

Process Quality Guide

Preschool



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



ABC Quality *Process Quality Guide: Preschool*

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 content, experts who provided guidance and recommendations on the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- 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 practices, field research and expert consultation.

The ABC Quality *Process Quality Guide: Preschool* 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. (2025). *ABC Quality Process Quality Guide: Preschool V2*. Columbia: Author

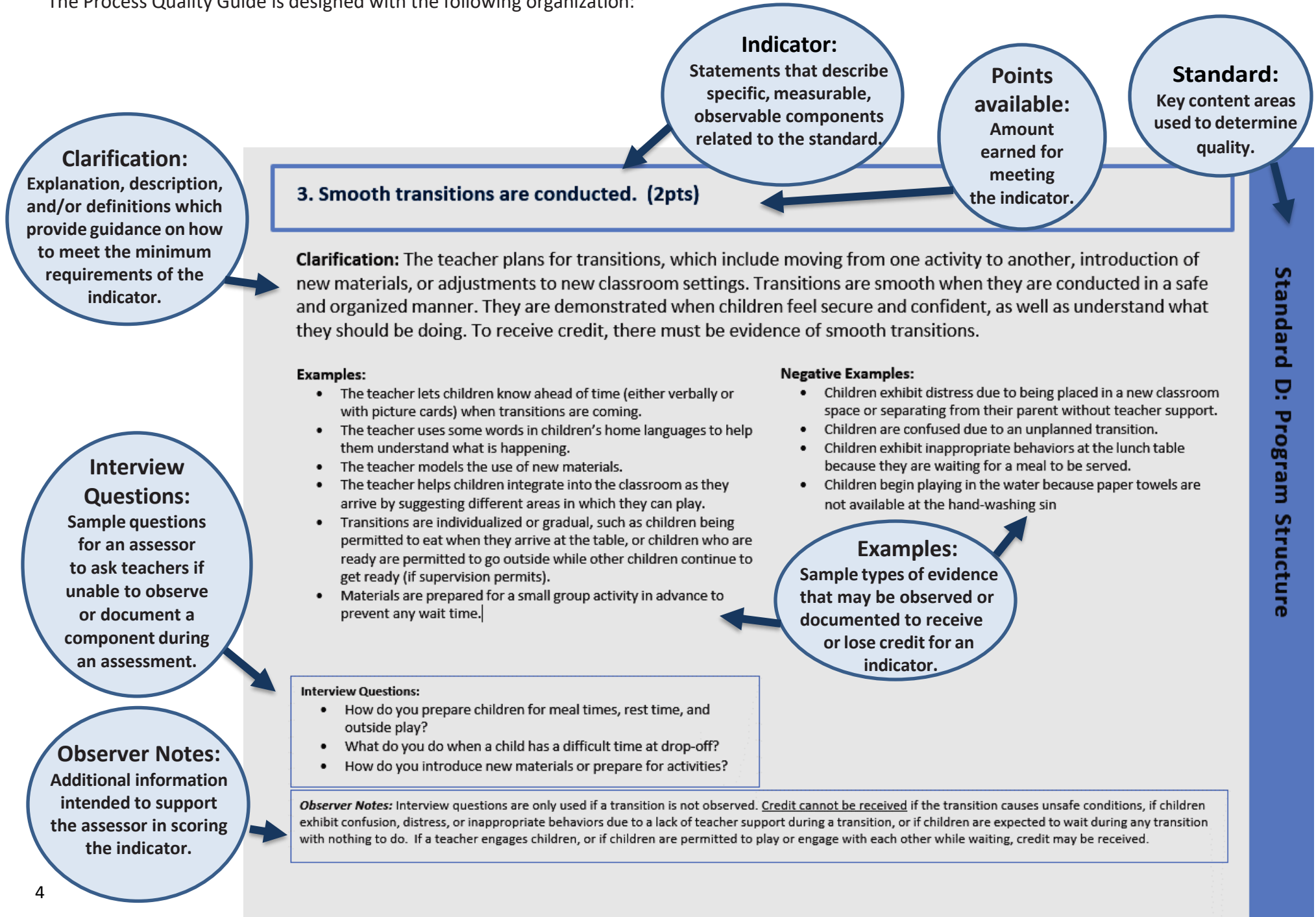
Funding for this document was provided by the South Carolina Department of Social Services with federal funds from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Leadership for this initiative has been provided by the Division of Early 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	12
Standard C: Guidance	23
Standard D: Program Structure	32
Standard E: Early Learning	42
Standard F: Environment	56
Element VI: Ratio and Group Size	
Administration and Scoring of Element VI: Ratio and Group Size	74
Standard A: Ratio	75
Standard B: Group Size	76

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 preschool-age children through warm, trusting relationships with familiar and responsive teachers.

1. Contributes to the positive climate by building relationships.
2. Listens attentively and responds appropriately when a child talks or attempts to communicate.
3. Responds immediately and appropriately to support a child's expression of emotions.
4. 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 cuddles or rubs a child's back.
- A child extends their hand, and the teacher responds by holding it.
- The teacher gives high fives, fist bumps, or special handshakes.
- The teacher allows a child to be close enough to physically touch.
- The teacher provides hand-over-hand support.
- 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 Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and modeled by the therapist.
- The teacher validates a child's frustration when trying a new activity that is challenging.
- The teacher shows empathy when children are hurt.
- The teacher is patient as a child is having difficulty expressing feelings.
- The teacher introduces a child to the group and helps facilitate their participation into the activity.
- The teacher smiles and greets children in their home language upon arrival.
- The teacher models positive interactions with other teachers, such as listening when the other is 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.
- The teacher hugs a child who is pulling away.
- The teacher discusses a child's personal or medical information within hearing distance of others

Observer Notes: Positive climate is assessed by observing the reactions of the children and teachers during interactions. Credit cannot be received if any negative instance is observed. Under no circumstances should children be shaken, jerked around, or handled roughly in any way. If physical force is used to control children's behavior, credit cannot be received. However, if a child is in danger of harming themselves or others, physical touch may be used to prevent harm. Any instance of a teacher using corporal punishment or handling a child roughly will result in no credit and a report to Child Care Licensing and/or addressed by ABC Quality, as applicable.

2. 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 pay attention to the child and express 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:

- The teacher looks at children and smiles, nods, and/or expresses interest as they discuss their roles in the dramatic play area.
- Ebony points at the snack picture on the visual schedule and the teacher responds by signing and saying to wash hands prior to snack.
- The teacher gives air high-fives to a group of children who signal that they have finished cleaning the block area.
- The teacher looks up with interest from wiping a table in response to a child speaking to them.
- A group of preschoolers is engaging in an activity on the playground. As they are communicating, the teacher squats to join them at eye-level and participates in their conversation.

Negative Examples:

- The teacher does not allow children to talk during meal times or transitions.
- The teacher tells children they cannot ask questions during story time.
- A child taps the teacher on the shoulder and is not acknowledged.
- 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. When a teacher redirects a child to be considerate of another child who is speaking, this does not count as an instance of discouraging communication.

3. 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 the teacher says, "Dakota I see that you're upset. Can you tell me why you're upset?"
- When a child is eager to share her excitement about completing an activity, the teacher responds, "Good job Evonne! You completed the puzzle by yourself."
- When a child is upset and crying, the teacher gets on the child's level and reaches out their hand to offer comfort.

Negative Examples:

- A frightened child calls for help from the top of the play-gym. The teacher does not respond to the child until several minutes have passed.
- The teacher diminishes a child's excitement by stating, "Calm down," or "Stop being hyper."
- The teacher dismisses a child's emotion by stating, "You're okay," without offering comfort, or shames the child by saying, "Only babies cry."

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.

