


A 5x10 grid of 50 images. The images alternate between photographs of diverse babies and young children and solid color blocks. The colors used for the blocks are purple, yellow, orange, blue, green, and teal. The photographs show children of various ethnicities and ages, some smiling, some looking thoughtful, and some sleeping. The grid is arranged in five rows and ten columns. The first row contains a purple block, a baby with a white towel on their head, an orange block, a smiling baby, a yellow block, a baby with a wide smile, a blue block, a baby looking up, an orange block, a teal block, and a green block. The second row contains a baby with a wide smile, a green block, a baby with a wide smile, a yellow block, an orange block, a blue block, a baby with a wide smile, a purple block, a teal block, a baby with a wide smile, and an orange block. The third row contains a yellow block, a baby looking up, a blue block, a baby looking up, a yellow block, a teal block, a baby looking up, an orange block, a purple block, a baby looking up, and a baby with a wide smile. The fourth row contains a baby sleeping, a blue block, a teal block, a green block, a purple block, a baby with a wide smile, a green block, a yellow block, a baby with a wide smile, a blue block, and a green block. The fifth row contains a purple block, a baby with a wide smile, an orange block, a baby with a wide smile, a yellow block, a purple block, a baby with a wide smile, an orange block, a green block, a teal block, and a baby with a wide smile.

A Classroom Assessment using the Intentional Teaching Tool and Ratio/Group Size

ABC Quality





ABC Quality Process Quality Guide: Infant & Toddler

ABC Quality, Division of Early Care and Education, South Carolina
Department of Social Services

Our special thanks to:

- The ABC Quality early childhood teachers and directors dedicated to the well-being of children who provided the expert feedback for this tool to assure that it is reflective and intentional through focus groups and use of their programs to practice and test the standards and indicators in the field.
- The Research, Evaluation and Measurement Center at the USC College of Education who guided and conducted validity studies, literature reviews, statistical data analysis to inform the development of the Tool.
- National and regional QRIS experts who provided guidance and recommendations.
- ABC Quality team members who provided expert consultation using their extensive field experience to guide the development of the ABC Quality Intentional Teaching Tool.
- The ABC Quality Intentional Teaching Tool Leadership Team who provided the vision, perseverance, guidance, and continued leadership to create measurable best practices for the ABC Quality early childhood teachers, directors, and programs in South Carolina.
- ABC Quality has served as South Carolina's Early Care and Education Quality Rating and Improvement System for 30 years. It has expanded from two quality levels to the current five quality levels. The ABC Quality Intentional Teaching Tool represents the work of a team of experienced ABC Quality assessors and experts representing measurement and content, to build a new strength-based assessment tool integrating evidence-based practices, field research and expert consultation.

The ABC Quality *Process Quality Guide: Infant & Toddler* may be reproduced with permission for non-profit, educational purposes. Permission should be requested abcquality@dss.sc.gov. The electronic version of this Tool is available from the following websites: <http://abcquality.org>
<http://scchildcare.org>

Suggested citation: ABC Quality Intentional Teaching Tool Leadership Team. (November 2025). *ABC Quality Process Quality Guide: Infant & Toddler V2*. Columbia: Author

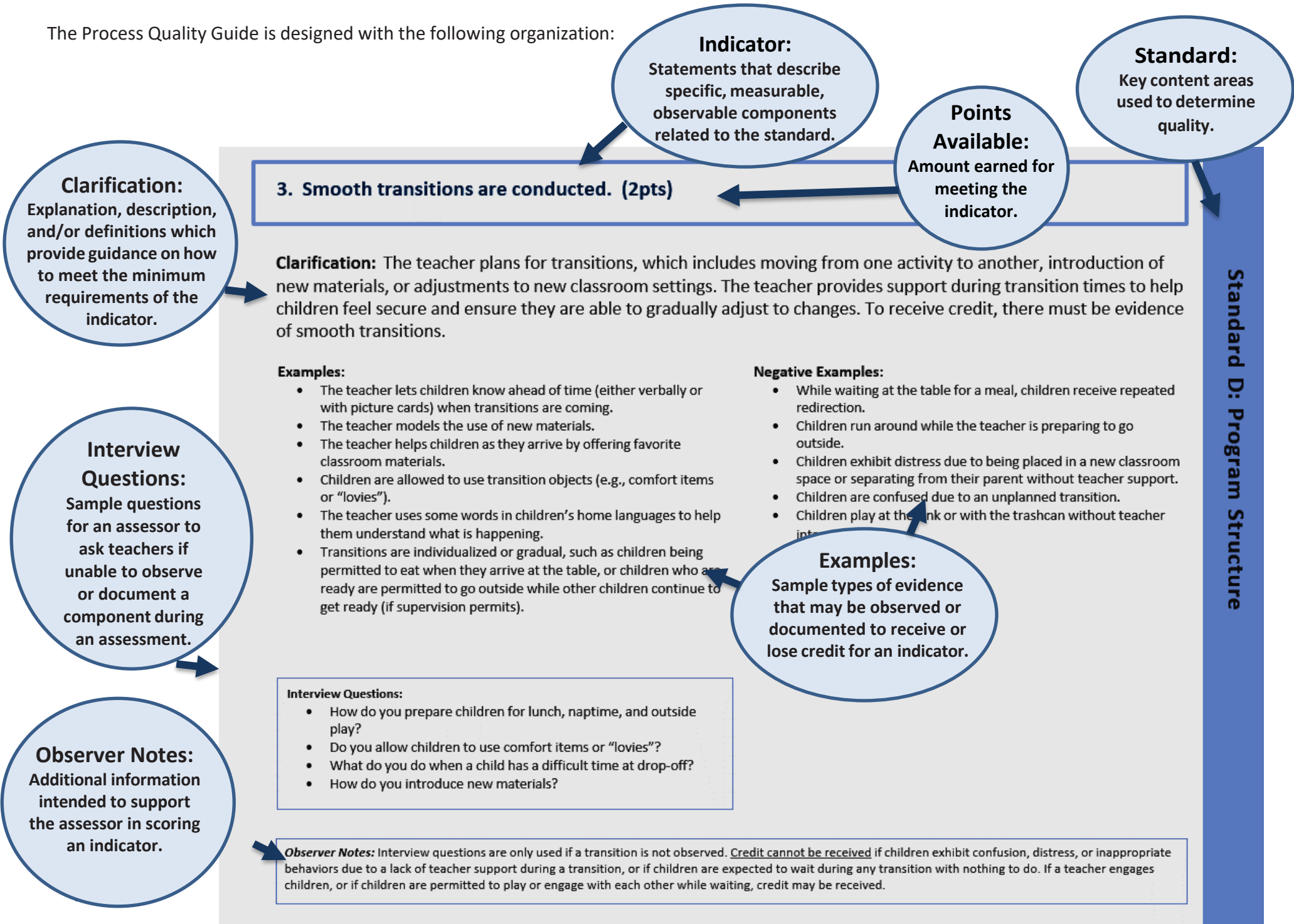
Funding for this document was provided by the South Carolina Department of Social Services with federal funds from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Leadership for this initiative has been provided by the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE), South Carolina Department of Social Services

CONTENTS

Organization of the Process Quality Guide	4
Element V: Intentional Teaching Practices	
Administration & Scoring of the Intentional Teaching Tool	6
Standard A: Responsive and Sensitive Care	7
Standard B: Language and Communication	13
Standard C: Guidance	24
Standard D: Program Structure	30
Standard E: Early Learning	40
Standard F: Environment	52
Element VI: Ratio and Group Size	
Administration & Scoring of Ratio and Group Size	71
Standard A: Ratio	72
Standard B: Group Size	73

Organization of the Process Quality Guide

The Process Quality Guide is designed with the following organization:



Element V: Intentional Teaching Practices

Assessed using the Intentional Teaching Tool

Administration of the Intentional Teaching Tool

To conduct an individual classroom assessment, the assessor spends approximately 1 hour observing, documenting, and collecting information about the classroom to score the indicators within the tool. The assessor spends a minimum of 40 minutes scripting the interactions and activities. The remaining time is used to review documents, examine materials, and conduct a short teacher interview.

At the onset of the observation, the assessor gathers information about the classroom to include teaching staff, enrollment, ages of children, and schedule. Once the observation begins, the assessor must not engage or interfere with the children, teachers, or ongoing activities. The focus of the assessor is to objectively gather information and remain neutral as they observe the naturally occurring experiences of children.

Following the observation, if the assessor was unable to observe or document evidence that would provide a justification to score an indicator, a teacher interview is required. During the interview the assessor asks questions to collect information to score relevant indicators. Frequently used interview questions are provided within the Intentional Teaching Tool, by indicator.

Scoring the Intentional Teaching Tool

After collecting all the relevant information, the assessor scores each of the indicators based on the whole classroom experience. When multiple teachers are present in a classroom, they all contribute to the overall score.

Assessors must utilize the clarifications and observer notes to ensure that each indicator is accurately scored. The scores are based on the observation, documentation, and information collected during the assessment. Previous knowledge or experience with the classroom cannot be used to provide scoring justification.

Each indicator is scored as a “yes” or a “no.” A “yes” score is based on meeting the minimum requirements as described in the clarification. Even though multiple points may be assigned to an indicator, only full or no credit may be received.

Each classroom assessed has the opportunity to earn a total of 100 points. The classroom’s score is the total number of points earned. The assessment, while a snapshot, is expected to reflect the overall experiences of children.

Once scored, the Intentional Teaching Tool showcases a classroom’s strengths within the standards of:

- Responsive and Sensitive Care
- Language and Communication
- Guidance
- Program Structure
- Early Learning
- Environment

Standard A: Responsive and Sensitive Care

The program supports the emotional development of infants and toddlers through warm, trusting relationships with familiar and responsive teachers.

1. Contributes to the positive climate by building relationships.
2. Spends the majority of time engaged with children.
3. Listens attentively and responds appropriately when a child talks or attempts to communicate.
4. Responds immediately and appropriately to support a child's expression of emotions.
5. Recognizes and responds to all children as individuals with unique strengths and needs.

1. Contributes to the positive climate by building relationships. (3pts)

Clarification: A positive climate is achieved by demonstrating respect, care, affection, and kindness toward children and other adults in the room. To receive credit, positive interactions and responses must be observed.

Examples:

- After asking permission, the teacher pats or rubs a child's back.
- A child extends their hand and the teacher responds by holding it.
- The teacher cuddles or rocks a child while reading a story.
- The teacher allows children to be physically close.
- The teacher offers a child a hug and waits for the child to consent.
- The teacher provides touch as a calming strategy for a child who has a sensory processing disorder, as identified in their Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and modeled by the therapist.
- The teacher validates a child's frustration when trying a new activity that is challenging.
- The teacher smiles and greets children in their home language.
- After a baby babbles in the teacher's lap, she smiles and repeats the sounds the infant made.
- The teacher makes silly faces and encourages children to do the same.
- The teacher shows empathy when a child is bitten.
- The teacher is patient as a toddler is learning to express their thoughts.
- The teacher models positive interactions with children and other teachers, such as listening when others are speaking.

Negative Examples:

- The teacher screams or yells to get children to change their behavior.
- The teacher criticizes a child's mistake.
- The teacher compares children.
- The teacher displays favoritism toward some children over others.
- The teacher conveys anger or contempt through words or actions.
- The teacher complains to a co-worker in front of children about some aspect of the job or a child.
- The teacher discusses a child's personal or medical information within hearing distance of others.

2. Spends the majority of time engaged with children. (3pts)

Clarification: The teacher interacts with children throughout the day, including during routine responsibilities such as cleaning. To receive credit, each teacher must remain engaged with children without any extended lapses.

Examples:

- While wiping down the table, a teacher talks to nearby children about their play.
- When preparing for activities, the teacher maintains conversations with children.
- The teacher involves children in routine care activities, such as giving a child a diaper to hold during a diaper change.
- The teacher and a child build with blocks together.
- The teacher stoops or squats to have a conversation with children.
- The teacher holds babies individually throughout the day to provide comfort.
- The teacher cuddles children while reading a book in the rocking chair.

