

# Process Quality Guide

## School-Age

V2: November 2025



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



# ABC Quality *Process Quality Guide: School-Age*

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

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- 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.
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- 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.

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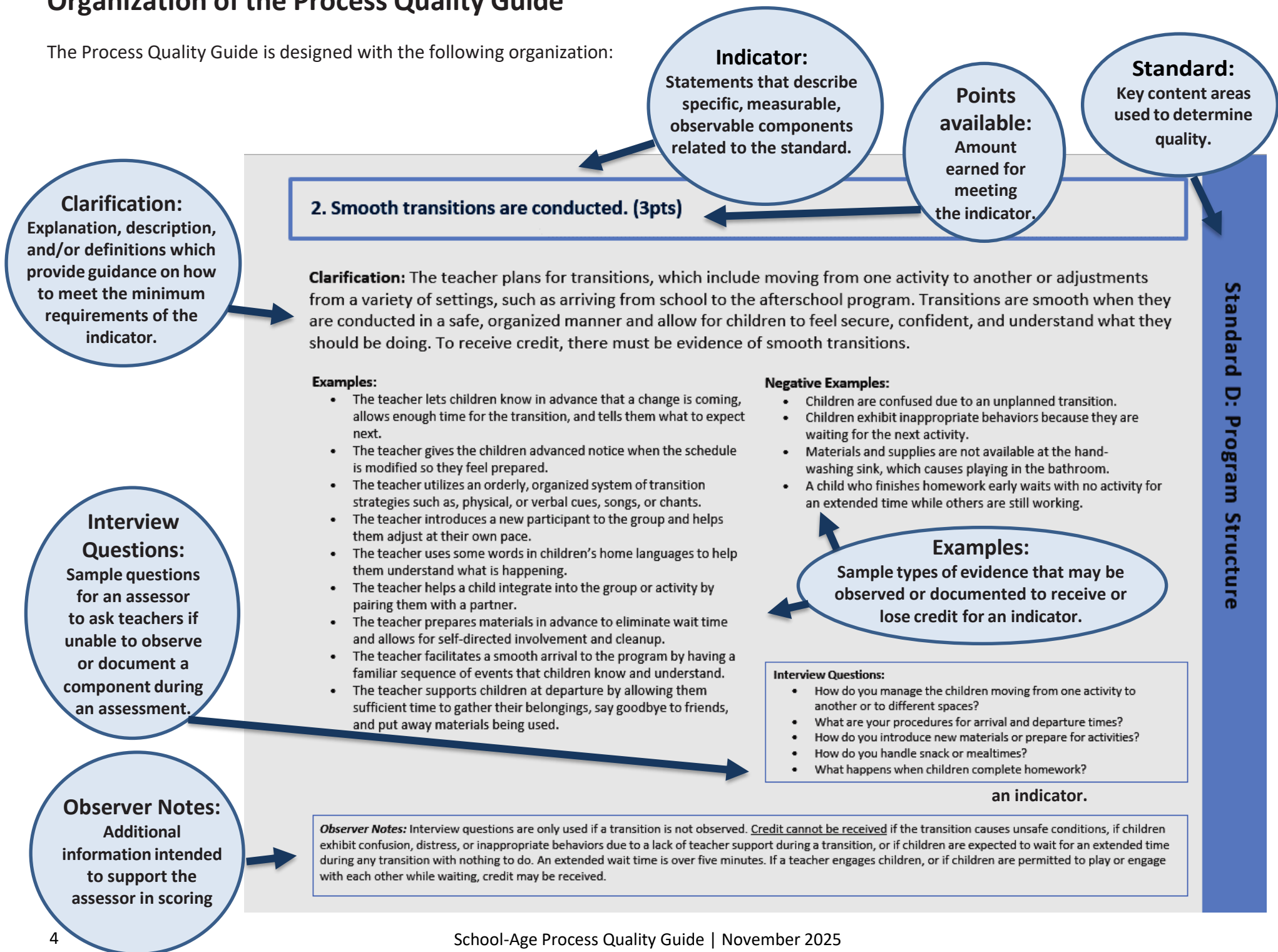
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# Organization of the Process Quality Guide

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 Respectful Care
- Language and Communication
- Guidance
- Program Structure
- Early Learning
- Environment

## Standard A: Responsive and Respectful Care

The program supports the emotional development of school-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. Encourages children to express their emotions.
4. Recognizes and responds to all children as individuals with unique strengths and needs.



## 1. Contributes to the positive climate by building relationships. (4pts)

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

### Examples:

- The teacher validates a child's frustration when trying a new activity that is challenging.
- The teacher shows empathy when children are hurt or frustrated.
- The teacher is patient as a child is having difficulty expressing their thoughts.
- 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.
- The teacher respects the child's choice to be called by their preferred name.
- The teacher keeps discussions about a child's private information such as personal/medical history, background, special needs, and family confidential.
- The teacher demonstrates physical warmth through high fives, elbow bumps, or special handshakes.

### Negative Examples:

- The teacher screams or yells to discipline or intimidate children.
- The teacher uses criticism, comparison, or favoritism.
- The teacher complains to a co-worker in front of children about an aspect of the job.
- The teacher conveys anger or contempt through words or actions towards children or other adults.
- 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. (4pts)

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

### Examples:

- The teacher looks at children and smiles, nods, and/or expresses interest as they discuss their plans for the day.
- The teacher gives a "thumbs up" to a group of children who have announced their successful completion of a board game.
- The teacher listens to a group of children discussing the rules to a game such as mancala or four square and responds when they ask for support.
- The teacher speaks in a non-threatening manner to children during homework to provide support as needed.
- The teacher takes interest in children's conversations about food eaten at home by acknowledging their preferences.
- The teacher encourages children to complete their thoughts by attentively listening and using non-verbal cues, such as nodding and mirroring.
- The teacher demonstrates understanding when children are struggling with speaking by allowing additional time to express their ideas and thoughts.