4. 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 children in their home languages and encourages children to use their home languages or dialects.
- The teacher asks a child with a special skill to model for their peers.
- The teacher encourages a child to use their communication device to respond during morning meeting.
- The teacher invites children to bring 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 demeans, labels, 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. Uses language to acknowledge and respond to children's comments/questions.
3. Models turn-taking in conversations with individual children.
4. Encourages and supports individual children in communicating and labeling their feelings.
5. Asks individual children open-ended questions related to their experiences and waits for a response.
6. Prompts children to use critical thinking skills that require more complex responses.
7. Expands children's knowledge by elaborating, extending, or sharing information.
8. Uses advanced language and/or concepts to increase children's vocabulary.
9. Uses verbal play to draw attention to sounds and words.
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 notices what children are doing and makes a point to speak to individual children while they are playing. This is done without a request or a child trying to get the teacher's attention.
- The teacher talks with a child about what they are doing, hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, or tasting.
- The teacher invites a child to talk about a book they are reading.
- The teacher makes specific, non-judgmental comments about a child's art, such as "You put more feathers in this corner."
- The teacher engages with children one-on-one 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 objects, and words or phrases for common events and routines.

Observer Notes: Directive language, such as giving instructions to children as to where to go or what to do, does not count as an instance. Initiating communication with a group of children does not count as an instance.

2. Uses language to acknowledge and respond to children's comments/questions. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher responds to child-initiated communication with appropriate feedback. The teacher may ask for additional information or make relevant comments in response to children's questions or comments. To receive credit, at least 3 instances must be observed.

Examples:

- A child asks the teacher, "Why is the moon in the sky?" The teacher says, "I don't know, let's look for a book to try and find out."
- A child says, "I went to the food store yesterday." The teacher says, "What type of food did you see?"
- A child says, "*Mira* [Look]!" and holds up a picture. The teacher uses some of the child's home language and says, "Wow, you used a lot of *verde* [green]."
- Aiden says, "My skin is darker than Angel's skin." The teacher says, "We all have different skin colors."

Observer Notes: Each teacher response to an individual child may count as an instance, including during small or large group times.

3. Models turn-taking in conversations with individual children. (2pts)

Clarification: Turn-taking in conversation is defined as having at least one full exchange where the communication continues following a response. To receive credit, at least 3 instances of back-and-forth communication between the teacher and individual children must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher and child are looking at a book.
Teacher: "What do you see on this page?"
Child: "A dog. I have a dog at home."
Teacher: "You do? What kind of dog do you have?"
Child: "He is a big, brown dog."
- Exchange occurs through using signs. The teacher also uses verbal language.
Child: "More."
Teacher: "More what?"
Child: "More bubbles."
- Child: "I went to the park once and the dragon carried my mom away."
Teacher: "Oh really? Did the dragon bring her back before it was time for you to leave?"
Child: "No."
Teacher: "So who is that nice lady who drops you off in the morning?"
- Child: "I had my first baseball game yesterday."
Teacher: "That sounds like fun! What is your team called?"
Child: "The Eagles. Micah is also on my team."

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. However, each turn-taking conversation between the teacher and an individual child during small or large group times may count as an instance.

4. 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:

- A child screams when another child takes a toy. The teacher states, “Are you frustrated because Jung-Soo took your toy? Can you tell her how you feel?”
- A child jumps up and down after building a tall tower with unit blocks. The teacher states, “You are very excited about what you built. That took some work.”
- The teacher uses feelings/emotions dolls to support a child who is non-verbal in expressing their feelings.
- As a child shows concern for Sophie, the teacher says, “Sophie is sad because her grandma had to go back to Atlanta. She misses her.”
- A child stomps over to the teacher and says, “I’m mad!” The teacher gets on the child’s level and asks, “What happened that made you mad?”
- A child covers their ears after hearing a loud noise, and the teacher says, “That was a loud bump. Did it scare you?”
- A child smiles and hums while eating. The teacher says, “You seem to really like your turkey sandwich. Are you enjoying it?”

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.

5. Asks individual children open-ended questions related to their experiences 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. To receive credit, at least 4 instances of the teacher using different open-ended questions with wait time must be observed.

Examples:

- Who could we call to help us?
- What is your favorite part of the day?
- Where do the bugs go when it is cold?
- When would you like to play the game?
- Why do eagles fly?
- How are you feeling?

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.

6. Prompts children to use critical thinking skills that require more complex responses. (2pts)

Clarification: Prompting children to think and respond to advanced questioning promotes cognitive development and critical thinking skills. Critical thinking challenges children to predict, plan, reflect, analyze, problem solve, or evaluate by using open-ended thinking. To receive credit, at least 2 instances of the teacher using critical thinking prompts with opportunities for the child to respond must be observed.

Examples:

- *Prediction:* The teacher asks the following questions: What would happen if you put a cup of ice cubes on the playground and another one in the classroom? Which one would melt first? Why?
- *Planning:* During morning meeting, the teacher seeks children's input (verbally or using pictures/props) for what activities they want to do and materials that might be needed.
- *Reflection:* While holding pictures from their recent field trip, the teacher asks, "What is one thing you learned when we went to the fire station?"
- *Analysis:* After reading a book, the teacher asks, "Take a look at the pictures of the people in this book. Why do some pictures look like you and some look different from you?"
- *Problem Solving:* The teacher asks, "How could you use five blocks to build a bridge that will not collapse when you drive a small car over it?"
- *Evaluation:* The teacher asks, "Where is your favorite place to go? Why?"

Observer Notes: Critical thinking prompts may be directed to individual children or groups. Credit may be received if a child's response is "I don't know."

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

Clarification: The teacher shares information with children using descriptive language to expand 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 2 instances of the teacher expanding children's knowledge must be observed.

Examples:

- A child says, "I had eggs for breakfast." The teacher says, "Eggs come from chickens. I had oatmeal, which comes from a grain called an oat."
- During a unit on outer space, the teacher shares a photo and says "Mae Jemison traveled into space. She was an engineer, physician, and an astronaut."
- While showing an article from the local newspaper, the teacher shares, "A boy from Ghana received a scholarship in mathematics to a New York school. New York is in the United States where we live."
- When children are playing "Go Fish," the teacher shares the steps to the game. "Take your turn and see if you have any matches in your hand. If you don't, you have to 'go fish' by drawing another card."

Observer Notes: A conversation during which teachers provide information collaboratively may count as an instance. Instances that occur during group times may be counted.

8. Uses advanced language and/or concepts to increase children's vocabulary. (2pts)

Clarification: Intentional efforts are made to expand and increase children's vocabulary development and comprehension. The teacher introduces new vocabulary and explains the meaning of words in simplified language. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of increasing children's vocabulary through teachable moments and/or pre-planned instruction must be observed.

Examples:

Teachable moments:

- The teacher says, "Let's work on a mural today. A mural is a large picture that the entire class can work on together."
- While reading a book about a farm, the teacher says, "That is a trough. A trough is where you can put food to feed the pigs."
- The teacher notices children comparing their skin tones and says, "Melanin is a pigment in our bodies that makes skin look darker and protects it from being burned by the sun."
- A child is looking at leaves in the science center. The teacher says, "The leaf looks different when you look at it through the magnifying lens. Magnify means make bigger. You see more details on the leaf when you look at it through the magnifying lens."
- The teacher says, "Blake's family is from China. They speak a language called Mandarin. 'Ni Hao' is hello in Mandarin."

Pre-planned instruction:

- Evidence in the classroom, such as a posted chart with new vocabulary.
- The current lesson plan demonstrates that the teacher regularly introduces new words.
- The teacher translates new vocabulary in the home language of children during lessons and discussions.

Observer Notes: Evidence of the use of advanced language and/or concepts may be found through observation, visual displays in the classroom, or current lesson plans. A word wall of sight words does not count as an instance.

9. Uses verbal play to draw attention to sounds and words. (2pts)

Clarification: Verbal play is a fun interaction that encourages sound and/or word experimentation, manipulation, or acquisition. The teacher uses a variety of everyday activities to help children hear and recognize sounds in words. Activities must be developmentally appropriate and engaging so that children become interested in sounds and patterns. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of verbal play must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher asks children whose name begins with the same sound as “bell” to choose a center to play in.
- The teacher claps out syllables in children’s names.
- The teacher emphasizes repeating sounds or rhyme patterns while reading a book.
- The teacher plays games where children match pictures to sounds (e.g., select a picture card that starts with the “sh” sound).
- The teacher asks children to come up with words that rhyme (example: cat/hat, fall/ball, boat/goat).
- The teacher says rhymes, sings songs, or raps using repeating sound patterns.