Observer Notes: Assessment includes timing each teacher's lack of attentiveness or interaction with children, and their personal conversations. Credit cannot be received if any teacher has an extended lapse (3 minutes or more) of not interacting with children or having a personal conversation with another adult. If there are ongoing, multiple (3 or more) personal conversations between adults, the time frame does not matter, and credit cannot be received.

3. Listens attentively and responds appropriately when a child talks or attempts to communicate. (3pts)

Clarification: Listening attentively encourages children's communication skills and supports their understanding that ideas, feelings, and activities are important. Listening attentively requires that the teacher pays attention to the child and expresses interest. Expressed interest may be verbal or non-verbal. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher listening attentively and responding appropriately to children as they communicate must be observed.

Examples:

- 0-12 months: An infant is sitting on a mat and touches or pats the teacher. The teacher asks, "Do you want to cuddle, or do you want me to pick you up?" If this is not what the child wants, the teacher keeps asking questions.
- 12-24 months: Raoul is trying to tell the teacher something that the teacher does not understand. The teacher listens with interest and keeps asking questions while trying to understand what Raoul is telling her.
- 24-36 months: The teacher stops wiping a table when Ebony comes over with her painting. The teacher asks Ebony to tell more about her art.

Negative Examples:

- The child says, "Me went to the zoo." The teacher dismisses what the child says by saying, "It's time to clean up for snack."
- A child pulls on the teacher's shirt and is not acknowledged.
- A child says, "Sing Jingle Bells." The teacher says, "No, it's not Christmas."
- After a child talks, the teacher says, "shh."
- The teacher devalues or undermines a child by saying, "We don't talk like that here."

Observer Notes: The teacher can express interest by nodding, smiling, or making eye contact. Children may use sign language, picture communication, or gestures. Credit cannot be received if there is any instance of a teacher not listening when a child attempts to communicate or not responding appropriately.

4. Responds immediately and appropriately to support a child's expression of emotions. (3pts)

Clarification: The teacher acknowledges children as they express a wide range of emotions. The initial response should immediately follow the expression of emotion. An immediate response occurs within one minute. An appropriate response acknowledges the child's emotion in a supportive way. To receive credit, children's expressions of emotion must be acknowledged immediately and appropriately.

Examples:

- In a calming voice teacher says, "Alyssa, I hear you crying. I need to finish Jamie's diaper. As soon as I finish, I will come and help you."
- When a child squeals with delight, the teacher says, "You did it! You stood up all by yourself."

Negative Examples:

- The teacher ignores a child's frustration and does not offer help or support.
- The teacher tells children to be quiet, "shh," or calm down when they are excited.
- The teacher is dismissive of a child's emotion by saying, "Don't cry," or "It's nothing to cry about."
- The teacher diminishes a child's emotion by stating, "You are fine," or "You're okay," without offering comfort.

Observer Notes: An appropriate response may be verbal or non-verbal. If a teacher inadvertently misses a child's expression of emotion because they are actively engaged with other children, credit may be received. Credit cannot be received if any teacher ignores or is dismissive of a child's expression of emotion when support is needed. If prolonged distress occurs due to the lack of a teacher responding to a child's expression of emotion, credit cannot be received.

5. Recognizes and responds to all children as individuals with unique strengths and needs. (3pts)

Clarification: The teacher recognizes, respects, and responds appropriately to children's individual interests, talents, abilities, temperaments, and languages. To receive credit, the teacher valuing children as individuals must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher supports children's choice in the way they engage in activities.
- The teacher respects children who prefer a space to be alone.
- The teacher allows children to express themselves with actions or activities that match their energy level.
- The teacher uses a "watch, ask, and adapt" strategy to ensure children are provided adequate support.
- The teacher responds to a child in their home languages and encourages children to use their home languages or dialects.
- The teacher encourages a child to use sign language to communicate with peers.
- Children are invited to bring in an item from their home.
- The teacher points out photos of the activities on the schedule to support a child with a hearing impairment.
- The teacher recognizes a child needs more time to finish snack and provides extended support.

Negative Examples:

- The teacher makes negative comments about a child's hair, such as being fuzzy.
- The teacher name calls, labels, and/or belittles-children.
- The teacher is impatient when a child needs help or support.
- One child or a group of children is repeatedly singled out for behavior correction.
- The teacher verbally compares children or uses public behavior charts.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if any negative instance is observed.

Standard B: Language and Communication

The program supports children's language and early literacy development through a variety of personal and meaningful interactions throughout the day.

Signs, pictures, props, or gestures may be used to complement verbal language as a support for children.

1. Regularly initiates communication with individual children.
2. Responds verbally to all types of a child's communication attempts.
3. Models back-and-forth communication with individual children.
4. Helps children connect words with actions by using self-talk.
5. Helps children connect words with actions by using parallel talk.
6. Encourages and supports individual children in communicating and labeling their feelings.
7. Asks individual children simple, open-ended questions and waits for a response.
8. Expands children's knowledge by elaborating, extending, or sharing information.
9. Uses verbal play to help children learn the foundations of language and early literacy.
10. Encourages children to communicate and share language with each other.

1. Regularly initiates communication with individual children. (2pts)

Clarification: Communicating with children individually includes speaking with children about their interests, explorations, experiences or home life. To receive credit, at least 3 instances of teacher-initiated communication with individual children must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher makes a point of talking to individual children while sitting on the floor. This is done without a request or a child trying to get the teacher's attention.
- The teacher talks individually with infants and toddlers about what they are hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting.
- The teacher invites a child to talk about the art they create.
- The teacher makes specific, nonjudgmental comments about what a child has done, such as "You stacked four blocks."
- The teacher engages one-on-one with children about their interests or events in their lives, such as favorite foods, favorite animals, or home life.
- The teacher says at least a few words in a child's home language, such as greetings, words for favorite people and things, and words or phrases for common events and routines.

2. Responds verbally to all types of a child's communication attempts. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher verbally responds following child-initiated communication, either verbal or non-verbal. The teacher may repeat what the child says, ask for additional information, or give relevant comments to children's gestures, questions, or comments. When children are non-verbal, the teacher responds and encourages the child's attempts to communicate through a spoken response. To receive credit, at least 3 instances must be observed.

Examples:

- A child smiles while looking at a book of animals and the teacher says, "You like the little dog."
- A child pulls on the teacher's hand and the teacher says, "Do you want to go outside?"
- A child says, "Me" and the teacher says, "Do you want to be held?"
- When a child grunts, squeals, make sounds, or uses words, the teacher repeats what the child says to encourage verbal communication.
- In a positive and encouraging manner, the teacher imitates and repeats the child's motions, sounds, and words in their home language.

Observer Notes: Each teacher response to an individual child may count as an instance.

3. Models back-and-forth communication with individual children. (2pts)

Clarification: Back-and-forth communication is the precursor to conversation. It is defined as having at least one full exchange where the communication continues following a response. This includes both verbal and non-verbal exchanges. Baby signs may be used before children are verbal. To receive credit, at least 3 instances of back-and-forth communication must be observed.

Examples:

Non-verbal child:

- A child sticks out his tongue and the teacher imitates the non-verbal child, who then repeats again.
- The teacher uses simple word communication games such as “peek-a-boo.”
- The teacher waves hello to a child as they enter. The child smiles. The teacher then motions for the child to come further into the room.

Verbal child:

The teacher sits near a child playing with a toy car. The teacher asks, “Where is your car going?” The child responds, “To park.” The teacher says, “Oh, what will you do at the park?”

Observer Notes: Directive language, such as giving instructions to children as to what to do or where to go does not count as an instance. Exchanges between the teacher and groups of children do not count as an instance.

4. Helps children connect words with actions by using self-talk. (2pts)

Clarification: Self-talk is a strategy that links language with action, which helps increase children's receptive vocabulary. It is accomplished by the teacher describing what they are doing as it is being done. There is not an expectation that the child will respond. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of self-talk must be observed.

Examples:

- As a teacher picks up a child she says, "I'm picking you up now, so I can change your diaper."
- The teacher says, "I am putting the toys here, so you don't trip," as she relocates the toys.
- During pretend play, the teacher places a pot in the oven and states, "I'm putting our lunch in the oven."

Observer Notes: The teacher must be saying what they are doing as it is happening to count as an instance of self-talk. The language must occur simultaneously with the action.

5. Helps children connect words with actions by using parallel talk. (2pts)

Clarification: Parallel talk is a strategy that links language with action, which helps increase children's receptive vocabulary. It is accomplished by the teacher describing what the child is doing, seeing, or hearing, as it happens. There is not an expectation that the child will respond. To receive credit, at least 1 instance must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher says, "You are holding the bottle all by yourself," when she notices the infant has gained control of the bottle.
- A child is clapping her hands and the teacher says, "You are clapping your hands."
- A child is building a tower. The teacher states, "You are building a tall tower."
- A child is cleaning up puzzles. The teacher says, "Amari is picking up all the puzzle pieces. He is putting the pieces back into the puzzle to make it complete. Now he is putting the puzzle back on the shelf."
- Two children get a large bowl and cake mix. The teacher states, "Luis and Mary are pretending to bake a cake. They have a large bowl and picked the yellow cake mix."
- A child is looking at his hands. The teacher states, "Look at your hands, Jalen. You are moving your fingers."

Observer Notes: Parallel talk is much like broadcasting what a child is doing. It is statements regarding what a child is doing as it happens. Questions to the child are not instances of parallel talk. For example, asking a child, "Are you bringing me the cup?" would not count as an instance, while "You are bringing me the cup." would.

6. Encourages and supports individual children in communicating and labeling their feelings. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher encourages children to talk about all types of feelings: anger, sadness, happiness, frustration, disappointment, excitement, tiredness, hunger, fear, or their likes and dislikes, etc. The teacher discusses and assists a child in labeling their feelings by asking questions, having conversation, or offering comfort. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher assisting a child in labeling their feelings must be observed.

Examples:

Non-verbal child:

- Following a diaper change the teacher states, “You feel better now that you are all clean.”
- The teacher uses feelings/emotions dolls to support a child in expressing their feelings.
- A child squeals at the cause-and-effect toy and the teacher says, “You were surprised when it popped up!”
- A child cries when the teacher stops rocking him. The teacher begins rocking again and says, “You didn’t like me to stop rocking, did you?”
- A child covers their ears during the fire alarm. The teacher says, “That is a very loud siren. Did it scare you?”

Verbal child:

- A toddler hugs a stuffed dog and says, “Doggie” and the teacher says, “You love your doggie, don’t you?”
- A child is excited that they went down the slide and teacher states, “You have a big smile on your face! You look happy that you went down the slide all by yourself.”
- A child cries, “Mommy, mommy,” during drop-off. The teacher says, “I know it makes you sad when Mommy leaves for work. Remember she will be back to get you after snack this afternoon.”

Observer Notes: A teacher asking questions or offering comfort without specifically discussing and labeling a child’s feelings does not count as an instance. Instances that include likes and dislikes must be associated with an emotion that a child is expressing to receive credit.

7. Asks individual children simple, open-ended questions and waits for a response. (2pts)

Clarification: Open-ended questions have many possible answers and encourage language development, critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, and decision-making skills. Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” and have no right or wrong answers. Typically, open-ended questions begin with who, what, where, when, why, or how. Wait time is defined as a pause following a question to allow the child time to respond or think about the question before continuing the conversation. This is still expected when children are non-verbal. To receive credit, at least 3 instances of different open-ended questions with wait time must be observed.

Examples of open-ended questions:

- Who lives in your house?
- What do you need to get for the kitty?
- Where is the truck going?
- When do we wash hands?
- Why did the blocks fall?
- How can we fix it?

Observer Notes: While a teacher may ask many questions, credit will only be received for open-ended questions. Asking the same question repeatedly counts as one instance. Open-ended questions that are not answered by the child may count as an instance, if the teacher provides wait time for a response. Open-ended questions directed to groups of children do not count as an instance.