### Negative Examples:

- The teacher does not allow children to talk during meal times or transitions.
- After a child asks the teacher a question, the teacher responds, "You are supposed to be quiet because it is homework time."
- A child has his hand raised and is never 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 responding to children with inappropriate content. 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. Encourages children to express their emotions. (4pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher encourages children to express and manage a wide range of emotions. The teacher acknowledges and is responsive to expressed feelings to create an emotionally safe environment by asking questions, having conversations, and/or offering comfort. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher encouraging children to express their emotions must be observed.

#### Examples:

- The teacher supports children in thinking about ways to respond to strong emotions during a group meeting.
- The teacher helps a child work through their feelings of frustration by offering alternative solutions to solving the problem.
- The teacher acknowledges a child's feelings of anger by stating, "I see you are angry about your friend taking that seat. You can read or draw until you are ready to join us. We will hold you a spot."
- The teacher is genuinely excited for and congratulates a child who receives an A on their science project.
- The teacher offers comfort and allows children to express their frustration in a safe and appropriate manner.
- The teacher assists the children with reflection by talking to them about how they feel.
- In a calming voice, the teacher says, "You look upset. If you would like to talk about anything bothering you, I am here."

#### Negative Examples:

- The teacher diminishes children's emotions by stating, "Get over it," "Don't cry," "Only babies cry," "Boys don't cry," or "Quit whining."
- The teacher is dismissive of a child's emotion by stating, "You are fine," or "You're okay," without offering comfort.

**Observer Notes:** 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. (4pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher recognizes, respects and responds appropriately to children's individual interests, talents, temperaments, abilities, 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 a child's preference to be alone by not forcing them to join a group or allowing them quiet space without interruption.
- The teacher validates children's use of their home languages or dialects.
- The teacher encourages children to explore, express, and celebrate each other's heritage and traditions, such as inviting them to bring items from home.
- The teacher recognizes children have varying temperaments and learning styles by responding appropriately.
- The teacher asks children with special talent to model for their peers.
- The teacher promotes a child to use their communication device to participate in a group activity.
- The teacher invites all to join in sports and games regardless of ability and makes accommodations as necessary.
- The teacher responds to a group of children who are excited about their block structure by cheering their efforts.

**Negative Examples:**

- The teacher demeans, labels, or belittles children.
- The teacher makes negative comments about a child's hair, such as being fuzzy.
- The teacher is impatient with or dismisses a child who needs 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. Engages in conversations with individual children.
2. Asks children open-ended questions related to their experiences and waits for a response.
3. Prompts children to use critical thinking skills that require more complex responses.
4. Expands children's knowledge and vocabulary by elaborating, extending, or sharing information.
5. Encourages children to communicate and share language with each other.

## 1. Engages in conversations with individual children. (3pts)

**Clarification:** Conversation is defined as having at least one full exchange where the communication continues following a response. Two-way, adult-child conversations occur when both parties are interested and contribute to the exchange. To receive credit, at least 3 instances of back-and-forth conversations between the teacher and individual children must be observed.

### Examples:

- Teacher: "What ingredients do you need to make a chocolate cake?"  
Child: "Flour, eggs, cocoa powder, sugar, and water."  
Teacher: "What kind of pan do you want to use?"  
Child: "If we make cupcakes, we need a muffin tin."
- Child: "We had our first soccer game yesterday."  
Teacher: "Oh wow! What team are you on?"  
Child: "The Giants. We have green shirts. Stephanie and Alex are also on my team."
- Child: "We finished reading Ramona today."  
Teacher: "Oh really? What was your favorite part of the book?"  
Child: "When she rescued the dog and made a new house for him in the backyard."  
Teacher: "That's so cool. What kind of dog was it?"

**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 does 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.

## 2. Asks children open-ended questions related to their experiences and waits for a response. (3pts)

**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 children time to respond before continuing the conversation. To receive credit, at least 4 instances of the teacher using different open-ended questions with appropriate wait time must be observed.

**Examples:**

- Who could we call to help us fix the problem?
- What changes do you want to make to your design?
- Where do you like to go on your bike?
- When do you think we should make the muffins?
- Why is it important to you?
- How could we do it another way using these two parts?

**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 directed to groups of children may count as an instance.

### 3. Prompts children to use critical thinking skills that require more complex responses. (3pts)

**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 must be observed.

**Examples:**

*Prediction:*

- During a science experiment, the teacher asks, “What do you think will happen if you combine baking soda and vinegar?”

*Planning:*

- When preparing for the talent show, the teacher asks, “What materials will you need to perform the skit you wrote?”

*Reflection:*

- The teacher says, “Thinking about our speaker today, tell me one thing you learned from her presentation that you did not know before.”

*Analysis:*

- While looking at a non-fiction book, the teacher asks, “How is an octopus different from an eel?”

*Problem Solving:*

- While children are playing with loose parts such as small blocks or sticks, the teacher prompts, “How could you design a bridge that won’t collapse when you drive a small car over it?”

*Evaluation:*

- The teacher prompts children to journal about what their favorite school subject is, and why.