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 communicate with each other. Teacher practices encourage peer communication throughout day. To receive credit, at least 2 instances of the teacher encouraging peer communication must be observed or children are observed engaging in communication with each other for the majority of the observation.

Examples:

- During morning meeting or group time, the teacher encourages children to ask questions of each other and helps children expand on what they are saying.
- The teacher brings up relevant events that are of interest to children. While looking at a book about sea creatures with a small group, the teacher says, "Sam went to the beach yesterday and watched the sea turtle get released back into the ocean. Sam, would you like to share what you saw with Kaitlyn and Imani?"
- During lunch children talk about foods they eat at home, nutrition, and family eating habits.
- The teacher says, "Pharaoh said good-bye to you. Would you like to wave to tell her good-bye?"
- Children are discussing roles to establish a restaurant in the dramatic play area.
- While playing with drums in the music center, the teacher says, "Cheyenne your family went to a Pow Wow where they played drums. Can you tell Tammuz and Angie how the drums are used in the Pow Wow?"
- While looking at a book about animals that live in Africa with a small group, the teacher says, "Akeeba's grandfather is from Africa and saw wild animals. Akeeba, would you like to share what your grandfather saw with Alena and Enrique?"
- Multiple children are talking to each other during center time activities.

Observer Notes: 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 facilitates 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. Communicates behavioral expectations to guide children's behavior in a positive manner.
4. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child.
5. Encourages children by verbally acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or helpful behaviors.
6. Models and promotes positive peer interactions.
7. Supports children in their attempts to resolve social conflicts.
8. Provides opportunities for children to identify with and feel a sense of family within the classroom.

1. Uses positive guidance techniques. (2pts)

Clarification: Positive guidance includes anticipation and prevention of potential conflicts, as well as interventions that help children learn desired behavior and self-discipline. 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 limits the number of children allowed in an interest area to ensure there is a sufficient number of materials and adequate space to play without competition.
- The teacher reviews behavior expectations prior to an activity.
- The teacher uses physical proximity to act as a supportive presence with a child who has displayed aggressive behavior.
- The classroom has a designated calming space in the classroom for children to regulate their emotions.

Reviewing safe practices:

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

Intervention:

- The teacher calmly intervenes when children exhibit harmful behaviors.
- Children who are exhibiting tension have the opportunity to cool down, reflect and rejoin the group.
- The teacher ensures that teasing is promptly addressed and handled in a positive way.
- The teacher uses a breathing or counting exercise to help calm a child.

Redirection:

- The teacher provides verbal cues for redirections, such as reminding a child to use their napkin instead of their sleeve.

Offering Choices:

- 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?”

Questioning to prompt problem solving:

- The teacher encourages children to think about their behavior. Such as, “What might happen if we run in the classroom?” or “How might you ask your friend for a turn with the toy?”

Logical Consequences:

- After repeated instances of a child throwing blocks and not following redirection, the teacher asks the child to select another interest area.

Negative Examples:

- 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 uses unrelated consequences, such as forcing a child to read, after running in the classroom.
- The teacher singles out a specific group of children with 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. (2pts)

Clarification: Positive guidance statements tell children what to do by stating the desired behavior. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of a 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 "Don't hit."
- The teacher says, "Draw on the paper," instead of "Stop coloring on the table."

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. Communicates behavioral expectations to guide children's behavior in a positive manner. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher clearly states and reinforces expectations to prevent undesirable behaviors using positive language. Children understand and abide by commonly agreed upon rules. To receive credit, there must be evidence of the teacher communicating behavioral expectations in a positive way, either stated or posted and visible to children.

Examples:

- The teacher reminds children of classroom expectations by stating, "We walk inside," "Gentle hands," etc.
- A list of three to five positively stated rules are posted at the children's eye-level and applied consistently in the classroom.
- The teacher encourages children when they follow behavior expectations by saying, "Thank you for picking up your toys and keeping our room safe."
- The teacher uses songs, games, or hands-on activities to guide children's behaviors, such as teaching children a handwashing song or clean-up fingerplay.
- Posted rules meet children's individual learning needs by including photos of the children demonstrating the behavior or including children's home languages.

Interview Questions:

- Do you have behavioral expectations or class rules?
- What are they and how do you communicate them to children?

Observer Notes: If class rules or expectations are posted, there must be no more than five. All listed rules must be worded positively to receive credit. If no instances of guidance statements are observed, a teacher interview is used to determine what the behavioral expectations are in the classroom and how they are phrased to children.

4. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher implements realistic expectations by using a variety of strategies and supports to strengthen children's independence and confidence. These expectations are based on each child's age, experience, development, circumstances, 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 paint. 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.
- The teacher notices that children are getting restless at the table before lunch and involves them in a song.
- The teacher introduces new challenges, materials, or activities gradually, based on the interest and ability level of children.

Negative Examples:

- The teacher forces children to stand in a straight line and be quiet.
- The teacher requires children who are no longer interested to continue to participate in adult-directed activities.
- The teacher continues to ask the child to make eye contact when this makes the child uncomfortable.
- The children experience wait time with no activity or opportunity for peer interactions.
- The teacher makes fun of a child's speech, creation, or mishap.

Observer Notes: When a teacher adapts their strategy based on a child's response, credit may be received. An unrealistic expectation is when teachers assume children should be able to do something that they are not yet capable of doing. If 2 or more unrealistic expectations are observed, credit cannot be received, regardless of whether the unrealistic expectations are the same type repeatedly or multiple types.

5. Encourages children by verbally acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or helpful behaviors. (2pts)

Clarification: Verbal encouragement boosts children's confidence and competence. Children better understand how their actions are related to positive consequences when the teacher uses descriptive feedback. Descriptive feedback is provided by stating the positive behavior and/or stating why it is beneficial. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of descriptive feedback must be observed.

Examples:

- After a child cleans up an area without being asked, the teacher says why she is thanking the child. "You made our classroom safer."
- The teacher says, "Do you remember when Marcus fell yesterday? You comforted him by giving him a hug. You were being a great friend."
- After a child washes their hands the teacher says, "Look at you! You washed your hands all by yourself. You remembered to sing the song."
- The teacher says, "You should feel so proud of yourself. You just wrote your name all by yourself!"
- The teacher says to a child, "Please water the plant so that it will not wilt." The child waters the plant and the teacher promptly responds, "Thank you Lily."

Observer Notes: The verbal statement must include the child's action and/or why it is beneficial to count as an instance. Physical rewards such as stickers and other treats do not count as an instance.

6. Models and promotes positive peer interactions. (2pts)

Clarification: Positive peer interactions occur when children are encouraged to form respectful relationships. Intentional efforts are made to facilitate positive peer interactions by providing opportunities for children to collaborate, socialize, and empathize with others. The teacher models language or provides other supports for the purpose of facilitating social skill development among children. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of a teacher prompt or support to promote positive peer interactions must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher encourages children to be gentle and treat each other with kindness.
- The teacher helps children recognize how their actions impact others and consider their peers' perspectives. After Mirai grabs a car from Megan, the teacher says to Mirai, "Megan is crying because you took her car. How can we help her feel better?"
- The teacher models social language by saying, "When you say, 'excuse me,' someone will know that you need to get by."
- The teacher encourages children to notice and verbally appreciate each other's helpful behaviors and accomplishments. The teacher says, "That was helpful of Malik to show you how to add the blocks to the top of the tower. What could you say?"
- The teacher fosters cooperation among children. During lunch the teacher says, "If you say your classmate's name when you ask them to pass the empanadas, they will know you are talking to them."

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.

7. Supports children in their attempts to resolve social conflicts. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher encourages children to find their own solutions to conflicts by using effective conflict resolution strategies that involve conversation and problem solving. The teacher must be aware of and maintain enough control to prevent hurtful behavior or interactions before they escalate. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher using a strategy to support children in resolving a social conflict must be observed. If no evidence of conflict among children is observed, credit may be received.