8. Expands children's knowledge by elaborating, extending, or sharing information. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher shares information with children using descriptive language and expanding their knowledge about their surroundings, activities, materials, events, or the outside world. At least three pieces of information must be shared to count as an instance. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher expanding children's knowledge must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher says, "The red ball rolled on the floor. Did you hear it jingling?"
- A child is looking out the window. The teacher says, "Look at the squirrel with the long, fluffy tail! It is running and jumping all over the yard."
- While on the playground, the teacher says, "See the yellow daffodil. It grows in the ground. It needs sun and water to grow."
- The teacher introduces a new book with languages from around the world. She says how "hello" is said in three different languages.

Observer Notes: A conversation during which teachers provide information collaboratively may count as an instance.

9. Uses verbal play to help children learn the foundations of language and early literacy. (2pts)

Clarification: Verbal play is a fun interaction that encourages word and/or sound experimentation, manipulation or acquisition. These interactions must be developmentally appropriate and engaging. To receive credit, at least 2 different examples of verbal play must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher plays back and forth with sounds, coos, or babbles based on an infant's interest.
- The teacher lap reads, reads simple stories, or makes stories come alive by using puppets, different voices and body movements.
- The teacher talks about pictures in books or on display.
- The teacher says or sings rhymes, poems, songs, raps, and finger-plays as children show interest.
- The teacher encourages children to help make up silly stories or songs.
- The teacher experiments with loud/soft sounds and fast/slow rhythms.
- The teacher plays verbal games, sings songs, or reads stories from different countries.

Any of these examples can be done in multiple languages to enrich the experience.

Observer Notes: Evidence of verbal play must be observed through teacher-child interactions. Skill drill activities are not considered verbal play. Therefore, the following examples do not count as an instance:

- Quizzing children on matching sounds with letters.
- Identifying letters by sight and/or name.
- Flash card skill drills.

10. Encourages children to communicate and share language with each other. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher supports developing language skills by prompting children to interact with each other in a positive way. Teacher practices encourage children to communicate with each other throughout day. To receive credit, at least 2 instances of the teacher encouraging children to communicate with, engage with, or notice each other must be observed or children are observed engaging in communication with each other for the majority of the observation.

Examples:

- The teacher places a non-mobile child on the floor and says, “I’m putting you here by Sam so that you guys can talk.”
- The teacher encourages children to interact with each other and says, “You can bang on the drum together.”
- The teacher prompts Samantha to say “good morning” to Jalisha at arrival.
- One child is watching another child playing with blocks. The teacher asks, “Would you like to join Francesca in the block area?”
- The teacher encourages children to notice what others are doing when they are pretending by saying, “See the way Maya is using the block for a race car.”
- Several children are playing with a basket of instruments. One child dumps them over and they all start laughing with each other.
- The teacher sits at the table with children during mealtime and engages with them as they talk about the day’s events.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if, at any time, any child is physically isolated by the teacher or confined without the ability to communicate with peers. If children are not allowed to talk with their peers when not otherwise engaged, credit cannot be received. If a child uses a specific communication technique, the teacher takes special care to facilitate peer-to-peer communication.

Standard C: Guidance

The program guides children's social skills while respecting each child's development and abilities.

1. Uses positive guidance techniques.
2. Guides children's behavior by telling them what to do when an undesirable or disruptive behavior occurs.
3. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child.
4. Encourages children by verbally acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or helpful behaviors.
5. Models and promotes positive peer interactions.

1. Uses positive guidance techniques. (3pts)

Clarification: Positive guidance includes anticipation and prevention of potential conflicts, as well as interventions that help children learn desired behavior and self-regulation. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of positive guidance must be observed. If no instances of disruptive behaviors occur due to the teacher using effective classroom management strategies, credit may be received.

Examples:

Prevention to minimize potential conflicts or dangerous situations:

- The teacher closely monitors children who are in the biting stage and provides many appropriate teething materials.
- The children are provided various opportunities for play throughout the room to avoid clustering, and to help prevent disputes over limited space and materials.
- The teacher provides a child their comfort item to avoid distress.
- The teacher sits near infants to prevent incidents of children climbing on top of each other.
- The teacher remains at the table with children who are eating to prevent children eating off each other's plates or eating food that has dropped on the floor.

Reviewing safe practices:

- The teacher explains to children why and how unsafe actions can hurt themselves or others.

Redirection:

- The teacher patiently guides children with verbal cues as they learn to control their own impulses and behaviors.
- When two children are fighting over a toy, the teacher provides a duplicate toy to ensure both children are engaged.

Offering choices:

- After a child throws a block the teacher says, "Blocks are for building. Balls are for throwing. Would you like to build with blocks, or would you like to throw balls in a bucket?"
- After a child tries to grab a toy from another child, the teacher offers the child two similar toys to choose from.

Negative Examples:

A child is confined in a crib, swing, bouncy seat, bucket seat table or exersaucer due to their behavior.

The teacher removes children from activities, such as using time-out.

The teacher uses threats such as, "I'll put the toys away if you can't share them."

The teacher uses food as a reward or punishment.

The teacher uses or withholds physical activity as punishment.

The teacher singles out a specific group of children for disciplinary action.

Observer Notes: Positive guidance focuses on being supportive of children, rather than responding to children's behavior with punitive consequences. If any instance of negative discipline is observed, credit cannot be received. Any instance of a teacher using corporal punishment or emotional abuse will result in no credit and a report to Child Care Licensing.

2. Guides children's behavior by telling them what to do when an undesirable or disruptive behavior occurs. (3pts)

Clarification: Positive guidance statements tell children what to do. To receive credit, at least 1 positively phrased guidance statement, must be observed. If no instances of disruptive behaviors occur due to teacher preventing, modeling, and/or contributing to the overall positive classroom climate, credit may be received.

Examples:

- The teacher says, "Walk," instead of "No, don't run."
- The teacher says, "Feet stay on the floor," instead of "No climbing."
- The teacher says, "Use gentle touches," instead of "No hitting."
- The teacher says, "We build with the blocks," instead of "Stop throwing the blocks."

Interview Questions:

- Are there any children present today who need a different guidance strategy because they have a formal behavior plan?
- Have you modified guidance strategies for a child based on discussions with their family due to changes in home life such as divorce, new siblings, or other significant family changes?

Observer Notes: If 3 or more instances of negatively phrased guidance statements are observed, credit cannot be received. Direct language, such as "no" or "stop" may be used only in an emergency to prevent harm and must be followed immediately by a descriptor of the appropriate behavior. An emergency is when a person is at risk of immediate danger. The use of direct language may be appropriate for children with behavior plans. Therefore, supplemental questions may need to be asked to determine if a teacher is implementing strategies from a plan. Direct language used in emergencies and for behavior plans does not count towards instances of negatively phrased guidance statements.

3. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child. (3pts)

Clarification: Realistic expectations are demonstrated when the teacher allows children to display abilities that match their age, development, and individual needs. To receive credit, realistic expectations are maintained.

Examples:

- The teacher turns children's accidents into learning opportunities. Accidents are handled calmly, individually, and as privately as possible. The teacher says in a gentle voice, "You spilled the milk. Let's clean it up together."
- The teacher shows acceptance of mistakes or failures by saying, "Oops, that didn't work! Let's try something else."
- The teacher accepts getting messy as part of a child's play and learning.

Negative Examples:

- The teacher forces children to share.
- The teacher conducts mandatory circle time, where children are made to sit in whole group when they are not engaged.
- Children experience extended wait times (3 minutes or longer) with no activity or opportunity for peer interactions.
- The teacher shames a child for making a mistake.

Observer Notes: An unrealistic expectation is when a teacher assumes children should be able to do something that they are not yet capable of doing. Sharing becomes an unrealistic expectation when it causes a negative reaction, or a child is forced to share. If 2 or more unrealistic expectations are observed, credit is not received, regardless of whether the unrealistic expectations are the same type repeatedly or multiple types.

4. Encourages children by verbally acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or helpful behaviors. (3pts)

Clarification: Verbal encouragement boosts children's self-confidence and competence. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher verbally acknowledging children's efforts, accomplishments or helpful behaviors must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher asks a child to put a book on the shelf, and the child puts the book on the shelf immediately. The teacher says, "Thank you" because the child complied.
- When a child helps pick up toys without being asked, the teacher says, "You helped me pick up the toys. Thank you."
- After the child goes down the slide the teacher states, "You have a big smile on your face! You look happy that you went down the slide all by yourself."
- An infant reaches for a rattle and the teacher says, "You are stretching your arm out to get the rattle. Keep trying! I know you can do it!"
- After a child washes his hands, the teacher says, "Look at you! You washed your hands all by yourself. You remembered to sing the song."

Observer Notes: Physical rewards such as stickers and other treats do not count as an instance.

5. Models and promotes positive peer interactions. (3pts)

Clarification: Positive peer interactions occur when children are encouraged to form respectful relationships. The teacher is involved with modeling, language, or other supports for the purpose of supporting social skill development as children interact with each other. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of a teacher prompt or support to promote positive peer social interactions must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher encourages babies to be gentle and kind when touching each other.
- The teacher helps children resolve differences by explaining what is happening as it occurs and labels emotions for what the child might be feeling such as, “You wanted to play with that doll? Javon is playing with it now. Let’s see if we can find another one on the shelf for you.”
- Chelsey grabs a doll from Jada. The teacher says to Chelsey, “Jada is crying because you took her doll. Let me help you give the doll back to her. You can play with this doll that is just like Jada’s.”
- The teacher says, “You are both friends. How can you help each other clean this mess up?”
- The teacher prompts children to use manners with each other. The teacher says, “Tell her thank you. That was nice of her to show you how to put the puzzle back in the right place.” Or “Say ‘excuse me’ when someone is in your way and you need to get by.”

Observer Notes: Instances require the teacher to be intentionally involved in promoting social skill development. Ambiguous language, such as “be nice,” does not count as an instance. The teacher telling a child to say “sorry” without additional support to promote positive interactions does not count as an instance. If a child uses a specific communication technique, the teacher takes special care to facilitate peer-to-peer communication.

Standard D: Program Structure

The program is structured and organized to individualize care in group care settings.

1. The daily routine includes handwashing with soap and water for teachers and children.
2. Daily routines and/or transitions are used as opportunities to engage children.
3. Smooth transitions are conducted.
4. Accommodations are made during daily routines to meet children's individualized needs.
5. Teacher allows children to feed and/or serve themselves during meals and snacks.
6. Teacher supports meal service routines as a time for children to engage and socialize.
7. A current daily routine/schedule is posted and followed so children can learn the sequence of events and feel more secure.
8. Child-directed activities are provided for children based on their interest.
9. Child-directed active outdoor play time is provided for all children daily, weather permitting.

1. The daily routine includes handwashing with soap and water for teachers and children. (2pts)

Clarification: The most important way to reduce the spread of infection, diseases, and parasites is by frequent and effective handwashing. Effective handwashing includes use of running water and liquid soap to remove dirt, germs, and other elements, and then completely drying hands with a disposable paper or single use cloth towel. Each teacher washes their own hands and assists children with handwashing as needed. Children wash their own hands independently or with assistance.

To receive credit, each teacher and child must wash their hands during the following key times:

- Upon entering the classroom at any time throughout the day.
- After removing disposable gloves.
- After diapering and in-between diapering multiple children.
- After toileting and in-between assisting children with toileting.
- After contact with bodily fluids or contaminated items.
- After contact with animals, their food, or environments.
- After any time spent outdoors.
- Before and after messy play, such as with sand, playdough, and water used by multiple people.
- After applying sunscreen and/or insect repellent. After using cleaning products or other chemicals.
- After handling garbage.
- Before and after preparing food/beverages and eating meals/snacks.
- Before and after giving medication or treating a cut or wound.
- Before teeth brushing and in-between assisting children with teeth brushing.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received when there is a full absence or neglect of handwashing within any given routine, or if there is an absence of materials needed to complete proper handwashing. If attempts are made, but some procedural steps are missed on occasion, credit may be received. Hand sanitizer, premoistened cleansing towelettes, or gloves cannot be used in place of proper handwashing. When running water and soap are unavailable outdoors, and hands are not visibly soiled or dirty, the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be a momentary alternative, but only until traditional handwashing with soap and water is available. However, hand sanitizer may not be used for children younger than 24 months old. When applicable, a lack of handwashing will be reported to Child Care Licensing.

