., DECAL Scholars, Early Learning Coaching, and Professional Learning Communities) as well as download relevant documents as reference. Preschool system leaders could use this information to answer Q20 (*Are there mechanisms to support equitable experiences for workforce members from focal populations?*).

Spotlight on policies and processes documentation: Texas



The [Texas Workforce Commission](#) publishes regular and detailed reports about how various child care subsidy funds are used across the state and by county. To learn more about preschool programs funded by child care subsidies, preschool system leaders can use the system operations documents included on the site to identify written policies, legislation, or budgeting expectations. For example, on their [Child Care Data, Reports, & Plans webpage](#), users can access strategic plans that provide details about intended goals and processes for preschool programs, such as requirements within the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan or their Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan. These documents detail policies and process, such as requiring local workforce development boards to use at least two percent of their CCDF funds for child care workforce professional development, which can help preschool system leaders answer Q18 (*Are there funding mechanisms to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?*). Preschool system leaders can analyze more detailed funding reports to understand more about what is being funded, how much is being funded, and the impact of these funds, such as the quarterly reports found on the [Texas Workforce Commission of the Local Board Child Care Quality \(CCQ\) Fund](#).

Spotlight on guidance documentation: Massachusetts



Massachusetts posts multiple guidance documents on a publicly available website: [Department of Early Education and Care's Learning Standards and Curriculum Guidelines](#). Their current documents include guidelines for preschool learning experiences and preschool standards for social-emotional development; standards for infants and toddlers as well as three- and four-year olds; standards specifically focused on science, technology, and engineering; curriculum frameworks for pre-K through 12th grade; and dual language education policies and guidelines. Additionally, each of these guidelines are translated into multiple languages that are accessible on their website, such as Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish, which increases the accessibility of these documents. Translating these documents is one way that preschool system leaders are ensuring equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members to help answer questions, such as Q19 (*Is there system-level guidance for how to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?*).

Essential Questions Answered by Administrator Documentation

The following section offers details about the types of documents that can be used to answer various questions from the Framework. This section is organized by the different steps in the Framework where administrator documentation can be used to answer the essential questions within those steps (for a list of resources by document type, see [Appendix A](#)). Preschool system leaders can identify which question they are most interested in answering and see the type of document(s) that can be used to answer this question.



Outreach

Q2. Do outreach methods improve knowledge and understanding of program options among families from focal populations?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
Policies and processes	Percentage of programs that use more than one outreach strategy to inform families from focal populations about preschool options	Documents with outreach policies and efforts required by programs in the system



Enrollment

Q3. Do eligibility processes allow families from focal populations to attend programs they want?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
Policies and processes	Preschool systems leaders make changes to their eligibility criteria based on community assessments to help families from focal populations attend their preferred choice of preschool program.	Written system guidance/policies on eligibility, legislation, and budgeting aligned with community/needs assessment recommendations

Q4. Do enrollment procedures help families from focal populations attend programs they want?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
Policies and processes	Percentage of programs that offer multiple ways for families to verify their child's eligibility for enrollment	Policies for verifying eligibility across preschool programs



Learning experiences

Q10. Do children from focal populations receive positive behavior supports?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
Policies and processes	Presence of program-level policies aimed at offering alternative approaches to negative discipline and promoting positive behavior supports	Program guidebook or documentation that outlines policies around discipline and behavior supports (e.g., limiting or governing when suspensions or expulsions can be used, investments in professional development or support systems for positive behavior supports [e.g., coaches, mental health consultants])

Q13. Are multiple forms of evidence used to understand the developmental progress, strengths, and needs—across domains of development—of children from focal populations?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
Guidance	Preschool system requires multiple forms of evidence to be used to understand a child's development	Written system guidance on child development monitoring



Administration

Q17. Are families from focal populations and workforce members engaged in shared leadership?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
System operations	Percentage of preschool systems leadership and management that identify as members of focal populations	Administrative records of leadership and management team members (e.g., advisory councils, committees)

Q18. Are there funding mechanisms to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
System operations	Percentage of system-level funding that is allocated to equity-focused activities targeted for children, families, and/or workforce members from focal populations	Administrative records or documentation that describe funding policies and how funding is allocated
	Percentage of programs that have a funding mechanism for allocating funds to be spent on identified needs for children, families, and workforce members from focal populations	Administrative records or documentation that describe funding policies, including how funding is allocated