Examples:

- The classroom has a resolution table or space where children go to work out conflicts.
- During morning meeting the teacher shares conflict resolution steps and encourages children to practice through role play.
- Two children are arguing over a tricycle. The teacher states, “Something has happened. I can see you both are angry with each other. What can we do about this? How can we solve this problem?”
- The teacher approaches two children who are angry and hitting each other. After they have calmed down, the teacher facilitates a discussion about what caused them to be upset.
- The teacher uses picture cards showing potential solutions for children who may need additional support.
- A child is in distress due to being called names by two classmates. The teacher acknowledges the distressed child to find out what support they need. Then the teacher addresses the two children by discussing how words can be hurtful and engages them in a conversation about supporting each other’s feelings.

Observer Notes: When a situation is harmful, a teacher will need to immediately intervene to prevent harm, then follow-up with conflict resolution coaching. The teacher solving a problem for children without seeking out their solutions does not count as an instance. The teacher telling a child to say “sorry” without additional support to promote conflict resolution does not count as an instance. Credit cannot be received if conflicts arise among children that are not addressed and escalate to visibly hurt feelings or physical aggression.

8. Provides opportunities for children to identify with and feel a sense of family within the classroom. (2pts)

Clarification: The teacher provides support for sense of self and connectedness to the group. A sense of family within the classroom is created when children feel that they are valued and contributing members of a larger group. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher creating an opportunity for children to experience acceptance as a part of the classroom family must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher encourages children to respect others' and classroom property, such as asking a child to pick up a classmate's jacket that fell out of the cubby.
- The teacher prompts a child to assist another child who is watering the classroom garden.
- A station is set-up for making cards for a sick classmate.
- The teacher establishes a "shout-out" routine to provide children the opportunity to recognize their classmates who have been kind, helpful, or engaged in selfless acts.
- The teacher allows children to share ownership of the classroom by participating in planning (e.g. discussing activities, naming the classroom, book selections, field trip opportunities, behavior expectations, class rules and routines).
- Class meetings are held to discuss important topics of the day and children are invited to share and participate.
- The classroom displays photos of children working together to build a city they have studied in another part of the world.
- Children's roles are displayed in the classroom (e.g. classroom jobs list).
- Photos of the currently enrolled children and their families are displayed in the classroom, so that all children are represented.
- The weekly newsletter encourages children to bring empty food containers from home to place in the dramatic play area.
- The lesson plan reflects morning meeting activities that include familiar classroom rituals focusing on building connections among members.

Observer Notes: Examples may be observed in activities, conversations, classroom displays, newsletters, or lesson plans.

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 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 schedule is posted and followed so children can learn the sequence of events and feel more secure.
8. The daily schedule provides activities that are primarily child-directed.
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 individual 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, only until traditional handwashing with soap and water is available. 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, 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 familiar song or reads a story.
- The teacher sings in children's home language during hand washing.
- Teachers sit at the table and have meaningful conversations with children while they are eating.
- The teacher scaffolds children's learning by reminding them of the steps to proper toileting.

Transitions:

- The teacher plays a sorting game with children while putting materials on shelves during clean-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.
- Children are involved in preparing for the upcoming activity, such as getting cots ready for nap or setting napkins out for a meal.
- The teacher plays a game with children while walking to a new location.

Negative Examples:

Routines:

- An available teacher does not assist a child who is having difficulty settling down at nap.
- Children are not permitted to speak or interact during lunch time (e.g. "silent lunch").
- The teacher does not interact with children while supervising toileting.

Transitions:

- Children are expected to clean up without support from the teacher.
- Children must wait with no activity or interaction while the teacher prepares the next activity.

Observer Notes: Engaging during routines and/or transitions provides opportunities for the teacher to use words and phrases from children's home languages. Providing brief directives or 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 include moving from one activity to another, introduction of new materials, or adjustments to new classroom settings. Transitions are smooth when they are conducted in a safe and organized manner. They are demonstrated when children feel secure and confident, as well as understand what they should be doing. 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 uses some words in children's home languages to help them understand what is happening.
- The teacher models the use of new materials.
- The teacher helps children integrate into the classroom as they arrive by suggesting different areas in which they can play.
- 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).
- Materials are prepared for a small group activity in advance to prevent any wait time.

Negative Examples:

- 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 exhibit inappropriate behaviors at the lunch table because they are waiting for a meal to be served.
- Children begin playing in the water because paper towels are not available at the hand-washing sink.

Interview Questions:

- How do you prepare children for meal times, rest time, and outside play?
- What do you do when a child has a difficult time at drop-off?
- How do you introduce new materials or prepare for activities?

Observer Notes: Interview questions are only used if a transition is not observed. Credit cannot be received if the transition causes unsafe conditions, 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, eating, 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:

- A cozy corner is provided if a child needs to rest.
- Children who are not sleepy during a rest time are allowed quiet activities.

Eating:

- A supplementary snack is provided if a child is hungry.
- Enough time is provided for children to finish eating their food.
- 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.

Toileting:

- A child who is in pull-ups is changed as needed.
- 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 activity.

Interview Questions:

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

Observer Notes: Demands of the routine should not hinder the individual needs of each child. Credit cannot be received if any child's routine care is not individualized or accommodated.

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

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. Preschool children are encouraged to feed and 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 serve themselves during meals and/or snacks.

Examples:

Feeding:

- 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.

Serving:

- A child is assisted by the teacher with hand-over-hand technique to serve watermelon from the common serving bowl.
- Children help to prepare the snack of ants on a log.
- The teacher sets up a snack station with picture recipe cards that include step-by-step instructions for the children to follow.
- 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 mealtime routines.
- How is food served? Who serves the food?
- How do children decide which of the foods offered they will eat and how much?

Observer Notes: If a meal service is not observed, a teacher interview is used to gather information about feeding/mealtime routines. This indicator may be met when children have the option to serve themselves one or more food components as part of the meal and/snack, while other food components are pre-plated or served by teachers. If the children are not encouraged to serve themselves, or do not have the option to do so, credit cannot be received.

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.

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 distributes pre-plated food before sitting down and talks with children 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: Each teacher must sit with the children for at least part of the meal. If one teacher is present, they must be supporting children during the mealtime routine. If more than 1 teacher is present, as long as one of the teachers is at the table supporting meal routines, the other teacher may be doing other classroom activities. 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 schedule is posted and followed so children can learn the sequence of events and feel more secure. (1pt)

Clarification: Following daily schedules help children predict what will happen next in their classroom. Consistent schedules facilitate children's understanding of classroom expectations and foster feelings of security and preparedness. The classroom has a schedule with the following three 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 that provides consistency for children.
- A picture schedule is displayed at the children's eye level, so children can predict what will happen next.

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. The daily schedule provides activities that are primarily child-directed. (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. Blocks of time for child-directed play allows children to develop and learn at their own pace. If group activities are conducted, the teacher monitors interest and engagement and follows the children's cues.

There are two components to this indicator:

1. The daily schedule reflects that children are provided with a large uninterrupted block of time for child-directed play with self-selected materials.
 - Half day programs (less than 6 hours) must provide at least one 30-minute block of time.
 - Full day programs (6 hours or more) must provide at least one 45-minute block of time, both in the morning and in the afternoon.
2. If group activities are used, they are relatively short and based on the children's age, level of interest, and engagement.

To receive credit, both components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Large uninterrupted blocks of time for child-directed play

- The posted daily schedule lists 8:00 – 10:00am and 2:30 – 4:00pm for Activity Areas, and one table is set up as a snack station that is available during these periods.
- The posted schedule shows two-hour blocks of Center Time during the morning and afternoon, and one of the centers that children may choose is a teacher-supported small group activity.

Component 2: Group activities are based on children's interest and engagement

- The teacher shortens story time after noticing that children are losing interest.
- The teacher respects a child's choice to not participate in a small group art activity.

Observer Notes: A current daily schedule is reviewed as evidence. The large uninterrupted block of time for child-directed activities must occur when the majority of the children are typically in attendance. If the schedule states that the block of time for play is 45 minutes, however it is observed to be less than 45 minutes, credit cannot be received. If the block of time listed on the schedule is combined with any activity that is not child-directed (e.g. story time/center time), credit cannot be received.