2. Daily routines and/or transitions are used as opportunities to engage children. (2pts)

Clarification: Daily routines include sleeping, eating, diapering and toileting. Transitions include moving from one activity to another, introduction of new materials, or adjustments to new classroom settings. The teacher engages with children during routines and/or transition activities. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of engaging children during routines or transitions must be observed.

Examples:

Routines:

- When a child is getting ready for sleep, the teacher sings a soft song or reads him a story.
- The teacher sings in children's home language while handwashing.
- The teacher uses diapering as a time to play games, to sing songs, and to enjoy talking or playing.
- Infants are held and talked to while bottle feeding.
- The teacher plays "Name That Body Part" while dressing or changing infants and toddlers.
- The teacher sits at the table and talks with children while they are eating.

Transitions:

- The teacher sings while cleaning up.
- The teacher uses a variety of music (blues, jazz, classical, hip-hop, etc.) to support children during transitions.
- The teacher engages children in a movement activity when preparing to go outside.
- As children come to the table for lunch/snack, the teacher engages them with a finger-play until everyone is ready.

Negative Examples:

Routines:

- An available teacher does not assist a child who is having difficulty settling down at nap.
- While diapering, the teacher does not engage with the child being diapered.

Transitions:

- The teacher reprimands a two-year-old who does not line up immediately when transitioning to outdoor time.
- The teacher punishes a toddler for hitting another child while they are waiting at tables for lunch to be served.
- The teacher ignores a crying infant who wakes up from nap and is waiting to be fed.

Observer Notes: Engaging during routines and transitions provides opportunities for teachers to use words and phrases from children's home languages. Providing brief directives/commands (telling children what to do) during routines or transitions does not count as an instance. Credit cannot be received if there are 2 or more negative instances during routines or transitions, even if positive instances are observed.

3. Smooth transitions are conducted. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher plans for transitions, which includes moving from one activity to another, introduction of new materials, or adjustments to new classroom settings. The teacher provides support during transition times to help children feel secure and ensure they are able to gradually adjust to changes. To receive credit, there must be evidence of smooth transitions.

Examples:

- The teacher lets children know ahead of time (either verbally or with picture cards) when transitions are coming.
- The teacher models the use of new materials.
- The teacher helps children as they arrive by offering favorite classroom materials.
- Children are allowed to use transition objects (e.g., comfort items or “lovies”).
- The teacher uses some words in children’s home languages to help them understand what is happening.
- Transitions are individualized or gradual, such as children being permitted to eat when they arrive at the table, or children who are ready are permitted to go outside while other children continue to get ready (if supervision permits).

Negative Examples:

- While waiting at the table for a meal, children receive repeated redirection.
- Children run around while the teacher is preparing to go outside.
- Children exhibit distress due to being placed in a new classroom space or separating from their parent without teacher support.
- Children are confused due to an unplanned transition.
- Children play at the sink or with the trashcan without teacher intervention.

Interview Questions:

- How do you prepare children for lunch, naptime, and outside play?
- Do you allow children to use comfort items or “lovies”?
- What do you do when a child has a difficult time at drop-off?
- How do you introduce new materials?

Observer Notes: Interview questions are only used if a transition is not observed. Credit cannot be received if children exhibit confusion, distress, or inappropriate behaviors due to a lack of teacher support during a transition, or if children are expected to wait during any transition with nothing to do. If a teacher engages children, or if children are permitted to play or engage with each other while waiting, credit may be received.

4. Accommodations are made during daily routines to meet children's individualized needs. (2pts)

Clarification: Daily routines include sleeping, feeding, and diapering/toileting. Accommodations must be made to meet each child's individual needs. To receive credit, the individual needs of each child must be accommodated during routine care.

Examples:

Sleeping:

- Children are allowed to sleep on demand and appropriate accommodations are made, such as being placed in a crib or on a mat.
- A cozy corner is provided if a child needs to rest.
- The lights are dimmed, and the noise level is reduced to support children's calm to rest.
- Children's backs are rubbed to help them relax and fall asleep.
- Children who are not sleepy during a rest time are allowed quiet activities.

Feeding:

- A supplementary snack is provided if a child is hungry.
- Food is cut in smaller pieces or mashed for a child with special dietary needs.
- The teacher provides suitable food options for children with religious dietary needs or food allergies.
- When an infant shows early signs of hunger (e.g. beginning to stir when sleeping), the teacher prepares the food or milk so that it is ready when the child is ready to eat.
- Enough time is allowed for children to finish bottles or food.
- A child who nods off during lunch is allowed to sleep and their food is saved for later.

Diapering/toileting:

- Diapers are changed as needed, not as a group, one after the other.
- Children are allowed to use the restroom as the need occurs.
- If children are taken to the restroom as a group, individual prompting and support is provided. Children who are not directly involved in toileting are provided another engaging activity.

Interview Questions:

- How do you handle an instance of a child being sleepy before nap time?
- How do you handle an instance of a child being hungry before lunch?
- How do you manage diapering/toileting?

5. Teacher allows children to feed and/or serve themselves during meals and snacks. (1pt)

Clarification: Fostering a positive food environment can help children become competent eaters who trust their hunger and fullness cues, enjoy a variety of foods, and develop a positive relationship with eating. When children feel supported and free from food-related pressure, they are more likely to develop healthy eating habits that promote lifelong health and well-being. This supports family style meal service by allowing children to practice independence, foster healthy eating habits, and improve fine motor control. Teacher follows infant cues regarding when to start and end feedings. Older infants and toddlers are encouraged to feed and/or serve themselves with supervision and support. Accommodations are made for children with varied ability levels as they learn to handle food and manipulate utensils when feeding and serving. To receive credit, children are allowed to feed and/or serve themselves during meals and/or snacks.

Examples:

- The teacher follows the cues of an infant who is showing signs of hunger, by preparing a bottle.
- The teacher observes the child's body language to determine when the child is finished eating.
- The teacher encourages a child to help hold their bottle or cup.
- Food is prepared and served to encourage children to use their pincer grasp to feed themselves.
- Children are encouraged to feed themselves using child-sized forks and spoons.
- A child is assisted by the teacher with hand-over-hand technique to serve steamed carrots from the common serving bowl.
- Children are encouraged to serve themselves using child-sized serving ware, such as serving platter and a covered pitcher.

Interview Questions:

- Tell me about your feeding and mealtime routines.
- How is food served? Who serves the food?
- How do you decide when and how much to feed children?

6. Teacher supports meal service routines as a time for children to engage and socialize. (2pts)

Clarification: Children gain social skills and healthy eating habits when they interact with their teacher and peers during meal service. Shared meals support relationships between children and teachers. Teachers serve as role models and initiate conversations during meal routines. This supports family style meal service by allowing children to practice independence, foster healthy eating habits, and build positive social interactions.

There are two components to this indicator:

- 1) Teacher engages in the meal service by sitting and interacting with children throughout the meal to model social skills and healthy eating habits.
- 2) Children are encouraged to interact with each other throughout the meal. (Exception: Infants who are being bottle fed.)

To receive credit, both components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: *Teacher engages in the meal service by sitting with and supporting children.*

- The teacher holds infant during feeding and sings songs.
- The teacher distributes pre-plated food, then sits down with the children and talks with them about the meal.
- While sitting with the children during afternoon snack, the teacher talks with the children about the day's events.
- The teacher supports children's proper use of eating or serving utensils.
- During breakfast, the teacher points out that the strawberries are from their garden.

Component 2: *Children interact with each other during the meal and/or snack.*

- Children sit at the table together, so they can have peer-to-peer conversations.
- Teachers encourage children to talk with each other during the meal.
- The teacher encourages the children to say "thank you" to each other when items are passed.

Interview Questions:

- Tell me about your mealtime routines.
- What do you do while the children eat?
- How do the children interact during meals and snacks?

Observer Notes: If a meal service is not observed, a teacher interview is used to gather information about mealtime routines. Component 1: There must be at least one teacher seated where children are eating. If all children are participating in the meal routine, then each teacher present must sit for part of the meal. Any staff in the room who are not the classroom teachers or substituting for the teachers do not need to be seated at meals. Credit cannot be received if there is no teacher interaction or children are not allowed to talk during mealtime.

7. A current daily routine/schedule is posted and followed so children can learn the sequence of events and feel more secure. (1pt)

Clarification: Following daily routines and schedules help children predict what will happen next in their classroom. Consistent schedules facilitate children’s understanding of classroom expectations and foster feelings of trust and security. The classroom has a schedule with the following components:

1. Current – schedule of events designated for the classroom at the time of the observation.
2. Posted - easily visible inside or directly outside of the classroom.
3. Generally followed - is flexible and accommodations are made for special events or inclement weather, as well as individual and group needs.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

- There is a planned, posted schedule of daily routines and general activities for teachers and staff to refer to and provide consistency for children.
- A picture schedule is displayed at the children’s eye-level so children can predict what will happen next.
- The posted schedule is flexible and adapted to accommodate individual and group needs.

Interview Question:

- I noticed that the activity listed on the schedule is different from what is occurring. Share why you adapted or made this change.

Observer Notes: Schedules may include multiple languages and pictures to support children’s home languages. If activities observed do not match the posted schedule, interview the teacher to determine why scheduling changes were made. If the justification meets the criteria for component 3, credit may be received. Credit cannot be received for component 3, “generally followed,” when the teacher disregards the schedule of activities and there are no barriers or special circumstances requiring flexibility or accommodations.

8. Child-directed activities are provided for children based on their interest. (1pt)

Clarification: Child-directed means the teacher encourages children to select their own activities and follows the children's cues to decide whether to continue, vary, or end an activity. This includes choices in materials, activities, and playmates. For children who require accommodations, the teacher must introduce toys, begin activities, and model use of materials. To receive credit, the teacher encourages children to pick from multiple experiences, play with materials in various ways and respects their choice of when to participate in group activities.

Examples:

- A child brings the teacher a book. Recognizing the child's cue, the teacher reads the book.
- The teacher begins a movement activity with a group of children. Some children choose to remain in the dramatic play area and are invited, but not forced, to join the group.
- Children select with whom and where they play for extended periods of time.

Observer Notes: If children are placed in teacher-selected areas, but are then allowed to come and go based on their interests, credit may be received. If group time is on the posted schedule, credit may be received only if children are allowed to come and go as they please. Credit cannot be received if children are made to participate in group times, limited to one activity, provided no materials/activities or are directed to play with materials in a specific way.

9. Child-directed active outdoor play time is provided for all children daily, weather permitting. (1 pt)

Clarification: Active outdoor play occurs when children are presented opportunities for unstructured free play each day. Time spent outdoors is associated with higher levels of physical activity in children and provides a connection to the natural world. There are three components to this indicator:

1. The required amount of time and frequency of child-directed outdoor active play is listed on the schedule.
 - 0-12 months: Must occur daily, but there is no required amount of time.
 - 12-36 months:
 - Full-day programs (6 hours or more) must provide at least 60-90 minutes per day, in two or three separate sessions.
 - Half-day programs (less than 6 hours) must provide at least 45-60 minutes per day, in one or two separate sessions.
2. The children go outdoors daily for active play the required amount of time and frequency unless weather does not permit.
 - “Weather permitting” means no heavy precipitation, thunder, lightning, or weather advisory.
 - Caution should be taken in the event of a wind chill factor at or below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or at or above a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit or unhealthy air quality. The SC Department of Public Health provides forecasts of ozone concentrations to warn the public of unhealthy air and to encourage people to avoid exposure to unhealthy air.
3. The classroom schedule or written plan notates that if the children are unable to go out for their scheduled outdoor time due to weather, indoor active play is provided for the same amount of time.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Required amount of time and frequency for outdoor play is listed on the schedule.