Q19. Is there system-level guidance for how to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
System operations	Preschool system provides guidance on professional development activities that represent, reflect, and uniquely support workforce members from diverse backgrounds, including those from focal populations	Professional development policies, catalog of approved development opportunities, or workforce registries
Guidance	Preschool system provides guidance on early learning standards, including how to uniquely support children and families from diverse backgrounds, including those from focal populations	Early learning standards
	Preschool system provides guidance on the types of culturally responsive curricula that represent, reflect, and uniquely support children and families from focal populations	Curricula selection guide
	Preschool system provides guidance or training on recommended culturally responsive assessments/screenings that represent, reflect, and uniquely support children and families from focal populations	Assessment/screenings selection guide, content from system-provided assessment/screening trainings
	Preschool system provides guidance or training on quality monitoring tools for classroom environment and/or child-adult interactions that represent, reflect, and uniquely support children and families from diverse backgrounds, including those from focal populations	Quality monitoring tools selection guide, content (e.g., syllabus) from system-provided trainings on quality monitoring

Q20. Are there mechanisms to support equitable experiences for workforce members from focal populations?

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
System operations	Number of professional development opportunities the preschool system offers that are intentionally tailored to workforce members from focal populations to support their unique needs	Descriptions of the professional development opportunities available to workforce members
	Number of career pathway supports the preschool system offers that are Intentionally tailored to workforce members from focal populations to support their unique needs	Descriptions of the career pathway supports available to workforce members

Administrator Documentation Type	Recommended Metric	Administrator Documentation
	Number of professional development opportunities the preschool system offers that are intentionally tailored to workforce members from focal populations to support their unique needs	Descriptions of the professional development opportunities available to workforce members
Policies and processes	Percentage of workforce members from focal populations who receive benefits comparable to that of the overall preschool workforce population	Policies on benefits offered to workforce members

Final Thoughts

Preschool system leaders have an opportunity to make critical decisions about operations, policies, processes, and guidelines that can improve the experiences of focal populations in their system. Many preschool system leaders have the information necessary to answer key questions about how their preschool system is currently administered, which can be leveraged to answer critical questions to guide making improvements to the preschool system. When leveraging administrator documentation to answer questions in the Framework, preschool system leaders can review existing documents to understand what may be available, what information could be updated, and how these documents can be reviewed over time. Although many of these documents are internal to the preschool system, preschool system leaders can also consider how these documents can be shared publicly so that they are accessible to those interested in knowing more about how the preschool system functions, such as families who want to know more or other preschool system leaders who want to improve their own system.

Appendix A. Administrator Documentation Inventory

Preschool system leaders can use this inventory to see recommended administrator documents from the Framework by documentation type.

Type	Recommended Administrator Documentation
System operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative records of leadership and management team members (e.g., advisory councils, committees) • Catalog of approved professional development opportunities, workforce registries • Descriptions of the professional development opportunities available to workforce members • Descriptions of the career pathway supports available to workforce members
Policies and process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach policies and efforts required by programs in the system • Policies on eligibility, legislation, budgeting aligned with community/needs assessment recommendations • Policies for verifying eligibility across preschool programs • Policies around discipline and behavior supports (e.g., limiting or governing when suspensions or expulsions can be used, investments in professional development or support systems for positive behavior supports [e.g., coaches, mental health consultants]) • Funding policies for how funding is allocated
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on child development monitoring • Early learning standards • Curricula selection guide • Assessment/screenings selection guide, content from system-provided assessment/screening trainings • Quality monitoring tools selection guide, content (e.g., syllabus) from system-provided trainings on quality monitoring

About the Data Source Series to Support the STEP Forward with Data Framework

This resource is part of a series to support preschool system leaders with implementing the STEP Forward with Data Framework. The Framework outlines six types of data sources that can be used to answer 20 essential questions. Each resource in this series focuses on how to use one of the data sources to answer the questions in the Framework. To learn more about the other data sources and access the entire series, go to our [Tools](#) page.

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Key Terms

Preschool: Early learning programs offered to 3- and 4-year-olds. In the Framework, we focus on those that are local, state, Tribal, or federally funded, including through state-funded, locally funded, and Tribal preschool and Head Start programs.

Preschool program: A type of preschool with a shared approach or curriculum, set of standards or regulations, funding stream, and/or administration (e.g., Head Start).

Preschool site: The location at which a child receives preschool, including center-, school-, home-, or faith-based settings.

Preschool system: The set of preschool programs that are overseen by a common set of leaders. The preschool programs in the system could be one type of program (e.g., state public pre-K) or multiple programs (e.g., Head Start, subsidized family child care, and state-funded pre-K).

Preschool systems leaders: Those who oversee preschool programs and who can influence systems-level decisions about how to improve preschool programs. Leaders may include state public pre-K administrators, Head Start State Collaboration Office directors, federal Head Start administrators, Head Start grantees overseeing large or multi-site preschool programs, Tribal early childhood administrators, state officers or administrators managing systems-wide early childhood initiatives, and city- or county-wide public preschool administrators.