When whole group time is observed, if children are actively participating and interested in the experience credit may be received. However, if children are not interested or are disengaged, then the group time is no longer meaningful and credit cannot be received. When group times are not observed, the schedule is reviewed. If the schedule has a repeated sequence of whole group activities, or teacher-directed activities that extend over 30 minutes, credit cannot be received. If no group times are observed or listed on the schedule because activities throughout the day are child-directed, credit may be received.

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

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 and provides a connection to the natural world. There are three components to this indicator:

1. The required amount of time and frequency of outdoor child-directed active play is listed on the classroom's daily schedule.
 - Full day programs (6 hours or more) must provide at least 90-120 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 for 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's daily 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 listed on the schedule

- The preschool classroom schedule states that children are taken outdoors daily from 9:00 am – 10:00 am and 3:30 pm – 4:00 pm.

Component 2: Children go outdoors when weather permits

- The teacher provides a longer amount of time outdoors after a rainstorm that prevented them from going outside in the morning.
- The teacher modifies the summer classroom schedule by taking the children outdoors in the early morning and late afternoon for a total of 90 minutes because the projected heat index is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Component 3: Planning for inclement weather

- The classroom's daily schedule states that indoor active play is substituted for the equivalent amount of time 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.

Observer Notes: To receive credit for component 1, active outdoor time must be clearly defined on the current daily schedule and not combined with other parts of the day. If the children are not observed going outdoors as scheduled, and weather permits, credit cannot be received for component 2. When scoring component 3, evaluate the terminology used by the program to signify the "same amount" or "equivalent" time that meets the intent. Credit may be received for terms other than those in the indicator.

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. Daily opportunities are provided for children to manage play independently.
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. Planned physical activities occur daily.
9. Experiences are provided that promote children's early reading development.
10. Experiences are provided that promote children's written communication skills.
11. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about nature, nutrition, or science.
12. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about engineering or math.
13. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about art or creative expression.

1. Daily opportunities are provided for children to manage play independently. (2pts)

Clarification: When children manage their own play they develop independence, decision making, and exhibit complex play. Independent play occurs when children take ownership of their play or activity choices, establish rules of play, move from one activity to another as they wish, and select their own play companions. To receive credit, there must be evidence that children have daily opportunities to manage their play.

Examples:

- After a child brings writing materials to the block area, the teacher says, “That was such a great idea.”
- A child selects their own partner for completing a matching game.
- After the teacher notices a child who has not engaged in an interest area, the teacher prompts the child, “Would you like to go to the blocks center and build, or would you like to go to the art area to create something fun?”

Interview Questions:

- Tell me about this time (such as learning centers or interest areas) on your schedule?
- How do you manage interest areas?
- How do children select the interest areas?

Observer Notes: The teacher may need to facilitate play supports or provide prompts for children who have not developed independent play skills. If not observed, the interview questions may be used. Credit cannot be received if children are required to stay in a teacher-selected area, limited to one activity, provided no materials/activities, or are directed to play with materials in a specific way during blocks of time for child-directed play (such as learning centers or interest areas). If a teacher assigns children to a learning/interest area, or if children are made to rotate centers, credit cannot be received.

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 2 different instances must be observed.

Examples:

Self-care:

- The teacher provides visual instructions to encourage self-help skills (e.g. handwashing poster, photos of tasks).
- The teacher provides consistent routines, so children can do them successfully.
- The teacher establishes handwashing routines and provides guidance and modeling when needed.
- The teacher encourages children to put on and take off outer gear (e.g. jacket, hats, boots) and provides instructions if necessary.
- The teacher creates a snack instruction chart or other tool, so children can prepare their snack.
- Children participate in sleep routines (e.g. handwashing, getting blanket, arranging cots).
- A child whose family encourages interdependence is provided additional supports while toileting.

Classroom Care:

- The teacher assigns classroom jobs to children or prompts them to help with tasks (e.g. door holder, clipboard holder, line leader, watering plants, or feeding pets).
- The teacher encourages children to participate in the meal routines (e.g. meal preparation, setting table, self-serving meal items, or cleaning-up).
- The teacher reminds children to keep pathways clear, making them available for all children to explore the room freely.
- The teacher involves children in selecting new books for their classroom that reflect their interests.
- The teacher sets up a repair station where children can take broken classroom items that can be repaired such as torn books, stuffed animals, etc.

Observer Notes: The teacher may provide assistance or scaffold children as they learn self-help and classroom care skills. The 2 instances may both be self-care, both be classroom care, or one of each to receive credit.

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 used throughout the day must be developmentally appropriate and meaningful.

Examples:

- Sensory experiences: water/sand play, playdough.
- Loose parts play: blocks, tree cookies, links, balls, gears.
- Creative experiences: music experimentation, open-ended art, construction.
- Dramatic play: props that meaningfully represent children's home life, traditions, recipes, and neighborhoods.
- Nature exploration: gardening, cloud/bird watching, nature walk.
- Literacy activities: reading, writing experiences, book making.
- Activities that promote various challenges: obstacle course, multi-stage projects, games such as follow-the-leader.
- Supporting learning using technology: computer exploration, relevant video clips, smart board activities, robotics.

Negative Examples:

- Preprinted worksheets or coloring sheets are used as a teacher-directed activity.
- Passive screen time in which there is not a supporting activity.
- Extended activity (15 minutes or more) when children are not interested or actively engaged.

Interview Question:

- How do you use screen media and for how long?

Observer Notes: Screen media (e.g. television, tablets, smart boards, and computers) may be used for educational and physical activity purposes only, and for no more than 20 minutes per day. Screen media that is used for work assigned by a school that is approved by the Department of Education, such as virtual learning, e-learning, or homework activities, is not included in this calculation. Credit cannot be received if any negative instance is observed.

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 2 instances of a teacher support during scaffolding, problem solving, or introducing new, challenging experiences must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher adds toys or other objects that may extend children's current play to make it slightly more complex.
- The teacher supports children in acting out and retelling stories about family traditions by providing classroom props.
- The teacher encourages a child to keep trying when they make a mistake or feel reluctant about an activity.
- The teacher provides a challenge that is just beyond what a child can already do easily on their own.
- The teacher prompts the child to try a puzzle piece another way and says, "I wonder what would happen if..."
- The teacher models steps involved in a task and/or skill (e.g. demonstrates how to use a water funnel or playdough tools.)
- The teacher encourages children to ask questions to find out more information.
- The teacher coaches a child with responses that will support their ability to join a group of children playing.
- The teacher refers to a chart that gives step-by-step directions (e.g. handwashing instructions) or shows an example of a completed activity.
- The teacher supports a child's fine motor development 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 encourages children to keep working and focus on effort while children are solving a problem (e.g. "You worked a long time on this. You are so determined. Keep going!").
- The teacher demonstrates how new materials can be used and allows children to explore them.

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, written 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 4 of the 6 South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS) domains.

SC Early Learning Standards domains:

- Approaches to Play and Learning
- Language Development and Communication
- Mathematical Thinking and Expression
- Emotional and Social Development
- Health and Physical Development
- 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 developmental goals for children that are supported by activities on the dated lesson plan.
- The activities on the lesson plan provide sufficient description to determine the relevant SC-ELS domains.

Observer Notes: The lesson plan must be written, meaning that it is documented in an observable manner. While encouraged, the domains do not have to be written using the exact SC-ELS terminology.

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 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 holding scissors, fastening clothing, and drawing letter forms).
- Lesson plans are linked to children's learning goals.
- Planned activities are labeled with goals from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards.

Interview Question:

- 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. Teacher plans physical activities daily. (1pt)

Clarification: Teacher-planned physical activities give children the opportunity to move in ways they may not necessarily choose on their own, such as crossing the midline, galloping, and skipping. Lasting 5-10 minutes, these planned activities may occur indoors, outdoors, during group activities, transitions, or other times of the day. To receive credit, the schedule or the lesson plan must have evidence of a teacher-planned physical activity at least once per day for half-day programs and at least twice per day for full day programs.