- The Infant classroom schedule states that children are taken outdoors daily in small groups.
- The Twos’ classroom schedule states that daily outdoor time is from 10:00 – 10:45 a.m. and 3:00 – 3:45 p.m.

Component 2: Children go outdoors when weather permits.

- The teacher provides the same amount of time outdoors after a rainstorm in the morning.
- The teacher adjusts classroom schedule by taking the children outdoors in the early morning and late afternoon for a total of 90 minutes due to a projected heat index above 90 degrees.

Component 3: Planning for inclement weather.

- The schedule states that indoor active play is substituted when weather does not permit outdoor time.
- Teacher’s written plan provides a list of gross motor play activities that are used when weather does not permit going outdoors, ensuring that the active play time is the same.
- The classroom has a rainy day schedule that incorporates indoor active play time for at least the same amount as outdoor time.
- Teacher’s written plan provides a list of gross motor play activities that are used when weather does not permit going outdoors, ensuring that the active play time is the same.

Standard E: Early Learning

The program facilitates early learning by creating meaningful experiences that support all areas of development. These experiences build on children's interests and encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving.

1. Freedom of exploration is supported within a least restrictive environment to promote play.
2. Opportunities are provided for children to complete or participate in self-care and/or classroom care tasks.
3. Teacher provides activities and experiences that are developmentally appropriate and meaningful.
4. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate support through scaffolding, promoting problem-solving skills or introducing new and challenging experiences.
5. Classroom has a written lesson plan that supports the developmental progress of children.
6. Observation and documentation of children's learning and development are conducted.
7. Planned activities are linked to specific learning goals based on individual children's development.
8. Experiences are provided that promote children's early literacy development.
9. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about nature, science, or math.
10. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about art or creative expression.
11. Opportunities are provided for children to enhance fine and gross motor development daily.

1. Freedom of exploration is supported within a least restrictive environment to promote play. (2pts)

Clarification: Children have opportunities to see and hear new things, see familiar things from different views, and watch or join in with others. Children are encouraged to freely explore their surroundings. Adaptive equipment and materials are provided when a child needs support to be active and successful in program routines and activities. Non-mobile children are moved to different areas of the room in order to have a variety of experiences. To receive credit, all children who are awake and ready to play have freedom of movement.

Examples:

- After waking, a child is removed from the crib and placed on the floor for tummy time.
- Children are encouraged to play in various areas around the room.
- The teacher provides activities at low tables for children to make independent choices.

Negative Examples:

- A child is confined in a piece of equipment such as a swing, bouncy seat, crib (if awake), and/or exersaucer for any amount of time.
- The teacher restricts a child's ability to move to play areas.
- The teacher prevents use of materials by continuing group times where children are not engaged.

Interview Question:

How and when do you use restrictive equipment?

Observer Notes: If restrictive equipment (e.g. swing, bouncy seat, exersaucer) is present in the classroom, assume it is used, and interview for its purpose. Occasionally, restrictive equipment can be used to help children with special needs to fully participate. When this is the case, credit may be received. Teachers themselves may be considered confining if they restrict movement of children who are awake and ready to play. Credit cannot be received if any negative instance is observed.

2. Opportunities are provided for children to complete or participate in self-care and/or classroom-care tasks. (2pts)

Clarification: Children are encouraged to complete self-care and/or classroom care tasks as they are able and interested. Self-care refers to the daily tasks that children do to take care of their personal needs. These tasks foster independence and build life skills. Classroom care refers to tasks that children do to collectively care for materials and their shared physical environment. These skills foster collaboration and prepare children to become cooperative classroom members. To receive credit, at least 1 instance must be observed.

Examples:

Self-care:

- The teacher supports infants in holding bottles and self-feeding as able.
- The teacher encourages children to help with diapering by lifting their legs.
- The teacher encourages children to put on and take off outer gear (e.g. jacket, hats, boots) and provides support if necessary.
- The teacher establishes handwashing routines and provides guidance and modeling when needed.
- Children participate in sleep routines (e.g. getting blanket, lovies, comfort items).
- A child whose family encourages interdependence is provided additional supports while toileting.

Classroom Care:

- The teacher prompts children to help with classroom tasks (e.g. holding the door or clipboard, turning off lights at naptime, watering plants).
- The teacher encourages children to participate in the meal routines (e.g. setting table, self-serving meal items, or cleaning-up).
- The teacher reminds children where items belong during clean-up routines, such as putting books back in the library area.

Observer Notes: The teacher may provide assistance or scaffold children as they learn self-help and classroom care skills. To receive credit, 1 instance of self-care or classroom care must be observed.

3. Teacher provides activities and experiences that are developmentally appropriate and meaningful. (2pts)

Clarification: Developmentally appropriate means that the activities support children's learning at their current stage of development. The teacher creates experiences that challenge and engage children by being aware and responsive to their varied developmental needs. Meaningful activities are those that are interesting, play-based, hands-on, and encourage exploration and learning through various senses. To receive credit, the activities and experiences provided throughout the day must be developmentally appropriate and meaningful.

Examples:

- Sensory materials/experiences: playdough, goop, textured books, sensory bottles, teething toys, water play, paint, and loose parts.
- Open-ended materials: blocks, boxes, balls, and clay.
- Materials that present multiple challenges: variety of puzzle types, zippers, buttoning toys, and cause-and-effect toys.
- Creative expression materials/experiences: instruments, various types of music, chalk, ribbons, and dramatic play materials.
- Literacy activities: reading and pre-writing experiences.
- Natural materials: flowers, pinecones, large seashells (at least 2-inch diameter), and leaves.

Negative Examples:

- Preprinted worksheets or coloring sheets are used as a teacher-directed activity.
- Screen media (e.g. television, tablets, cell phones, smart boards, and computers) is used with children.
- A majority of the classroom materials are designed for older or younger age groups.
- Materials are not available during group times where children are not interested or actively engaged.

Observer Notes: If there are some materials that are not age-appropriate, but there is still a sufficient number of age-appropriate materials, credit may be received. If a TV is in the room, unless it is covered or marked that it is not used, credit cannot be received. If any negative instance is observed, credit cannot be received.

4. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate support through scaffolding, promoting problem-solving skills or introducing new and challenging experiences. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher supports a child's skill building, knowledge acquisition, and self-confidence through scaffolding, promoting problem-solving skills or introducing new and challenging experiences. Scaffolding occurs when a teacher is familiar with a child's development and provides the necessary support for a child to complete a task or activity that they would otherwise not be able to accomplish. Problem solving occurs when children are given the opportunity to use themselves, objects, or others to reach a goal. The teacher's role is to encourage children to find solutions for themselves. New and challenging experiences with teacher support exposes children to safe risk-taking opportunities. All of these opportunities may be done as a planned experience with teacher interventions to promote skill development, or by capitalizing on teachable moments to enhance development. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of a teacher support during scaffolding, problem solving, or introducing new, challenging experiences must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher encourages a child to hold their own bottle during lap feeding, as a child is able.
- The teacher adds toys or other objects that may extend children's current play to make it slightly more complex.
- The teacher prompts a child to try a puzzle piece another way. The teacher states, "I wonder what would happen if..."
- The teacher hides toys while infants are watching and encourages them to find them (under a blanket, in their hand, behind the chair).
- The teacher supports children in acting out and retelling stories using classroom props.
- The teacher provides reassurance when a child explores a new activity.
- The teacher places a toy out of reach and encourages a child to find a way to reach the toy.
- The teacher prompts a child who is unsure about using the slide.
- The teacher extends play by asking thought-provoking questions, such as "How might you...?" or "What will you need to...?"
- The teacher asks a child who is in a tunnel, "How are you going to get out?"
- The teacher promotes fine motor skills while a child is coloring by saying, "I see you are having a hard time holding the crayon. What if you try holding it this way?"
- The teacher demonstrates how new materials can be used and allows children to explore them.
- The teacher encourages children to keep working and focus on effort while children are solving a problem, by saying, "Wow! You figured out how to make it up the first step. You are so determined. Keep going!"

Observer Notes: Children's skill level or developmental milestones may not be evident during the observation. Credit may be received for scaffolding, problem solving, and/or introducing new and challenging experiences when a teacher provides support for a child's skill development or knowledge acquisition. While children may scaffold each other's learning, these situations do not count as an instance. To receive credit, teacher involvement and support is required.

5. Classroom has a written lesson plan that supports the developmental progress of children. (1pt)

Clarification: A lesson plan is a written plan of activities that provides a roadmap for teachers to guide all children's progress through developmental domains. It promotes intentionality in the planning process. A current, lesson plan that demonstrates age-appropriate activities aligned to developmental domains must be observed. There are two components to this indicator:

1. Current - the lesson plan is dated and covers the timeframe during which the observation takes place.
2. Aligned to developmental domains - the lesson plan must reflect at least 3 of the 6 South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS) domains.

SC Early Learning Standards domains:

- Approaches to Play and Learning
 - Emotional and Social Development
 - Language Development and Communication
 - Health and Physical Development
 - Mathematical Thinking and Expression
 - Cognitive Development
- To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

- Lesson plans are dated for the current week and organized by the developmental domains.
- The classroom journal of activities is dated for each day, and entries are labeled with SC-ELS goals.
- The teacher lists goals for children that are supported by activities on the dated lesson plan.
- The activities on the current lesson plan provide sufficient description to determine the relevant SC-ELS domains.

6. Observation and documentation of children's learning and development are conducted. (1pt)

Clarification: Documentation is a record of children's learning and development as captured through the teacher's observations and notes. Observation and documentation must be conducted on each child. To receive credit, evidence of written, dated documentation of children's learning and development occurring at least twice a year must be observed.

Examples:

- Individual portfolios with teacher observation notes, photographs and samples of children's work.
- Electronic portfolios (videos, recording).
- Individual child's observation notebook.
- Anecdotal notes.
- Developmental tracking notes based on observation.
- Formal ongoing assessment connected to program's curriculum.

Any documentation method must be written, dated and conducted on each child at least twice a year.

Interview Question:

- Do you complete any documentation of the children's learning and development? If so, how often? May I see a sample?

Observer Notes: A sample of children's portfolios, work samples or teacher's notes are reviewed as evidence to ensure that observations are conducted and documented. Dated evidence of observation and documentation must occur at least twice a year, with a minimum of 4 months between occurrences. Credit may be received if evidence is observed for at least one occurrence of observations for children. Interview may provide evidence for additional occurrences.

7. Planned activities are linked to specific learning goals based on individual children's development. (1pt)

Clarification: The teacher demonstrates intentionality by connecting the written lesson plans to children's documented development. There are three components to this indicator:

1. The teacher conducts ongoing child observation and documentation (as described in Standard E, Indicator 6).
2. The teacher uses documented observations to develop learning goals that are individualized based on a child's abilities.
3. The teacher creates learning experiences based on children's goals.

Each of these components are steps in a process of creating intentional lesson plans that are based on individual children's development. To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: The teacher conducts ongoing observation and documentation.

- The teacher observes and documents individual child progress, using anecdotal notes.
- The teacher collects children's work, photographs, informal observations, formal assessments and other information to record development.

Component 2: The teacher uses documentation of children's development to individualize learning goals.

- The teacher's anecdotal notes are linked to learning goals for children that support their abilities.
- The teacher develops learning goals based on observation and documentation (e.g. child identified to need strengthening in fine motor skills). Learning goals may be kept as a part of a child's portfolio or charted as "I can..." and "I'm working on..."

Component 3: The teacher creates learning experiences based on children's goals.

- The teacher creates and plans experiences based on children's goals (e.g. a child with fine motor goals is given additional supports such as paper-tearing, manipulating playdough, and grasping activities).
- Lesson plans are linked to children's learning goals.
- Planned activities are labeled with goals from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards.

Interview Questions:

- How do you decide what activities you will incorporate on your lesson plan?
- What factors do you consider when deciding which activities to include on your lesson plan?
- How do you support the individual learning and development of children in your class during planned activities?