**Observer Notes:** Critical-thinking prompts may be directed toward individual children and/or in group gatherings. Credit may be received if a child’s response is “I don’t know.”



#### 4. Expands children's knowledge and vocabulary by elaborating, extending, or sharing information. (3pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher shares information with children using advanced language and expands knowledge about their surroundings, activities, materials, events, or the outside world. When children do not understand a word/concept, the teacher explains the meaning in simplified language. Intentional efforts are made to expand and increase children's vocabulary development and comprehension. At least three pieces of information must be shared to be counted as an instance. To receive credit, at least 2 instances of the teacher expanding knowledge and vocabulary through rich conversations must be observed.

**Examples:**

*Advanced Language:*

- A child says, "I helped my mom change a flat tire this weekend." The teacher says, "Did you really? Where did you dispose the old tire? Dispose means to throw away or get rid of it properly." A nearby teacher adds, "I replaced all my old tires last winter after I slid on black ice. Black ice is a sheet of ice you cannot see on the road."

*Information Sharing:*

- During a child's homework about notable people from South Carolina, the teacher shares, "Chadwick Boseman is from Anderson County and was the lead actor in the Black Panther movie. He made charitable donations to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Boys & Girls Clubs."

*Elaboration/Extension:*

- When children are learning to play with cards, the teacher shares how to deal with a tie when playing war. "If there is a tie for the highest card, those players place three cards face down and another card face up. The one with the highest card wins all the cards in that turn."

**Observer Notes:** Each conversation during which teachers provide information simultaneously may count as an instance. Instances may occur during group times.

## 5. Encourages children to communicate and share language with each other. (3pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher supports collaboration and engagement by encouraging children to communicate with each other. The teacher prompts or provides opportunities for children to verbally share their experiences and ideas with other children. 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 an art activity, the teacher prompts children to tell each other how the slime feels and smells.
- Children help each other complete homework.
- The teacher says, “Maria would you like to tell Miguel what you saw when you went to the parade this weekend with your family?”
- The teacher encourages children to share with a partner what and how to make their favorite breakfast foods.
- Greg and Mya collaboratively develop a new song for the upcoming talent show.
- At the beginning of summer camp, the teacher provides an icebreaker activity for children to greet each other in their home language or any other language they know.
- Children collaboratively develop a playground game by talking about the roles and rules.

**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 takes special care to facilitate peer-to-peer communication.

## Standard C: Guidance

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

1. Uses positive guidance techniques.
2. Communicates behavioral expectations to guide children's behavior in a positive manner.
3. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child.
4. Encourages children by acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or cooperative behaviors.
5. Models and promotes positive peer interactions.
6. Supports children in their attempts to resolve social conflicts.
7. Provides opportunities for children to identify with and feel a sense of family within the program.

## 1. Uses positive guidance techniques. (3pts)

**Clarification:** Positive guidance includes anticipation and prevention of potential conflicts, as well as interventions that help children learn desired behavior and self-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 guidance 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 uses physical proximity to act as a supportive presence with a child who has displayed aggressive behavior.

#### *Reviewing safe practices:*

- The teacher explains to children why and how unsafe actions can hurt themselves and others.
- The teacher asks children to think about safety, such as “What might happen if we run inside?”

#### *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 bullying and 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 tells children to go to another area to play to give space for a child who prefers to be alone.

#### *Offering Choices:*

- The teacher states, “Owen is trying to finish the puzzle. You can ask him if you can help him or you will need to wait until he finishes it. What do you want to do?”

#### *Questioning to prompt problem solving:*

- The teacher encourages children to think about their behavior by asking, “How might you control your anger?” or “What could happen if you leave the spilled beads on the floor?”

#### *Logical Consequences:*

- The teacher asks Louisa to help rebuild a child’s card house after she knocked it down.
- The teacher helps children take responsibility for their actions and maintain self-control.

### Negative Examples:

- The teacher removes children from activities, such as using time-out.
- The teacher uses threats such as, “I’m going to call your dad to come get you early.”
- 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 clean up after snack, because they threw a board game on the floor.
- The teacher singles out a specific group of children with disciplinary action.

**Observer Notes:** 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 and/or be addressed by ABC Quality, as applicable.

## 2. Communicates behavioral expectations to guide children's behavior in a positive manner. (3pts)

**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 reinforces clear limits and reminds children of behavioral expectations or ground rules.
- The teacher offers acceptable, appropriate, and constructive alternatives for managing behavior and emotions.
- A list of five positively-stated rules is posted and applied consistently such as, "Listen when others are speaking."
- Rules are posted in a variety of ways to meet children's individual learning styles, such as including photos or children's home languages.
- The teacher introduces activities that promote and support appropriate behavior through class meetings/discussions/role playing and small group problem solving.
- Children help with the development of rules and behavioral expectations.
- The teacher and children participate in activities and exercises that address behavioral expectations throughout the year.

### Interview Questions:

- Do you have behavioral expectations, rules, or guidelines for behavior?
- 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 and how they are phrased to children.