Examples:

Teacher-planned physical activities such as the following are listed on the schedule or lesson plan and activities can be observed.

- Music and movement activity such as African dance, line dance, Irish Step dance, or Salsa dance.
- Nature or neighborhood walk.
- Yoga or Tai Chi.
- Indoor obstacle course.
- Outdoor ball game or other sport.

Observer Notes: A current daily schedule or lesson plan is reviewed as evidence. Half-day programs are those that operate less than 6 hours per day. The teacher may need to provide additional support to children with special needs to ensure that they have the opportunity to be physically active.

9. Experiences are provided that promote children's early reading development. (2pts)

Clarification: Reading development occurs when children interact with a variety of texts, print, and written materials. Opportunities to connect symbols with meaning build the foundation for learning to read. There are two components to this indicator:

1. Reading must be observed or listed daily on a current schedule and/or lesson plan.
2. At least 1 additional instance of an experience that promotes reading must be observed.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Reading (by teacher and/or children)

- A child engages with a book or uses pictures to read aloud.
- The teacher reads to child(ren).
- The schedule or the lesson plan states that story time is provided daily.
- The teacher points out written text in a child's home language before reading it in English.
- The teacher shares news/interesting facts or reads from informational texts such as newspapers, magazines, flyers.
- The teacher respectfully invites a family member who speaks a child's home language to read aloud to the class.

Component 2: Additional reading development experiences

- The teacher models proper use of books and helps children care for books.
- The teacher encourages children to recognize print and symbols used to organize the classroom (e.g. teacher points to exit sign, states the word, and says what it means).
- Children use materials with environmental print (e.g. food containers, street signs, words on pictures in room) to support play or routines.
- Children use sequencing guides, menus, or blueprints in center play.
- Children play letter bingo or other word games.
- The teacher points out a few familiar letters, such as the first letter in a child's name, and calls attention to them occasionally. If a child asks for a letter name, the teacher provides it.
- The teacher provides activities that promote print awareness.
- The teacher points out activities coming up on a visual schedule.

Observer Notes: The use of audio books may only be counted as an instance if the pictures or written text are also provided. Component 2 may receive credit if children are observed exploring and using the teacher developed strategies or opportunities promote reading within the environment. The presence of reading materials does not count unless children's use of the materials is observed.

10. Experiences are provided that promote children's written communication skills. (1pt)

Clarification: Writing skills develop through opportunities to use writing tools, instruments and varied writing surfaces. As writing skills develop, children will move from scribbles to writing beginning letters or words. To receive credit, there must be evidence of children's early writing either observed, on display, or on a current lesson plan.

Examples:

- Children write, paint, or color using art or writing center materials.
- Children write or create menus, blueprints, receipts, or maps.
- Children create letters using various materials such as sand, playdough, or craft sticks.
- Children create letters, symbols, or words using a computer or tablet.
- Children use chalk to scribble on sidewalks.
- Children organize magnetic letters to create real or made-up words.
- The teacher writes what the child says they draw on the paper.
- The teacher prompts children to write thoughts and ideas (e.g. draw a picture).
- The teacher prompts children to write their names and other words (e.g. using materials from the writing center).
- The teacher encourages children to sign-in for attendance.
- The teacher promotes the use of adaptive equipment to support written communication skills.
- Children's written work is displayed in the classroom.
- The lesson plan has an activity for children to do sandpaper letter rubbings.

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

Any of these examples can be done in a child's home language.

Observer Notes: The presence of writing materials does not count unless children's use of the materials is observed.

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

Clarification: Learning about nature, nutrition, and science helps children understand how they fit into the world. Making these connections helps children develop inquiry and exploration 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:

- The teacher uses books with real pictures of animals and points out the characteristics of the animals (e.g. fur, sounds, climate, food the animal eats, living conditions).
- Children observe birds at the birdfeeder through the window.
- The teacher encourages children to discuss the weather outside, noticing the position of the sun or other seasonal changes.
- The teacher invites a member of a child's family to help the class plant a pawpaw tree in the outdoor play and learning environment.
- The teacher reads books about the work of scientists.
- A child asks, "Where did the ice go?" The teacher responds by talking about properties of materials and changes of substances (e.g. temperature and melting).
- The teacher talks about foods and how they help the body, such as "The calcium in milk makes your bones and teeth strong."
- Children play with magnifying glasses and color paddles at the science table.
- Children investigate the properties of different types of soil (e.g. sand, clay, garden soil, and composted materials).
- Natural materials are used to illustrate concepts (e.g. shells, shark's teeth, coral, or crab claws used to discuss different habitats).
- The teacher encourages children to use more than one sense (e.g. smell, touch, taste) to explore a variety of food and herbs.
- The teacher provides guidance and support of children's participation in activities that help care for the environment (e.g. planting a garden, planting trees, recycling bin in classroom).
- The teacher engages children in the scientific process by observing, making predictions, recording predictions, and testing hypotheses.

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

12. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about engineering or math. (2pts)

Clarification: Learning about engineering and math promotes spatial awareness, logical thinking, mathematical understanding, and problem solving. Fostering opportunities for children to learn about engineering and math can be achieved through conversations, activities, and/or meaningful experiences. To receive credit, at least 1 instance must be observed.

Examples:

- The teacher counts while emptying items from a bucket or as items are passed out (e.g. “I wonder how many cups I need for snack. Let me see...there are 10 friends here today. I need 10 cups”).
- The teacher uses words that describe relative sizes and amounts to label objects, people, and collections (e.g. big/small, many/few, etc.).
- The teacher talks about shapes through everyday interactions and draws attention to shape names (e.g. “I see that you have red circles on your shirt”).
- The teacher emphasizes numbers during a counting song by using fingers.
- The teacher points out patterns and relationships (e.g. repeating colors or shapes to create patterns).
- The teacher emphasizes measurement (e.g. measuring the growth of plants or children).
- The teacher introduces children to the concept of weight and volume by using words like “heavy/light,” or “empty/full.”
- The teacher describes ways of collecting, organizing and representing data (e.g. creating a graph).
- The teacher creates charts and graphs with children identifying groups children belong to (e.g. preschool class, churches, teammates)
- The teacher draws children’s attention to shapes in their own work (e.g. drawings, paintings, block buildings).
- The teacher plays games and sings-songs that use numbers and counting (e.g. Mancala, songs about numbers in various languages).
- Children count money in dramatic play.
- Children use pattern blocks to recreate a picture.
- The teacher encourages a child to build structures with loose parts or various recycled materials.

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

13. 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 roles and characters.
- Children create original art with open-ended art materials such as skin tone paints, collage materials, playdough, beads, glue, crayons, assorted paper, sweetgrass, leaves, twigs, yarn, fabric, etc.
- The children use art materials to create products that promote their sense of self.
- Children tell stories through puppets.
- Children play with and explore musical instruments.
- The teacher talks about using color, shade, tone, dimension, contrast, or shadow.
- The teacher discusses and introduces the work of artists from different countries and traditions (ironwork, sculpture, folk art, basket weaving, pottery, murals, and depictions of lifestyle, landscapes, or portraits, etc.).
- The teacher involves children in singing or dancing (e.g. karaoke, rhymes, traditional dances or making up movements to Hokey-Pokey).
- The teacher explores the use of a variety of rhythm instruments and discusses their origins, rhythms, tonal patterns or sounds.
- The teacher uses a variety of music (e.g. classical, salsa, rock, pop, country, reggae, rap, and popular music) and asks open-ended questions about how music feels, where it comes from, or what dances can be done with music.
- The teacher encourages children to create instruments from everyday materials that represent their home life.
- 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.
- The teacher documents and displays children's opinions of various art in the classroom.

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.

Standard F: Environment

The program designs the indoor and outdoor environments using the space, materials, and furnishings to create safe, interesting, and developmentally appropriate places for all children to play, learn, and grow. Environments with a variety of enriching materials are engaging spaces for children.