Observer Notes: To receive credit, Standard E, indicators 5 and 6 must be met.

8. Experiences are provided that promote children's early literacy development. (2pts)

Clarification: Literacy development is the acquisition of early reading and writing skills. It occurs when children are actively engaged in the experience. There are two components to this indicator:

1. Reading books must be observed or listed as an activity on a current daily schedule or lesson plan.
2. At least one additional instance, other than reading books, of an experience that promotes literacy development must be observed.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Reading books.

- The teacher reads books to children on her lap.
- The teacher says the words for the pictures in books in children's home languages.
- The teacher revisits scrapbooks or memory books with the children.

Component 2: Promoting literacy through reading and writing experiences.

- The teacher and children make books using pictures of family members and familiar objects found in magazines, catalogs, and other environmental print.
- The teacher models respect for books and helps children care for books.
- The teacher points out words in the environment.
- The teacher uses a cereal box to point out a few familiar letters in a child's name.
- The teacher provides paper and crayons for scribbling.
- The teacher writes what the child says as they draw on the paper.
- The teacher encourages children to retell experiences and events that are important to them through pictures and dictation.
- The teacher models the use of writing and drawing in everyday activities.
- The teacher invites a family member who speaks a child's home language to read books.
- The teacher points to a picture of milk and uses sign language for the word milk.

Observer Notes: If children are not actively engaged and participating in the literacy experience, it does not count as an instance. The use of audio books may count as an instance if the pictures or written text are also provided.

9. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about nature, science, or math. (2pts)

Clarification: Learning about nature, science, or math helps children understand how they fit into the world. Making these connections helps children develop inquiry, exploration, and problem-solving skills. Opportunities to learn can be achieved through conversations, activities, and/or meaningful experiences. To receive credit, at least 1 instance must be observed.

Examples:

Nature:

- The teacher points to a tree and says, “The wind makes the branches move.”
- The teacher uses books with realistic pictures of animals and practices making animal sounds with children.
- The teacher facilitates an activity with children to sort leaves of different color, size, or shape.

Science:

- The teacher talks about or labels body parts.
- The teacher facilitates a sink or float activity with children to introduce the concept of weight and volume by using words like “heavy” or “light.”
- During mealtimes, the teacher talks about foods and how they help the body, such as “Milk makes your bones and teeth strong.”
- The teacher facilitates an activity with magnets and an assortment of everyday objects such as keys, spoons, wood blocks, plastic animals, etc.

Math:

- The teacher prompts children to think about quantity by saying, “There are 10 friends here today. I need 10 cups.”
- The teacher uses words to introduce comparisons. (more/less, taller/shorter, big/small, many/few, etc.)
- The teacher emphasizes numbers during a counting song by using her fingers.
- The teacher facilitates an activity with children to create shapes with craft sticks.
- The teacher uses an assortment of socks with children to promote matching and sorting

Observer Notes: The presence of nature, science, or math materials does not count unless children’s use of the materials is observed.

10. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about art or creative expression. (2pts)

Clarification: Creative expression provides children opportunities to experiment with the artistic process, develop imagination, communicate ideas, and express individuality. Opportunities for art or creative expression can be achieved through conversations, activities, and/or meaningful experiences. To receive credit, at least 1 instance must be observed.

Examples:

- Children act out familiar roles and characters using dramatic play props.
- Children create original art using open-ended art materials (e.g. skin tone paints, collage materials, playdough, pipe cleaners, glue, crayons, assorted paper, sweetgrass, leaves, yarn, fabric).
- Children tell stories with puppets.
- The teacher discusses and introduces the work of artists from different countries and traditions (e.g. ironwork, sculpture, folk art, basket weaving, pottery, murals, and depictions of lifestyle, landscapes, or portraits).
- The teacher involves children in singing or dancing games (e.g. karaoke, rhymes, or making up movements to Freeze Dance) using a variety of music (e.g. classical, salsa, rock, pop, country, reggae, rap, and popular music).
- The teacher explores the use of a variety of instruments with children.
- The teacher asks open-ended questions or discusses the properties about how art materials feel, changes in color, textures, and other characteristics of art materials.

Observer Notes: The presence of art or creative play materials does not count unless children's use of the materials is observed. Asking children "What color is this?" is not sufficient to count as an instance. Teacher-directed art activities with specific materials do not count as an activity for creative expression.

11. Opportunities are provided for children to enhance fine and gross motor development daily. (2pts)

Clarification: Motor development opportunities promote children’s large and small muscle control. Strengthening these skills facilitates the ability for children to use their whole bodies to explore their environment, develop hand-eye coordination, and manipulate objects. All children must have daily opportunities for both fine and gross motor play. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of both fine and gross motor activities or meaningful experiences must be observed.

Examples:

Fine Motor:

- Children use chalk on an easel indoors or on the sidewalk outdoors.
- Children use crayons, finger paints, or objects like rubber stamps and small, wheeled vehicles.
- Children with limited hand control use wide brushes or markers with adapted handles.
- The teacher encourages a child to use a pincer grasp to pick up pieces of cereal.
- Children use materials that encourage grasping, such as rattles, teething toys, small balls, and linking rings.
- The teacher does finger plays or hand games with children, such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or “Pat-a-cake.”
- The teacher supports children by handling materials that have varied textures.
- The teacher encourages children to use fine motor skills during self-care, such as using zippers and buttons.

Gross Motor:

- Infants are placed on mats or blankets indoors and outdoors with toys within their reach.
- The teacher bicycles babies’ legs, lifts their arms, and encourages them to kick and reach during play.
- Children use equipment to crawl and climb, both inside and outside.
- The teacher provides large boxes for children to explore and bubble wrap for jumping.
- The teacher plays music indoors and outdoors where children can make large dance movements.
- The teacher creates mazes and obstacle courses that are age- appropriate and encourage children to move through tunnels, under chairs, around tree trunks, and over low hills.
- The teacher provides small mounds, balance beams, stepping- stones, and other low barriers for children to climb on and over.

Observer Notes: The presence of fine and gross motor materials does not count unless children’s use of the materials is observed.

Standard F: Environment

The program designs the indoor and outdoor environments using the space, materials, and furnishings as resources for creating a safe, interesting, developmentally appropriate place for all children to play, learn, and grow.

Category	Recommended # of material types
Art	4
Construction/Blocks	4
Dramatic Play	4
Manipulatives/Fine Motor	4
Cozy	4
Reading/Literacy	4
Music	4
Nature/Science/Sensory	4
Math	4
Gross Motor/Movement	4
Other	4

Category: A group of complimentary materials that support play and learning. Categories within the classroom or outdoor environments should be purposefully planned with attention to order and organization of materials.

Material Type: Materials that provide the same function or serve the same purpose. Materials may be store-bought, homemade, recycled, or found in nature.

Example: The “dishes” material type includes plates, cups, bowls, and flatware.

In order to be counted, materials must be:

- In reach and permitted to use;
- Developmentally appropriate;
- Properly functioning: able to be used for its intended purpose; and
- Fully intact.

Standard F: Environment Continued

1. Sufficient materials are provided for children to remain engaged.
2. Some variety of materials are organized to support purposeful play.
3. A wide variety of materials are organized to support purposeful play.
4. Play materials are well-organized for children to make deliberate choices.
5. The classroom is divided into spaces for routines and both active and quiet play that are appropriate for ages of the children enrolled.
6. The space and furniture are organized and arranged to support play and routines.
7. A protected cozy area is available for children.
8. Materials represent the unique backgrounds of children and families.
9. A variety of child-related displays are easily visible to children.
10. A literacy-rich environment is present.
11. Designated outdoor spaces promote exploration within a least restrictive environment.
12. Materials used in the outdoor space are sufficient for children to be actively engaged.
13. Portable play materials used in the outdoor space promote a range of skills.
14. Outdoor space is planned as a play and learning environment.
15. The outdoor environment has a variety of vegetation.

1. Sufficient materials are provided for children to remain engaged. (2pts)

Clarification: Sufficient materials allow children to be engaged, reduce competition, and enhance play and learning. To receive credit, there must be a minimum of 16 different material types for classes with up to 8 children enrolled. Classes with 9-20 children must have at least 2 different material types per child enrolled. Classes with over 20 children enrolled must have a minimum of 40 different material types.

Number of children enrolled	Minimum number of different material types required
1-8	16
9-20	2 material types per child (18-40)
21 or more	40

Examples:

Infants:

Baby play-gyms, activity mats, small climber, rattles, rain stick, piano, cage bells, music table, activity boards, teething rings, soft dolls, stuffed animals, soft balls, soft play foods, soft blocks, vinyl blocks, soft cars, push toys, riding toys, pull-up bars, non-breakable mirrors, toy telephone, soft tissue box with scarves, bubbles, tunnels, cloth book, vinyl books, musical toys, stacking toys, nesting toys, tummy time toys, large knob puzzles, shape sorters, puppets, cause and effect toys, jumbo animals, large vehicles, sensory tubes

Toddlers/Twos:

Various types of balls, puzzles for a variety of ability levels, kitchen, soft dolls, vinyl dolls, doll accessories, pots/pans, dishes, play food, serving utensils, small pitchers, grocery carts, play vacuum, dress-up clothes, hats, role playing accessories, finger puppets, dancing ribbons/scarves, drums, maracas, xylophone, sensory table, small climber, blocks, building materials, road signs, toy animals, easel, paint brushes, large crayons, assorted papers, child-safe scissors, playdough, vehicles of varying sizes, people figurines, rocking toys, flannel story boards, soft seating, sorters, counting sets, board books

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where the children spend the majority of their day is assessed for sufficient materials. If additional rooms are used, the materials in these rooms are not counted. Materials that are available for children to reach and use for any amount of time during the observation are counted. If more children are present than enrolled, the number of children present is used to calculate the number of material types needed. The material type (e.g. puppets) is counted, and not each individual item (e.g. cat puppet, dog puppet, and turtle puppet). Within each material type, if there are differences that promote various skills, such as foam balls versus plastic kick balls, each variety within the material type may be counted. A climbing structure or loft is assessed for the number of opportunities available for children to have different experiences. Material types that are sets, such as blocks, tangrams, pop-beads, and interlocking toys must have at least 10 pieces to be counted. If a material type is unable to be used because a companion piece is missing, such as crayons without paper, that material type cannot be counted. Adaptations and accommodations may need to be made for individual children, so they are able to reach and use materials.

2. Some variety of materials are organized to support purposeful play. (1pt)

Clarification: Children engage in meaningful play when they have hands-on experiences with multiple material types that are physically organized into several distinct categories. A variety of materials is measured in two ways— breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are represented. Depth examines the number of material types that are organized within those categories.

To receive credit for “some variety,” at least 4 categories that each contain at least 4 different material types must be observed.

Examples:

Categories may include: Gross motor/Movement, Nature/Science/ Sensory, Math, Construction/Blocks, Art, Dramatic play, Reading/ Literacy, Cozy, Manipulatives/Fine Motor and Music.

- Dramatic play: soft dolls representing various skin tones, soft animals, toy telephones, dishes, kitchen, dress-up clothes, and food representing various traditions, national origins, and/or countries.
- Manipulatives/Fine motor: cause and effect toys, grasping toys, puzzles representing children with varying abilities, and nesting cups.
- Cozy: Soft furnishings such as cushions, mats, area rug; soft materials such as, animals, books, stacking rings, grasping toys, and teethers.
- Gross motor/movement: cradle gym, low vinyl furnishings to crawl over or into, pull-up bar, soft activity mats, grasping balls, textured balls, and vinyl ramps.

Observer Notes: To receive credit, sufficient material types in Standard F, indicator 1 must be met and the same space is assessed. If additional rooms are used, the materials in these rooms are not counted. Although materials may be duplicated within categories or moved by children from area to area, individual items counted should be grouped, organized and available in identifiable categories. Infant rooms (with children under age one) must have some variety of materials represented by the categories but are not required to have the materials organized into categories. However, if the infant room does not have 4 organized categories of materials, they must have 2 defined spaces for active and quiet play. Once a room has two or more children age one and older, they must follow the organization of materials into categories.