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

**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 supports children as they learn to be responsible for their actions and decisions, such as reminding a child that if they choose to stay outside they will miss chess club.
- The teacher supports children through the trial-and-error process, such as building a structure with packing peanuts and toothpicks.
- The teacher encourages responsible risk taking by ensuring appropriate safety measures are in place and supervising the use of materials such as irons, hot glue guns, workbench, and gardening tools.
- The teacher supports a child when they assert themselves in a positive way, such as encouraging a child to communicate with other children when they do not like how they are being treated.
- The teacher shares control with children by allowing them to use equipment, materials, and supplies needed to complete tasks independently.
- The teacher encourages children to try activities that support life-skills development and independence, such as providing children tools to take apart mechanical items (e.g. radios, keyboards, TVs, and computers).
- Accidents are handled calmly, individually, and as privately as possible. The teacher turns these incidents into opportunities for children to learn from them, such as providing a child a whisk broom and dust pan after spilling their crackers on the floor.
- The teacher notices a child in a wheelchair who wants to play dress-up. The teacher provides the child time to work with the clothing while offering assistance if they request it.

#### Negative Examples:

- The teacher maintains complete control over activities and decisions.
- There are extended wait times with no activity or opportunity for peer interactions.
- The teacher shames or embarrasses a child.
- The teacher belittles a child for making a responsible decision to try a task on their own.
- The teacher continues to ask a child to make eye contact, when it is uncomfortable for them.
- The teacher forces children to participate in activities they have no choice or interest in.

**Observer Notes:** An unrealistic expectation is when a teacher assumes children should be able to do something that they are not yet capable of doing. An extended wait time is when a child has no activity or opportunity for peer interactions for over five minutes. 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.

#### 4. Encourages children by acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, or cooperative behaviors. (3pts)

**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:**

- The teacher acknowledges a positive choice that a child made during snack by saying, "You made a good choice to move to the other side. It is too crowded on this side of the table. Thanks."
- The teacher supports cooperative behaviors that a child initiates and says, "Thanks Devan. I appreciate you helping Kennedy get the activity cart out of the storage closet. It is much easier when there are two people."
- The teacher encourages a child's effort and says, "Neveah, I know you tried really hard to get the stand to stay up. There must be something else you could do to make it work. What do you want to try next?"
- The teacher recognizes a child's accomplishment and says, "I see you got an A on your spelling test this week. Way to go! All your practicing and studying really paid off."
- The teacher supports a child's confidence and competence by saying, "I see your wheels turning. You are on to something here. Keep at it!"

**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.



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

**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, acceptance, and appreciation.
- The teacher coaches children to stand up for each other.
- The teacher expresses support for children taking into account the perspectives of others as they express their own point of view.
- The teacher leads children in explicit discussions about differences and ways to show appreciation and respect by listening to each other.
- The teacher helps children know and understand social norms and cues.
- The teacher promotes cooperation and negotiation during small group activities.
- The teacher supports children in developing openness and respect for others by including others and recognizing that they may have different perspectives and opinions.
- The teacher discusses ways to support and respect the expressed feelings of others, such as “You saw that Julio was really upset after losing the game. You really helped him to calm down by inviting him to come play with you. You are being a great friend.”
- The teacher encourages children to notice and acknowledge each other’s work and accomplishments, such as prompting children to be excited for a friend who has just won the spelling bee.
- Children are encouraged to show empathy and support by encouraging children to make cards for a classmate who lost a pet.

**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.

## 6. Supports children in their attempts to resolve social conflicts. (3pts)

**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:

- Two children are heard arguing over a soccer ball. The teacher states, “I can see you both want the ball. What can you do about this? How can you solve this problem?”
- The program has a resolution table or designated space where children go to calm down or work out conflicts.
- The teacher supports conflict resolution by asking each child to share their experience and cooperatively come up with solutions.
- The teacher stands near children and encourages them to listen to each other. The teacher helps them think through possible solutions as they try to find a peaceful resolution to a disagreement over the rules to a board game.
- Children are asked why they think an incident occurred and what they could have done differently.
- The teacher responds calmly to children who feel they have been treated unfairly by another. The teacher listens as they describe their feelings and guides them to find a reasonable, non-judgmental solution.
- Children are observed pushing and shoving in the library area as they tell each other to get out of the way. The teacher approaches them and asks, “What can you do if you don’t have enough room to spread out here?”
- The teacher recommends some effective strategies for cooling down to children who are arguing, such as walking through a deep breathing exercise.
- After a conflict, the teacher facilitates children rejoining a group by ensuring everyone agrees to being reunited, and understands what behaviors are expected.

**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 a teacher allows, is dismissive of, or ignores intentional aggressive behaviors such as bullying, ongoing teasing, or other hurtful actions.

## 7. Provides opportunities for children to identify with and feel a sense of family within the program. (3pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher provides support for sense of self and connectedness to the group. A sense of family within the program 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 program's family must be observed.

### Examples:

- The teacher promotes a sense of acceptance and helps children feel connected to the group through engaging activities such as songs, chants, handshakes, rituals and/or traditions that are related to the group.
- The teacher reinforces program membership by consistently referring to individuals as part of the group or identified team, such as "We are the Dolphins."
- The teacher provides opportunities for children to get to know each other through team-building activities.
- The teacher engages children in activities that foster good citizenship, such as setting up a voting booth or making cards for soldiers or first responders.
- The teacher asks a couple of children to help clean tables before snack.
- The teacher encourages children to respect each other's property, such as asking a child to pick-up a classmate's bookbag that fell off the table.
- The teacher provides activities for children to reach group goals, such as collectively reading 1000 books. A posted thermometer chart is used to demonstrate how far they have come to reach their goal.
- The teacher sets up a card making station for a child who is absent due to illness.
- Daily group meetings are held to introduce and discuss important topics of the day, and children are invited to share, participate, and reflect.
- Activity plans include a variety of clubs and/or interest groups where children can collaborate with each other.
- The weekly newsletter has information about the teacher connecting children to internal and/or external neighborhood projects and activities, such as maintaining a local garden.