Category	Recommended # of material types
Dramatic Play	5
Engineering/Construction	5
Art	5
Manipulatives/Fine Motor	5
Cozy	5
Reading/Literacy	5
Writing	5
Music	5
Technology	5
Nature/Science/Sensory	5
Math	5
Gross Motor/Movement	5
Other	5

Category: A group of complementary materials that support play and learning. Categories within the classroom or outdoor environments are 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: “Dishes” are one material type, which includes plates, cups, bowls, and flatware. A “computer” is one material type, which includes the screen, processor, keyboard, and mouse.

In order to be counted, materials must be:

- Able to 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 space and furniture are organized and arranged to support play and routines.
6. A protected cozy area is available for children.
7. Materials represent the unique backgrounds of children and families.
8. A variety of child-related displays are easily visible to children.
9. A literacy-rich environment is present.
10. A nature-rich environment is present in the classroom.
11. Materials used in the outdoor space are sufficient for children to be actively engaged.
12. The outdoor space provides a variety of equipment and materials that are organized to support complex play.
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 20 different material types for classes with up to 10 children enrolled. Classes with 11-20 children enrolled 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
1-10	20
11-20	2 material types per child (22-40)
21 or more	40

Examples:

Puzzles for a variety of ability levels, kitchen, soft dolls, vinyl dolls, doll accessories, pots/pans, dishes, play food representing various countries, serving utensils, small pitchers, shopping baskets, menus, cash register, play vacuum, dress-up cloths and hats, role playing accessories, puppets, dancing ribbons/scarves, drums, maracas, castanets, bells, sand blocks, xylophone, sensory table with accessories, small climber, blocks, interlocking toys, building materials, vehicles of varying sizes, people figurines, road signs, toy animals, easel, paint brushes, paint, crayons, markers, stencils, assorted papers, child-safe scissors, playdough, clay, flannel story boards, letter recognition games, soft seating, board books, picture books, writing materials, bean bag toss, pop beads, various types of balls, linking toys, board games, magnifying glass, prisms, nature collections, tape measure, magnet set, scale, light table, tangrams, pattern blocks, abacus, sorter, and counting sets

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the 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 type of material, 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 complex play scenarios when they have hands-on experiences with a variety of material types that are organized and grouped together. A variety of materials is measured in two ways: breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are present. Depth examines the number of material types that represent a category and are organized together. To receive credit for “some variety,” at least 4 categories that each contain 5 different material types must be observed.

Examples:

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

Examples of material types within the categories:

- *Nature/Science:* natural collections (e.g. rocks, shells), magnifying glass, native plant, bug viewer, nature books and solar system puzzle.
- *Engineering/Construction:* wooden blocks, plastic blocks, tree cookies, animals, people representing varying abilities, and vehicles.
- *Art:* paper, scissors, skin-tone crayons, playdough, and an easel with chalk and erasers.
- *Gross Motor:* balls, hoops, bean bags, bowling set, and global music for movement activities.

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.

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

Clarification: Children engage in complex play scenarios when they have hands-on experiences with a variety of material types that are organized and grouped together. A variety of materials is measured in two ways: breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are present. Depth examines the number of material types that represent a category and are organized together. To receive credit for “wide variety,” at least 6 categories that each contain 5 different material types must be observed.

Examples:

Categories may include: Dramatic play, Engineering/Construction, Art, Manipulatives/Fine Motor, Cozy, Reading/Literacy, Writing, Music, Technology, Nature/Science/Sensory, Math, and Gross Motor

Examples of material types within the categories:

- *Nature/Science:* Natural collections (rocks, shells, etc.), magnifying glass, native plant, bug viewer, nature books with characters and solar system puzzle.
- *Engineering/Construction:* wooden blocks, plastic blocks, tree cookies, animals, people representing varying abilities, and vehicles.
- *Art:* paper, scissors, skin-tone crayons, playdough, and an easel with chalk and erasers.
- *Gross Motor:* balls, hoops, bean bags, bowling set, and music for movement activities.
- *Dramatic Play:* dolls with different skin tones, dishes, cash register, kitchen, dress-up clothes, and food representing many traditions, national origins, or countries.
- *Reading/Literacy:* reading materials such as magazines, fiction and non-fiction books (representing multiple religions, languages, geographical regions, or traditions and comfortable seating for reading such as a soft chair and cushions).

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.

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 words in children's home languages.
- Materials have a defined placement.
- Companion materials are stored together, such as chalk and chalkboard.
- Baskets and bins are used to organize materials.

Negative Examples:

- A toy chest with a random assortment of materials.
- 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 children spend the majority of the day is assessed for well-organized materials.

5. 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:

- Furniture and equipment are child-sized.
- The construction area provides a flat surface for building.
- The dramatic play area provides sufficient space for the number of children allowed in the area.
- The art materials are stored and used in an area of the classroom that has surfaces which are easy to clean.
- Pathways are arranged for all children and adults to have easy availability to classroom spaces, and to limit large open areas where children may run and disrupt interest area activities.
- Areas for quiet and noisy play are separated by physical space.
- Tables where children eat are placed on floors that are easily cleaned.
- Messy play (such as sensory tables or art activities) are placed near the hand-washing sink.

Negative Examples:

- Children play in overcrowded areas with minimal materials, causing disruptive behaviors to occur.
- A loud space, such as the music center is located next to a quiet space, such as the library.
- Appropriate tables and seating are not provided for a writing activity.
- The construction area does not have sufficient space for building.
- A child in a wheelchair is unable to enter all classroom spaces due to the furniture arrangement.
- Circle time is chaotic because there is not sufficient space for all children to be seated comfortably.
- Children use a large space to run from side to side, thus running over others trying to play.

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

6. 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 3 materials (minimum of 2 must be soft, and 1 may be comforting to provide emotional regulation support). Cozy areas must be kept separate from active play. The teacher redirects active play to designated spaces to ensure the cozy area is protected. To receive credit, at least 1 protected cozy area must be available.

Examples:

- Soft furnishings: bean bag chairs, thick mats, sofa, padded carpeting, cushions for seating, hammock, fabric canopy, wall tapestry, or soft chair.
- Soft materials: pillows, stuffed animals, soft or silicone toys, Serape Blanket, felt stories, cloth puppets or soft dolls.
- Emotional support materials: feelings books, games that promote emotion regulation, breathing exercise cards, sensory supports, handheld mirrors.

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. To receive credit for materials, all three may be soft or 2 may be soft and 1 provides emotional support. 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.

7. 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 are: skin tone, traditions, nationality, ability, family structure, and age. To receive credit, at least 5 different material types representing at least 3 examples of uniqueness must be observed.

Examples:

- *Skin tone:* dolls, figurines, puppets, crayons or markers.
- *Traditions:* photos of children's families engaged in typical activities, food packages or kitchen tools from various countries, global art and displays, music from different genres, books in various languages especially those that represent the enrolled children, or musical instruments from different parts of the nation and/or 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 with various abilities.
- *Family Structure:* books that depict a variety of family structures.
- *Age:* easily visible pictures on the wall depicting multiple generations.

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.

8. 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, there must be at least 4 examples of child-related display. Of the four, at least 2 of the examples must reflect the enrolled children, and at least 1 of those must be child-created.

Examples:

- Reflects the children enrolled: Photos of family members and pets, photos of the enrolled children, growth charts, graphs representing children's selections, family trees, birthday boards
 - Child created: Children's artwork, writing sample, creations, or joint projects such as banners and murals.
- Realistic pictures of people of different nationalities, everyday objects, animals, and nature.
- Art: Photos, paintings, wall hangings, weavings, tapestry, national or global folk art
- Visual schedule of classroom activities
- Three-dimensional displays (visible to all children): Sculpture, mobiles, windsocks, spinners, chimes, globe, and non-poisonous plants, terrariums

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 must be placed at the children's eye-level to be counted. Larger items (such as hanging items, murals, and large posters) may be placed higher as long as they are able to be seen. The 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.

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

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

There are three components to this indicator:

1. A minimum of 15 fiction and nonfiction books are reachable.
2. At least one type of writing material and an appropriate writing surface must be available for use.
3. At least one example of meaningful print must be easily visible. Meaningful print is defined as written words and symbols that are familiar, recognizable, and usable to children.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

Examples:

Components 1: Books

Fiction and nonfiction books, homemade books, magazines, or books in children’s home languages.