3. A wide variety of materials are organized to support purposeful play. (1pt)

Clarification: Children engage in meaningful play when they have hands-on experiences with multiple material types that are physically organized into several distinct categories. A variety of materials is measured in two ways— breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are represented. Depth examines the number of material types that are organized within the category. To receive credit for “wide variety,” at least 6 categories that each contain at least 4 different material types must be observed.

Examples:

Categories may include: Gross Motor/ Movement, Nature/Science/Sensory, Math, Construction/Blocks, Art, Dramatic play, Reading/ Literacy, Cozy, Manipulatives/Fine Motor, and Music.

Examples of material types within the categories:

- *Dramatic play:* soft dolls representing various skin tones, soft animals, toy telephones, dishes, kitchen, dress-up clothes, and food representing various traditions, national origins, and/or countries.
- *Manipulatives/Fine motor:* cause and effect toys, grasping toys, puzzles representing children with varying abilities, and nesting cups.
- *Reading/Literacy:* reading materials such as vinyl, cloth, and board books representing fiction, non-fiction, and multiple, religions, languages, geographical regions, and/or traditions; materials that support literacy such as hand or finger puppets, flannel boards, materials that support story telling; comfortable seating for reading such as soft chair and cushions.
- *Music:* instruments that represent different countries, rattles, music boxes, rain sticks, soft animals that make noise when shaken, and small pianos.
- *Math:* toys with shapes or numbers, simple shape, color or size sorters, stacking rings, books with numbers or shapes.
- *Gross motor/movement:* cradle gym, low vinyl furnishings to crawl over or into, pull up bar, soft activity mats, grasping balls, textured balls, and vinyl.

Observer Notes: To receive credit, sufficient material types in Standard F, indicator 1 and “some variety” in Standard F, indicator 2 must be met. The same space used to assess F1 and F2 must be assessed. If additional rooms are used, the materials in these rooms are not counted. Although materials may be duplicated within categories or moved by children from area to area, individual items counted should be grouped, organized and available in identifiable categories. Infant rooms (with children under age one) must have a wide variety of materials represented by the categories but are not required to have the materials organized into categories. However, if the infant room does not have 6 organized categories of materials, they must have 2 defined spaces for active and quiet play. Once a room has two or more children age one and older, they must follow the organization of materials into categories.

4. Play materials are well-organized for children to make deliberate choices. (1pt)

Clarification: Materials are organized in a way that allows for flexibility in use, but purposeful arrangement is apparent. Materials are logically organized or grouped to promote their appropriate use. Storage and organization do not interfere with the children's ability to reach and use materials. To receive credit, there must be at least 1 example of well-organized materials.

Examples:

- Toy storage is clearly labeled with pictures and word labels in children's home languages.
- Companion materials are stored together, such as blocks with cars and people; play dishes and food; dolls and doll furnishings.
- Baskets and shallow bins are used to organize materials.

Negative Examples:

- A toy chest with a random assortment of materials is used.
- Materials do not have defined locations.
- The shelves are overcrowded with materials.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if 2 or more negative examples are observed. When assessing negative examples, if the same example is observed more than once it may be counted as multiple instances. Only the primary space where the children spend the majority of the day is assessed for well-organized materials.

5. The classroom is divided into spaces for routines and both active and quiet play that are appropriate for ages of the children enrolled. (1pt)

Clarification: The classroom is organized and arranged to support a variety of routine and play activities. The areas are purposefully separated both for sanitation and to ensure spaces for active play and quiet, restful moments. The classroom arrangement must provide separate areas for children's needs including:

- Feeding: separate area for meals and snacks that promote health and easy clean-up.
- Diapering/toileting: area that is adjacent to a handwashing sink and separated distinctively from all other areas to promote sanitation.
- Active play: open area for movement.
- Quiet play: area where children have a place to be alone and avoid overstimulation.

To receive credit, all 4 areas must be present.

Examples:

- Feeding area: A designated space with child-sized tables and chairs that is separated from the play and diapering areas. An adult-sized chair is available for teachers to hold infants while they are bottle feeding.
- Diapering/Toileting: An area separated from the feeding and play area with needed supplies available.
- Active play area: Infants have an unobstructed floor space for tummy time, creeping, crawling, and cruising. Older infants and toddlers have an open space defined by using a large area rug or mat for music and movement, gross motor play such as balls, push toys, riding toys, rocking toys, soft climbing structures, etc.
- Quiet play area: Corner space with soft furnishings, book nook, or child-sized tables used for fine-motor activities with low shelves or furniture that is used to create boundaries from active play.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if food and/or items used for feeding are present in the diapering area, including the sink. If a separate handwashing sink is used for diapering, it is used only for that purpose to prevent cross-contamination. If the same sink is used for handwashing and food preparation, it must be sanitized properly between uses. When not in use for feeding, the tables in this area may be repurposed for play activities. The active area may be counted if there is a designated space for active/movement activities, even if no gross motor materials are present.

6. The space and furniture are organized and arranged to support play and routines. (1pt)

Clarification: Intentional planning is used to arrange and organize the space and furniture. The space and furniture provide the appropriate conditions for activities and routines. The arrangement supports a wide range of children's abilities, ages and stages of development. Accommodations or adaptations for individual children are made to ensure participation of all children. To receive credit, at least 3 examples of how the space and furniture are organized to support play and routines.

Examples:

- Low shelves are organized to separate space, increase visibility, promote reachability, and protect children's play.
- Soft areas are provided for children who need a space to be alone.
- The teacher rearranges or modifies flexible spaces to support self-directed play activities.
- The construction area provides a flat surface for building.
- The art materials are stored and used in an area of the classroom that has surfaces which are easy to clean.
- The majority of furnishings are child-sized and children are able to use them comfortably independently.
- Pathways provide easy availability to play areas so that they are reachable to children and adults with special needs.
- Areas for quiet and noisy play are separated by physical space.

Negative Examples:

- A loud space, such as blocks, is located next to a quiet space, such as the cozy area.
- A child with limited mobility is unable to reach all classroom spaces due to the furniture arrangement.
- Bucket seat tables are used.
- Children use a large space to run from side to side, thus running over others trying to play in designated spaces.
- Children play in overcrowded areas with minimal materials, causing disruptive behaviors to occur.
- Confining equipment dominates the space in a way that impedes independent access to materials.

Observer Notes: The space identified in F1 is assessed. Credit cannot be received if two or more negative examples are observed.

7. A protected cozy area is available for children. (1pt)

Clarification: A cozy area is a space where a child can find comfort, retreat, and relax. A cozy area is defined by having at least 2 soft furnishings and at least 2 soft material types. Cozy areas must be kept separate from active play. The teacher redirects active play to active play spaces to ensure the cozy area is protected. To receive credit, at least 1 protected cozy area must be available.

Examples:

- Soft furnishings: thick mat, covered crib mattress, non-slip rug, sofa, large cushions, soft chair, fabric canopy or wall tapestry.
- Soft-material types: pillows, stuffed animals, soft or vinyl books, soft toys, Serape Blanket, cloth puppets or soft dolls.

Interview Question:

How is the cozy area used?

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if there is not a cozy area, the area is available for a limited time, or children are allowed to have active play in the space. If active play begins, and the teacher redirects the children from the cozy area, credit may be received. The reading area may be counted if the space is protected and contains sufficient soft furnishings and materials. Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the day is assessed for a cozy area.

8. Materials represent the unique backgrounds of children and families. (1pt)

Clarification: Providing materials that reflect children and families helps children recognize and respect similarities and differences between themselves and others. Examples of uniqueness: skin tone, traditions, nationality, ability, family structure, and age. To receive credit, at least 3 different material types representing at least 2 examples of uniqueness must be observed.

Examples:

- Skin tone: dolls, figurines, or puppets.
- Traditions: photos of children's families engaged in typical activities, food packages or kitchen tools from various countries, global art or music books in various languages, or musical instruments from different parts of the world.
- Nationality: maps, photos of different parts of the world, national flags, or representations of recognizable geographic or architectural features of different countries.
- Abilities: puzzles or pictures on display representing people of various abilities.
- Family Structure: books that depict a variety of family structures.
- Age: easily visible pictures on the wall depicting multiple generations, such as grandparents, parents, and children.

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the day is assessed. Contrasting examples must be present within a material type to receive credit.

9. A variety of child-related displays are easily visible to children. (1pt)

Clarification: Displays that are age-appropriate and reflect the activities, interests and experiences of the children enrolled help them feel welcome, support learning, and celebrate efforts. A display is considered easily visible if children can see the meaningful details within it. To receive credit, at least 4 examples of child-related display must be observed. Of the four, one must reflect the children enrolled.

Examples:

- Reflects the children enrolled: Children's artwork or creations, photos of family members and pets, photos of the enrolled children.
- Realistic pictures of people of different nationalities, everyday objects, animals, and nature.
- Art: Photos, paintings, wall hangings, tapestry, murals, and weavings
- Visual schedule of classroom activities
- Three-dimensional displays (visible to all children): Sculpture, mobiles, windsocks, spinners, chimes, and non-poisonous plants

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the day is assessed. If the display is detailed, such as a photo, it should be within the child's eye level to be counted. Larger items (such as, hanging items, murals, and large posters) may be placed higher, if they are able to be seen. Display that reflects the children in the classroom may include: their artwork/creations, photos of them, and/or photos of their families/ pets. Commercially produced displays that are seasonal and do not match the current season are not counted. Display that is not easily visible is not counted. Credit cannot be given if there are less than four examples of display, or no examples of display reflect the children.

10. A literacy-rich environment is present. (1pt)

Clarification: The environment promotes literacy by having books, early writing materials, and/or meaningful print for children. These examples make literacy a natural part of children's learning experiences in their daily environment.

There are two components to this indicator:

1. For children 0-12 months, a minimum of 5 books are out and available for use. For children over 12 months, a minimum of 10 books are reachable.
2. Two literacy-rich examples from early writing materials and/or meaningful print must be present. Meaningful print describes written words and symbols that are familiar, recognizable, and usable to children.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Example:

Component 1: Presence of books.

- Fiction, nonfiction, board books, cloth books, vinyl books, homemade books, magazines, and books in children's home languages.

Component 2: Literacy rich examples.

Early writing materials: crayons, markers, chalk, paint, variety of paper, stencils, tracing/rubbing cards, stamps, and envelopes.

Meaningful print:

- Children's names and pictures posted on belongings or cubbies.
- Environmental print such as road signs, logos, photos or posters of familiar books, and household products.
- Dramatic play items such as: familiar food containers, telephone books, greeting cards, shopping lists, menus, and recipe cards.
- Labeling children's art.
- Pictures with word labels for storing play materials.
- Rug with pictures and word labels.
- Word labels on objects and furnishings in children's home languages.

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the day is assessed. Books that are damaged so that they are unable to be read, books in closed containers, or books that are out of children's reach, are not counted. Only print that is on the lower half of the room may be counted. A child's written name on multiple items counts as one example of meaningful print. Some children may use adaptive technology or equipment to acquire literacy skills, which may be counted in the appropriate component.

11. Designated outdoor spaces promote exploration within a least restrictive environment. (1pt)

Clarification: The outdoors is a natural place of wonder for young children and provides them the space to explore the world around them. There are two components to this indicator:

1. The children have an outdoor space designated for their sole use. Sole use is defined as a separate area or separate outdoor time from older children.
2. The designated outdoor space is designed to encourage movement without confinement or restriction. Play mats or blankets may be taken outdoors and placed on the ground so that non-mobile infants have freedom of movement.

To receive credit, both components must be met.

Observer Notes: Buggies may be used for transporting children between indoors and the designated outdoor space. When children arrive in the designated outdoor space, they must have freedom of movement. Bucket swings are confining equipment much like exersaucers and bouncers because children must be placed in the equipment by an adult. This type of equipment causes children to be restrained and without the ability to change positions or move about as they wish. Credit cannot be received if equipment that causes confinement is observed. Teachers themselves may be considered confining if they hold a child for the duration of the outdoor observation. If restrictive or confining equipment, such as a stroller, is used to help a child with special needs to fully participate, credit may be received.