**Observer Notes:** Evidence may be observed or present in newsletters, displays, or activity plans.

## Standard D: Program Structure

Programming, schedules, activities, and transitions are structured to meet the varying needs of children.

1. The daily routine includes handwashing with soap and water for teachers and children.
2. Smooth transitions are conducted.
3. Teacher allows children to feed and serve themselves during meals and snacks.
4. Teacher supports meals as a time for children to engage and socialize.
5. A current daily schedule is followed.
6. The daily schedule provides time for a variety of activities to occur.
7. 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:

- After any time spent outdoors.
- 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.
- Before and after messy projects or activities, such as with sand/dirt, cooking, 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.

**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. A lack of handwashing may result in a report to Child Care Licensing and/or addressed by ABC Quality, as applicable.

## 2. Smooth transitions are conducted. (3pts)

**Clarification:** The teacher plans for transitions, which include moving from one activity to another or adjustments from a variety of settings, such as arriving from school to the afterschool program. Transitions are smooth when they are conducted in a safe, organized manner and allow for children to feel secure, confident, and understand what they should be doing. To receive credit, there must be evidence of smooth transitions.

### Examples:

- The teacher lets children know in advance that a change is coming, allows enough time for the transition, and tells them what to expect next.
- The teacher gives the children advanced notice when the schedule is modified so they feel prepared.
- The teacher utilizes an orderly, organized system of transition strategies such as, physical, or verbal cues, songs, or chants.
- The teacher introduces a new participant to the group and helps them adjust at their own pace.
- The teacher uses some words in children's home languages to help them understand what is happening.
- The teacher helps a child integrate into the group or activity by pairing them with a partner.
- The teacher prepares materials in advance to eliminate wait time and allows for self-directed involvement and cleanup.
- The teacher facilitates a smooth arrival to the program by having a familiar sequence of events that children know and understand.
- The teacher supports children at departure by allowing them sufficient time to gather their belongings, say goodbye to friends, and put away materials being used.

### Negative Examples:

- Children are confused due to an unplanned transition.
- Children exhibit inappropriate behaviors because they are waiting for the next activity.
- Materials and supplies are not available at the hand-washing sink, which causes playing in the bathroom.
- A child who finishes homework early waits with no activity for an extended time while others are still working.

### Interview Questions:

- How do you manage the children moving from one activity to another or to different spaces?
- What are your procedures for arrival and departure times?
- How do you introduce new materials or prepare for activities?
- How do you handle snack or mealtimes?
- What happens when children complete homework?

**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 for an extended time during any transition with nothing to do. An extended wait time is over five minutes. If a teacher engages children, or if children are permitted to play or engage with each other while waiting, credit may be received.

### 3. 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. School aged children are encouraged to feed and serve themselves with minimal 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:**

- Children retrieve snacks or meals independently.
- Children can self-select individual food items.
- The teacher sets up a snack station with instructions, so children can prepare their snack independently.

**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 mealtime routines. The indicator may be met when children have the option to serve themselves one or more food components as part of the meal and/or 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.



#### 4. Teacher supports meals as a time for children to engage and socialize. (3 pts)

**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.

There are two components to this indicator:

1. Teacher engages in the meal service by sitting (for at least part of the meal) and interacting with children 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 discusses the benefits of healthy eating with a group of children.
- The teacher supports a child that needs help opening a yogurt lid.
- After children get their snack, the teacher joins them at the table.
- The teacher supports children's proper use of serving utensils.
- During breakfast, the teacher talks about what children are going to do over the weekend.
- The teacher reminds children to clean small spills with their napkin.

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

- Children have social conversations at mealtimes.
- Teachers prompt children to talk with each other with conversation starters.
- The teacher encourages the children to say "thank you" to each other when items are passed.

##### Interview Questions:

- Tell me about your mealtime routines and how children participate.
- 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.

## 5. A current daily schedule is followed. (1pts)

**Clarification:** A current daily schedule is readily available and generally followed so children can learn the sequence of events and feel prepared for what happens next. The program or group must have a schedule that has the following three components:

1. Current - schedule of events designated for the program or group at the time of the observation.
2. Readily available - able to be quickly obtained by staff for reference, without having to leave the room/group or obtain from another person outside of the room.
3. Generally followed - is flexible, and accommodations are made for special events, inclement weather, as well as individual and group needs.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

**Examples:**

- There is a planned, posted, and followed schedule of activities for teachers and staff to refer to and provide consistency for children.
- The teacher carries a binder or clipboard with the program's daily schedule and activities, which is followed.

**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.

## 6. The daily schedule provides time for a variety of activities to occur. (1pts)

**Clarification:** Daily programming includes a variety of social, recreational, and educational activities to support children's interests, needs, and abilities. There are three components to this indicator:

1. The daily schedule reflects that children are provided uninterrupted blocks of time for child-directed play in self-selected areas or materials.
  - Programs operating under 6 hours must provide at least one 30-minute block of time.
  - Full day programs operating 6 hours or more must provide a minimum of a 45-minute block of time, both in the morning and the afternoon.
2. Individual, small, and large group activities are varied based on the level of interest and engagement.
3. Children have time and adult support to complete homework as needed.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

### Examples:

*Component 1: Children are provided uninterrupted blocks of time for child-directed play*

- The afterschool program has a 30-minute block of time for play in interest areas on the daily schedule.
- The summer camp has an hour-long block of child-directed play both in the morning and in the afternoon.