Component 2: Early writing materials and appropriate writing surface

- Writing materials: crayons, markers, chalk, paint with brushes, pastels, or colored pencils.
- Writing surfaces: lapboards, chalkboard easel, dry-erase boards, tablets, or various types of paper.

Component 3: Meaningful print

- Children’s names posted on belongings or cubbies.
- Word labels on objects and furnishings in children’s home languages.
- Environmental print in children’s home language such as road signs, logos, household products, and photos or posters of familiar books.
- Dramatic play items such as familiar food containers, greeting cards, shopping lists, menus, and recipe cards.
- Writing child’s description on their artwork.
- Pictures with word labels for storing play materials.
- Rug with pictures and word labels.
- Braille for children with visual impairments.

Observer Notes: Only the primary space where children spend the majority of the day is assessed.

Component 1: Books that are damaged so that they are unable to be read, or books in closed containers that are out of reach to children are not counted.

Fiction is a made-up story by the author who uses their imagination to create characters, places, and events that aren’t real. Non-fiction is a true story that tells about real people, places, or things and provides factual information.

Component 2: Only print that is at the children’s eye level 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.

10. A nature-rich environment is present in the classroom. (1pt)

Clarification: A nature-rich classroom environment provides children proximity to, appreciation of, and interaction with nature. Connecting children to natural objects will expand their experiences while indoors. To receive credit, at least 5 different natural items must be observed indoors.

Examples:

Natural items:

- Unpainted wooden furniture.
- Science collection: geodes, bugs, shark teeth.
- Rugs: seagrass, jute, sheepskin.
- Live plants: vegetable, sensory, flowering.
- Live animals: class pet, ant farm, butterfly habitat.
- Insect specimens: moths/butterflies, beetles, ladybug.
- Storage containers: natural baskets, pottery, unpainted wooden boxes.
- Decorations: large branch, picture frame made of sticks, cut flowers, tabletop water feature.
- Art materials: tree branches or pine needles used as painting utensils, mud or dirt for painting.
- Compost bin: worm compost bin, compost bag.
- Musical instruments: wooden maracas, drum with leather top, bamboo rain stick.
- Sensory table materials: beach sand, dirt, or water.
- Loose parts: tree cookies, shells, rocks, unpainted wooden blocks, leaves.

Observer Notes: If similar natural items are found, they are only counted once. For example, the presence of 3 natural baskets for materials storage will be counted as one natural item.

11. 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:

Slide, stairs, climbers, swings, play-gym, various types of balls, steering wheels, small basketball hoops, wheeled push toys, riding toys, trikes, parachute, balance bikes, scooters, wagons, wheel barrow, hula hoops, dancing ribbons, scarves, outdoor blocks and building materials, tree cookies, obstacle course set, cones, limbo bars, pool noodles, tunnels, balance beam, balance board, stepping stones, bean bag toss game, child's golf set, bowling set, drums, music wall, triangles, chimes, rhythm sticks, tambourine, cymbals, maracas, sand box, sensory table, shovels and scoops, buckets/pails, binoculars, bug net, turn over stones, loose parts play materials, magnifying glass, small shovels, hand trowels, watering cans, and watering buckets, sidewalk chalk, easel, brushes, sponges, mud kitchen, play house, grocery carts, plastic dolls, plastic food, bowls, utensils, small pitchers, outdoor puppet theater, puppets, measuring cups, books, interlocking toys, mailbox, variety of vehicles, large animals, road signs, toy gas station pump

Interview Question:

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

Observer Notes: If multiple classrooms use the outdoor space at the same time, the total 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 materials needed. 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. Stationary equipment, such as a climbing structure, is assessed for the number of opportunities available for children to have different experiences. For example, a structure with a slide, stairs, climber, and 2 swings would count as 4 material types. Within each material type, if there are differences that promote various skills such as foam balls versus rubber kick 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 designed for older children is used or there is no outdoor space designated for the classroom.

12. The outdoor space provides a variety of materials that are organized to support complex play. (1pt)

Clarification: Children will engage in more complex play when they are exposed to a variety of material types and equipment. A variety of materials outdoors is measured in two ways: breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are present in the outdoor environment. Depth examines the number of material types that represent a category and are organized together. To receive credit, the outdoor space has 3 categories that each contain 5 different material types.

Examples:

Categories may include: gross motor, nature/science/sensory, math, engineering/construction, art, dramatic play, writing, reading/ literacy, manipulatives/fine motor, and music.

Material types within the categories:

- Nature/Science: binoculars, sticks, turnover stones, bird feeder, and field guides.
- Engineering/Construction: wooden blocks, large waffle blocks, tree cookies, animals, vehicles, and figurines.
- Gross Motor: balls, hoops, tricycles, parachute, dance scarves, and climbing structure.
- Dramatic Play: dolls, play/mud kitchen, dishes, pots/pans, and grocery carts.
- Music: Music wall using pots and pans, drums, homemade shakers, windchimes, and dance scarves.
- Art: Sidewalk chalk, easel with paints, brushes, sponges, and natural collage materials.

Interview Question:

How do you organize your materials outdoors for children's use?

Observer Notes: Although materials may be relocated by children from area to area, individual items from each category are organized and grouped together.

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 5 different gross motor skills.

To receive credit, both components must be met.

Examples:

Component 1: Portable play materials

Balls of various sizes and materials, batons used for relay races, hoops, large trucks, outdoor blocks, outdoor bowling set, scooters, vinyl spots, shovels/scoops, tricycles.

Component 2: Gross motor skills

Building, catching, digging, hopping, jumping, kicking, running, pedaling, pushing, rolling, scooping, scooting, throwing.

Observer Notes: If children are not observed outdoors, a teacher interview may be used to determine what additional materials are available outside. Various types of balls (e.g. footballs, playground balls, tennis balls, soccer balls) 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 extend 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 5 activity settings are present in the outdoor space:
 - Each activity settings must be:
 - Permanent or semi-permanent (i.e., not easily moved);
 - Separate, physically-bounded by a 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 double-looping pathway that contains an activity setting in each loop.
- An open grassy area for gross motor activities.
- A low stage set among an established grouping of trees with a row of tree stumps for sitting.
- One or more raised garden beds placed along a covered patio classroom exit.
- An area for earth play bordered by tree stumps.
- A mud kitchen bordered by a dry creek bed and shrubs.

Component 2: Activity settings are purposefully arranged.

- A double-looping primary pathway weaves through a group of trees and connects to a large grassy area. Sand and earth play settings are tucked away in two corners of the outdoor space, each bordered by partially buried tree stumps. A natural construction area that contains strategically placed low, flat rocks is located in one of the pathway loops. A free-standing music wall located between two large trees is in the middle of the other pathway loop.

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, at least 5 categories of vegetation must be present in the outdoor space.

Examples:

- Living Groundcover: zoysia, clover, creeping phlox, bermuda grass, st. augustine grass, centipede grass
- Vine: coral honeysuckle, muscadine grape
- Tree: redbud, fig, crape myrtle
- Multiple Annual/Perennial Plants: black-eyed susan, lambs ear, purple coneflower, hosta
- Multiple Edible Plants: green pepper, cantaloupe, basil, lettuce, broccoli
- Multiple Shrubs: camellia, hydrangea, blueberry shrub
- Multiple Ornamental Grasses: muhly grass, fountain grass, little bluestem

-The preschool outdoor play space has a grassy lawn, two trees, and three planting areas that each include a shrub, an ornamental grass, and a perennial plant counting as five categories of vegetation.

-The fours classroom has a basil plant, lettuce, and broccoli in a raised garden bed, a coral honeysuckle vine on an arbor, has three camellia shrubs, has a maze of ten fountain grasses, and a grassy lawn 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. 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
3 – 4 years	1 adult: 11 children
4 – 5 years	1 adult: 13 children
5 – 6 years	1 adult: 15 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
3 – 4 years	22
4 – 5 years	26
5 – 6 years	30

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