12. Materials used in the outdoor space are sufficient for children to be actively engaged. (2pts)

Clarification: Providing sufficient materials for each child is important for their ability to make choices in play and explore the outdoor space. Accommodations or adaptations are made to ensure that all children have opportunities to participate. To receive credit, at least 1 different material type per child enrolled must be present. When more than 20 children use the outdoor space at the same time, there must be a minimum of 20 different material types present.

Examples:

Infants: Baby play-gyms, activity mats, rattles, teething rings, soft dolls/animals, soft balls, soft blocks, vinyl blocks, soft cars, push toys, riding toys, pull-up bars, non-breakable mirrors, bubbles, tunnels, cloth books, vinyl books, musical toys, rocking boat, short stairs, stacking toys, nesting toys, low ramps, tummy time toys

Toddlers/Twos:

Small slides, outdoor blocks, building materials, cones, balls, small basketball hoops, wagons, trikes, bean bags and toss games, shovels, scoops, pails/buckets, mud kitchen, pots/pans, dishes, serving utensils, small pitchers, grocery carts, watering cans, wheel barrow, balance beams, stepping stones, dancing ribbons/scarves, drums, maracas, sensory table, small climber, play house, plastic dolls, road signs, steering wheels, large toy animals, easel, paint brushes, sidewalk chalk, toy gas station pump, large trucks

Interview Question:

What materials do you take outdoors? May I see them?

Observer Notes: Only the outdoor space that the children use on the day of the observation is assessed. If regularly scheduled outdoor play is not observed, the space that the teacher states is primarily used is assessed. If multiple classrooms use the outdoor space at the same time, the number of enrolled children for those classrooms must be used to determine sufficiency. If the observed number of children is greater than the enrolled number of children, the observed number of children is used to assess the number of material types needed. Stationary equipment, such as a climbing structure, is assessed for the number of opportunities available for children to have different experiences. For example, a play-gym with a slide, activity panel, and stairs counts as 3 material types. Since bucket swings are not independently usable by the children, they are not counted. Within each material type, if there are differences that promote various skills, such as soft balls versus grasping balls, each variety within the material type may be counted. Vegetation planted in the outdoor space does not count as a material type. Credit cannot be received if outdoor equipment that is not age-appropriate is used or there is no outdoor space designated for the classroom.

13. Portable play materials used in the outdoor space promote a range of skills. (1pt)

Clarification: Children must have the opportunity to be physically active in a variety of ways. Portable play materials are those that are intended to be moved and manipulated by children. They are essential to children's gross motor play experiences. There are two components to this indicator:

1. At least 5 different portable play material types must be available.
2. Portable play materials must support a minimum of 3 different gross motor skills.

To receive credit, both components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Portable play materials.

Balls of various sizes and materials, large trucks, outdoor blocks, push toys, riding toys with pedals, riding toys without pedals, scooters, vinyl spots, shovels/scoops, tricycles, tunnels, pull toys, rocking horse, portable activity mat, baby play-gym, musical instruments, bubbles

Component 2: Gross motor skills.

Reaching, building, catching, digging, hopping, jumping, kicking, walking, pedaling, pushing, rolling, scooping, scooting, throwing, crawling, rocking

Observer Notes: If children are not observed outdoors, a teacher interview may be used to determine what additional materials are made available outdoors. Various types of balls (e.g. grasping, soft, rubber, beach) that promote different skills may be counted for up to 2 portable play materials. Stationary play equipment does not count as a portable play material.

14. Outdoor space is planned as a play and learning environment. (1pt)

Clarification: Outdoor play and learning environments contain a variety of opportunities that enhance children's play experience and contribute to their healthy development. A planned outdoor play and learning environment is an outdoor space that includes activity settings purposefully arranged to promote movement, play and learning. An activity setting is a separate, physically-bounded space where a predictable pattern of activity occurs. Settings are intentionally designed to support a wide range of children's abilities, ages and stages of development. Accommodations or adaptations for individual children are made to ensure participation of all children.

There are two components to this indicator:

1. A minimum number of activity settings are present in the outdoor space:
 - 0-12 months: the outdoor space contains a minimum of 3 activity settings;
 - 12 months and older: the outdoor space contains a minimum of 5 activity settings;
 - Activity settings must be:
 - Permanent or semi-permanent (i.e., not easily moved);
 - Separate, physically-bounded is defined as different ground surfacing and/or a physical boundary; OR a distinct structure with different ground surfacing and/or a physical boundary between activity settings.
2. Activity settings as identified in component 1 are purposefully arranged when:
 - Play in settings is protected from interference;
 - Pathways generate flow between activity settings and throughout the entire outdoor space;
 - Quiet and active play settings are located apart each other.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Required number of permanent or semi-permanent, separate and physically bounded activity settings are identified.

Activity Settings examples:

- A grass-covered mound with a pathway of stepping stones along one side.
- A stationary tunnel bordered by flower beds with plant protection rails.
- A low stage placed against an exterior fence and bordered on the free sides by wooden planter boxes.
- A stationary play-gym with a slide and climber surrounded by cushioning material and a border.
- A looping pathway for wheeled toys.

Component 2: Activity settings are purposefully arranged.

- For infant space: a padded low deck covered with vine covered arbors on 3-sides, with stepping stones that lead to an adjacent grass-covered mound on one side and a raised-bed sensory garden on the other side.
- For toddler space: a looping pathway containing a grassy mound in the middle. Secondary pathways lead to a sandbox in a corner bordered by low tree stumps, an anchored playhouse bordered by flower beds with plant protection rails, and a music wall bordered by shrubs.

Observer Notes: Component 2 (purposefully arranged) cannot be met until component 1 (activity settings) is met. When one outdoor play and learning environment is used by a mixed age group of children, use the age of the oldest child to determine the minimum number of settings required. If an activity setting is under construction, is obstructed, or not ready for safe use, the setting may not be counted. Once an activity setting has been identified, it may only be counted once, even if there are two areas with the same setting. For example, if there are two playhouses in different areas, the playhouses may only be counted as one activity setting. Fall zone cushioning material, such as sand, is a type of surfacing, not a setting. However, types of surfacing including concrete, dirt, grass, mulch, living groundcovers, pour in place, sand, smooth rocks, stepping stones, or wood may help define and separate activity settings. Additionally, to help define activity settings, types of physical boundaries include interior fence, landscape timbers, logs, low wall, plant protection rails, rubberized border, shrubs, smooth rocks, tire planters, tree stumps, vegetation, or wood (e.g., a playhouse sitting on grass bordered by flower beds with plant protection rails). A pathway must be looping to count as a setting. A walkway along the side of a building does not count as a pathway but may help define another activity setting.

15. The outdoor environment has a variety of vegetation. (1pt)

Clarification: Outdoor play spaces with a variety of plantings allow children to actively explore, engage with, and gain an appreciation for nature. Outdoor environments that incorporate vegetation enrich children's play and learning. Vegetation is defined in the following categories: Living groundcover, vine, tree, annual/perennial plants, edible plants, ornamental grasses, and shrubs. To receive credit, the outdoor space for children 0-12 months contains at least 3 categories of vegetation, and the outdoor space for children over 12 months contains at least 5 categories of vegetation.

Examples:

- Living Groundcover: zoysia, clover, creeping phlox, bermuda grass, st. augustine grass, centipede grass
- Vine: coral honeysuckle, confederate jasmine
- Tree: redbud, fig, crape myrtle
- Multiple Annual/Perennial Plants: black-eyed susan, lambs ear, purple coneflower, hosta
- Multiple Edible Plants: basil, lettuce, rosemary
- Multiple Shrubs: camellia, hydrangea, dwarf cryptomeria
- Multiple Ornamental Grasses: muhly grass, fountain grass, little bluestem

-An infant outdoor space contains an herb garden with rosemary, basil, and thyme, three pots of black-eyed susans, and has a grassy mound counting as three categories of vegetation.

-The two's outdoor play space has a grassy lawn, a redbud tree, a confederate jasmine vine on an arbor, five muhly grasses, and ten sunflowers planted along a fence counting as five categories of vegetation.

Observer Notes: Only living vegetation within the outdoor space that is used by children is counted. Dormant vegetation may be counted if it is visible. Vegetation that is reachable to children must be non-hazardous (non-poisonous, not thorny, or not pose a potential choking risk). Annual/Perennial Plants, Edible Plants, Ornamental Grasses, and Shrubs must have multiple to count as a category. Multiple is defined as three or more plantings for Annual/Perennial Plants, Edible Plants, Ornamental Grasses, and Shrubs. Multiples may include the same type of plant or different types of plants within each category. Each planting, with the exception of trees, may only count for one category. For example, three blueberry bushes may only count as the shrub category or the edible plant category. When there are 1-3 trees, they are counted as 1 category. when there are 4-5, they may be counted for 2 categories and when there are 6 or more, they can be counted for three categories. Credit may be received for edible plants in a separate enclosed garden if the garden is located within the assessed outdoor space and children can freely access the garden.

Element VI: Ratio and Group Size

Ratio and group size are two factors that are critical to children's health, safety, and development. Low child-to-adult ratios and small group sizes help ensure that each child receives individual attention from a teacher who is available to take care their unique needs. This positively impacts children's social and emotional development, physical well-being, and overall learning. One-on-one attention helps children feel safe and secure. Additionally, both children and teachers have reduced feelings of being overwhelmed. A smaller group size is easier to manage, because teachers are better able to watch and respond. (Office of Child Care, 2020)

Administration and Scoring of Element VI: Ratio and Group Size

Each classroom that has children enrolled receives a ratio and group size assessment. The ratio and group size are assessed according to the charts provided in Element VI: Standards A and B, based on the youngest child enrolled in the classroom. Information is collected on the number of children enrolled, the number of children observed, the assigned teachers, and the teachers observed in the classroom. The standards are scored based on the highest number of enrolled children/assigned teachers versus observed children and teachers.

Standard A: Ratio and Standard B: Group Size are both worth 5 points per classroom. Each classroom may earn a total of 10 points for meeting Element VI: Standards A and B.

1. The classroom meets the ABC Quality ratios. (5pts)

Clarification: Ratios are determined by the number of teachers to children. Ratios are applied to the youngest child in the room. Ratios are assessed on both the observed **and** the enrolled number of children in the classroom and are scored based on the greater of the two. Ratios are assessed in all locations. To receive credit, the classroom must meet the ABC Quality ratios.

Age of Child	ABC Quality Ratio
0 - 12 months	1 adult: 4 children
12 - 24 months	1 adult: 5 children
2 – 3 years	1 adult: 7 children

Observer Notes: Ratios are assessed based on the age of the youngest child in the classroom and not majorities. If the classroom is observed to be out of compliance with ABC ratios, **credit cannot be received**. Volunteers cannot be included in staff-child ratio.

1. The classroom meets the ABC Quality group size. (5pts)

Clarification: Group size is determined by the total number of children in a single classroom. With smaller group sizes children have better opportunities to develop closer relationships with teachers and other children. Group size is applied based on the youngest child in the room. Group size is assessed on both the observed **and** the enrolled number of children in the classroom and is scored based on the greater of the two. Group size is assessed in all locations. To receive credit, the classroom must meet the ABC Quality group size.

Age of Child	ABC Quality Group Size
0 - 12 months	8
12 - 24 months	10
2 – 3 years	14

Observer Notes: Very large classrooms with dividers that are at least 4 feet tall may be considered separate classroom spaces. To be considered distinct classrooms, each must be equally equipped with learning materials and furnishings, and each group must be separately staffed with no cross-supervision. Classes do not combine.



1-800-763-2223
abcquality@dss.sc.gov
www.abcquality.org
<https://m.facebook.com/ABCQualitySC/>

Columbia Office:
3150 Harden Street Extension
Columbia, SC 29203

Greenville Office
P.O. Box 5616, MS 6001
Greenville, SC 29606-5616