*Component 2: Individual, small and large group activities are varied based on the level of interest and engagement*

- The teacher shortens the group meeting after noticing that children are losing interest.
- Children are engaged in sustained activities as long as they are interested.

*Component 3: Children have time and adult support to complete homework as needed*

- The teacher provides opportunities for homework assistance, tutoring, and completion of school work.

### Interview Questions:

- Does your program provide accommodations for children to complete homework? If so, how is that handled?

**Observer Notes:** Credit cannot be received if the program/group does not have a schedule. The uninterrupted blocks 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 30 minutes, however it is observed to be less than 30 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. homework/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 and disengaged, then the group time is no longer meaningful, and credit cannot be received. The schedule is reviewed when group times are not observed. 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.

If homework is not observed because no children have homework, credit may be received. However, if some children do have homework and others are made to sit and wait until the assignments are completed without any alternative activities available, credit cannot be received. If a program does not provide time or supports (teacher, materials, and space) for children to complete homework, credit cannot be received.

## 7. 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 program or group'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.
1. 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.
2. The 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 afterschool program has a 45-minute block of time for outdoor play listed on the daily schedule.
- The summer camp schedules daily outdoor times from 10-11 a.m. and 2-3 p.m.

*Component 2: Children go outdoors when weather permits*

- Children go outside after it rains.
- The summer schedule is modified to accommodate outdoor play times earlier in the day when temperatures are expected to be high in the afternoon.

*Component 3: Planning for inclement weather*

- The schedule states that indoor active play is substituted when weather does not permit outdoor time.
- Teacher's written inclement weather plan provides child selected active play materials.
- The program has a rainy day schedule that incorporates indoor active play time for at least the same amount as outdoor time.

### Interview Questions:

- What do you do when you are unable to go outdoors due to weather? Where do you have this written?

**Observer Notes:** To receive credit for component 1, active outdoor play 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: Enhanced Learning and Enrichment

The program facilitates enhanced learning and enrichment 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 independently manage play and/or activities.
2. Opportunities are provided for children to show initiative and assume leadership roles and responsibilities.
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. A written plan of activities that supports the active engagement of children is present.
6. Planned physical activities occur daily.
7. Experiences are provided that promote and extend literacy development.
8. Opportunities are provided for children to extend learning using a variety of nature, nutrition, science, engineering, math, or technology concepts.
9. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about art or creative expression.
10. Opportunities are provided for inquiry and exploration through project-based experiences.

## 1. Daily opportunities are provided for children to independently manage play and/or activities. (3pts)

**Clarification:** When children manage their play and activities, they develop independence, decision making and problem-solving skills. 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 and/or activities.

**Examples:**

- The teacher invites children to select an activity.
- The teacher is supportive of a child bringing a book outside to read.
- The teacher allows a child to bring writing materials to the block area.
- A child selects their own partner for playing chess.
- Children decide if they want to participate in clubs of interest that are provided by the program.
- Children decide how to form teams for an organized game.

**Interview Questions:**

- Tell me about this time (e.g. interest areas) on your schedule?

**Observer Notes:** The teacher may need to facilitate play or provide prompts for children who need additional support engaging in play. 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 (e.g. interest areas).

## 2. Opportunities are provided for children to show initiative and assume leadership roles and responsibilities. (3pts)

**Clarification:** Children are encouraged to take initiative to lead and/or assist in tasks or activity development. Their individual autonomy is supported by providing opportunities to assume leadership roles and program responsibilities. Opportunities are individualized based on the children's home life, interests, and abilities. To receive credit, there must be evidence of an opportunity for children to demonstrate leadership and initiative.

### Examples:

- Children are encouraged to plan, design, and develop new activities for themselves or the group.
- The teacher encourages children to take initiative in selecting, completing, or reflecting on activity choices they make.
- The teacher encourages children to care for the program's property (e.g. unstack chairs and tables, put out table games and set up interest areas, put away sports cart, organize storage cabinet materials) by rotating responsibilities so all children are involved.
- The teacher allows children to share in ownership of the programming by participating in planning (e.g. discussing activities, book selections, field trip opportunities, behavior expectations, class rules and routines).
- The teacher provides opportunities for each child to have leadership roles (e.g. club leaders, welcome committee, teacher's assistant, homework helper, safety patrol, and environmental manager).

### Interview Questions:

- What role do children play in planning your daily activities?
- What are some of the roles and responsibilities given to children, if any?

**Observer Notes:** If not observed, a teacher interview is used to determine opportunities that are provided which allow for leadership roles or initiative taking. To receive credit, the evidence must have occurred within the past week.



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

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

#### Examples:

- On-site clubs, sports, and interest groups.
- Experiences that promote creativity such as music experimentation, open-ended art, construction, and dramatic play with props that meaningfully represent children’s home life or neighborhoods.
- Open-ended materials that encourage problem-solving and investigation.
- Nature exploration through gardening, cloud/bird watching, and nature walks.
- Activities that promote literacy such as reading, writing experiences, and bookmaking.
- Multi-stage projects such as cooking using family recipes.
- Organized games with rules such as red light/green light and kickball.
- Digital learning through technology such as coding and robotics.

#### Negative Examples:

- Passive screen time in which there is not an alternative activity.
- Extended activity (15 minutes or more) when children are not interested or actively engaged.
- Academic activities (homework/math drills) are exclusively offered.
- The teacher forces children to participate in teacher-directed activities.
- Children are limited to one or two activities the teacher provides.
- The teacher shows a movie that lasts longer than 60 minutes in one full day.

#### Interview Question:

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

**Observer Notes:** Activities may be independent and do not need to build on each other. Screen media (e.g. television, tablets, smart boards, and computers) may be used for purposeful play, physical activity, educational research or digital learning. Each child’s daily total screen media time is limited to no more than 60 minutes for full day programs and 30 minutes for programs operating under 6 hours per day. Screen media that is used for work assigned by the school such as virtual learning, e-learning, or homework activities, is not included in this calculation. Credit cannot be received if there is any negative instance.

#### 4. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate support through scaffolding, promoting problem-solving skills or introducing new and challenging experiences. (3pts)

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

##### Examples:

- The teacher facilitates and participates in activities to extend current play levels to make them slightly more complex.
- The teacher encourages children to try new skills and build self-confidence by taking charge of their own learning.
- The teacher provides a challenge that is just beyond what a child can already do easily by themselves.
- The teacher utilizes a variety of instructional supports such as peer-to-peer prompts, direct instruction, and/or collaborative engagement to scaffold learning.
- The teacher prompts a child or asks questions to help a child to take initiative to begin and complete a task.
- The teacher refers to a chart that gives step-by-step directions (e.g. assembly instructions) or shows an example of a completed activity.
- The teacher supports children in acting out and retelling stories by providing props.
- The teacher encourages a child to keep trying when they make a mistake or feel reluctant about an activity.
- The teacher prompts children to consider different solutions as they are figuring out a problem.
- The teacher coaches a child with responses that will support their ability to join a group of children playing.
- The teacher extends play and encourages children to persevere by asking thought-provoking questions (e.g. "How might you..." "What will you need to...?").
- The teacher leads a brainstorming session for children to think about new activities or materials they would like to try.
- When children indicate they need help, the teacher determines ways to support by listening and observing.

**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. A written plan of activities that supports the active engagement of children is present. (1pts)

**Clarification:** A plan of activities provides enhanced learning and enrichment opportunities to be implemented in an intentional way. A current, written plan that demonstrates developmentally appropriate activities must be available. There are two components to this indicator:

1. Current - dated for the timeframe during which the observation takes place and updated at least monthly.
2. Developmentally appropriate activities are planned to meet the needs, skills and abilities of the children observed.

To receive credit, all components must be present.

**Examples:**

- A current, written plan connects or extends school to aftercare activities.
- Posted and dated plans indicate opportunities for children to participate in various activities tied to developmental domains and/or academic achievement.
- The teacher has a binder or clip board with current activity plans that are appropriate for their age group.
- A weekly dated plan is developed for all age groups attending summer camp, which includes activities that are theme-based.

**Observer Notes:** The plan must be written, meaning that it is documented in an observable manner. The current activity plan must include at least two activities and reflect the correct date. The activity plan may be for the entire program, but it must ensure developmentally appropriate activities for the age group observed.

## 6. Teacher plans physical activities daily. (2pts)

**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, stretching, and running. 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 activity/learning 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 as required on a schedule or activity/learning plan:*

- Sports, fitness, and recreational activities.
- Dances such as African dance, line dance, or Salsa dance.
- Yoga or Tai Chi.
- Indoor obstacle course.
- Outdoor ball game or other sport.
- Nature walk/hike.

**Observer Notes:** A current daily schedule or an activity/learning 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 they have the opportunity to be physically active.

## 7. Experiences are provided that promote and extend literacy development. (2pts)

**Clarification:** Children are purposefully engaged in meaningful reading and writing experiences which promote literacy development. There are three components to this indicator:

1. Evidence of an experience that promotes reading is observed, on display, or listed on a current schedule or activity/learning plan.
2. Evidence of children writing is observed, on display, or listed on a current schedule or activity/learning plan.
3. A minimum of 15 fiction and nonfiction books are within reach.

To receive credit, all components must be met.

### Examples:

#### *Component 1: Evidence of reading experiences*

- Children play games that promote reading such as word searches, crossword puzzles, or board games.
- The teacher shares news or interesting facts using informational texts, such as newspapers, magazines, or flyers.
- Children are given opportunities to practice researching a topic for school.
- The schedule states that children are provided a block of time for reading.
- Children are read to, read alone, and/or read to others.
- Children use a variety of texts, print, and written materials in various languages provided by the program.

#### *Component 2: Evidence of writing experiences*

- Children's written work that was created at the program is displayed.
- The teacher prompts children to write thoughts and ideas (e.g. draw a picture, write a poem).
- The teacher promotes use of adaptive equipment to support written communication skills.
- The activity/learning plan states that children are provided journaling time to record daily thoughts.
- Children use materials from the art or writing center to create a story.
- Children practice spelling words by writing sentences during homework.
- The teacher encourages children to write stories in their home language.

#### *Component 3: Presence of at least 15 fiction and nonfiction books*

- Reference books.
- Homemade books.
- Magazines and newspapers.
- Graphic novels and comic books.
- Books in children's home languages.
- Books that originated from other parts of the world.

**Observer Notes:** Displayed evidence must be created at the program to earn credit. Reachable supplemental materials that support reading, other than books, receives credit for component one, even if not used during the observation. Reachable writing materials receive credit for component two, even if not used during the observation.

## 8. Opportunities are provided for children to extend learning using a variety of nature, nutrition, science, engineering, math, or technology concepts. (2pts)

**Clarification:** Opportunities that extend learning with scientific and mathematical concepts support children's inquiry, exploration, and problem-solving skills. This can be achieved through conversations, activities, and/or meaningful experiences. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of an opportunity for children to extend learning in nature, nutrition, science, engineering, math, or technology topic areas must be observed or listed on the current activity plan.

### Examples:

- Children participate in activities that help care for the environment (e.g. planting garden, planting trees, recycling bin).
- The teacher describes ways of collecting, organizing, and representing data.
- The activity plan has an organized bridge-building challenge.
- The teacher talks about skeletal parts of the body and which muscles are involved in walking, dancing, or playing a game.
- The children use technology: computer exploration, smartboard activities, coding, robotics, etc.
- The teacher encourages children to use more than one sense (e.g. smell, touch, taste) to explore food or herbs.
- The teacher leads an activity where children take and compare measurements of furniture.
- The teacher reads books about the work of scientists.
- The teacher extends what children know about physics by using words like "energy" or "motion."
- The activity plan has a scavenger hunt for children to collect and compare different leaves.
- The lesson plan has an activity where the children read food packaging labels and analyze the nutritional data.
- A special event on the plan is for a member of a child's family to help the class plant a pawpaw tree in the outdoor play and learning environment.
- The teacher describes and demonstrates how a manual typewriter works.
- The children use recycled materials to build and race vehicles.
- The teacher engages children in the scientific process by observing, making predictions, recording predictions, and testing hypotheses.
- The teacher supports a child who is struggling with math homework by providing steps and tricks for solving multiplication problems.
- The teacher talks with children about how to calculate tax on purchases while they are using the cash register or calculator.

**Observer Notes:** The presence of nature, nutrition, science, engineering, math, or technology materials does not count as an instance unless children's use of the materials is observed.

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

**Clarification:** Creative expression experiences introduce children to the fine arts: visual art, music, dance, and drama. Creative expression provides children opportunities to experiment with the artistic process, develop imagination, communicate ideas, and express individuality. Opportunities can be achieved through conversations, activities, and/or meaningful experiences. To receive credit, at least 1 instance of the teacher providing a creative expression opportunity must be observed.

### Examples:

- The teacher encourages children to act out roles and characters in stories.
- The teacher encourages children to create original art through the use of open-ended art materials such as skin tone paints, collage materials, playdough, glue, crayons, sweetgrass, fabric, assorted paper, and comments on the process.
- 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, African American art, murals, and depictions of lifestyle, landscapes, or portraits, etc.).
- The teacher involves children in singing, playing instruments or dancing (e.g. karaoke, drumming, or traditional dances).
- The teacher explores the use of a variety of rhythm instruments and points out the origin, rhythms, tonal patterns, or sound.
- The teacher uses a variety of music (e.g. classical, rock, pop, country, reggae, rap, and popular music) and asks open-ended questions on 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.
- Children are engaged in sewing, knitting, beading, crocheting, or loom work.
- The teacher asks open-ended questions or discusses the properties of art materials such as changes in color, textures, and other characteristics of art materials.
- Children tell stories through puppets.
- With the support of the teacher, children are involved in planning and producing talent shows, poetry contests, debates, or theatrical presentations.
- The teacher provides experiences to learn photography or printmaking.
- The teacher encourages children to paint, make goop, sculpt pottery, or manipulate clay.
- The teacher asks children their opinion of displayed art.
- The children use various types of fabric to create fashion designs and dress up in their creations.

**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 would not count as an activity for creative expression.

## 10. Opportunities are provided for inquiry and exploration through project-based experiences. (2pts)

**Clarification:** Project-based means that the activity is generated from the children's inquiries or interests and is sustained over a period of time. These experiences are continued from day to day, week to week, and may include all or a few interested children. The teacher uses guiding questions to motivate, engage and extend learning during a multi-stage process of concept development and implementation. To receive credit, there must be evidence of a project-based experience.

### Examples:

- A graphing chart with pictures from weather experiences is displayed in the group setting, demonstrating that children are active participants in a weather study.
- A group of children are actively exploring carpentry tools. They identify and compare types, kinds, uses, and sizes of tools and wood pieces as they build a birdhouse.
- Children make piñatas for an upcoming celebration. Each day they continue with the project until it is completed and used in the event. Pictures capture their progress and excitement of the day.
- The program's monthly newsletter announces to parents an upcoming service-learning project for children such as "Home for the Holiday." They execute their plan by collecting and distributing canned goods to those in need over the winter break.
- Children explore and research local traditional housing. When studying the Yemassee society they research, design and build a life-sized wattle and daub structure out of recycled materials.
- Children are involved in making a class quilt to display in the room.
- Open ended, ongoing, art or construction activities are protected and available for continuation from day to day.
- Curriculum integration is evident and reflects individual and group ongoing interests and investigations.
- Activity plans describe ongoing project-based experiences.
- Children maintain a flower or vegetable garden under the supervision of teachers.

**Observer Notes:** Evidence for project-based experiences may be found through observation of activities, display of pictures/tangible objects, written newsletters, or activity plans. Projects are inquiry-based and may be planned by the teacher with children's input or occur spontaneously in response to a real-world idea or problem. Clubs and daily activity offerings such as chess, cooking, or soccer are not considered project-based since they are available one day or offered as a one-time occurrence versus demonstrating progressive planning, inquiry, and creation.



## Standard F: Environment

The program designs the indoor and outdoor environment using the space, materials, and furnishings as resources to create safe, interesting, and developmentally appropriate places for all children to play, learn, and grow.

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

**Category:** A group of complimentary materials that support play and learning. Categories within the indoor space 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
- 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. The space and furniture are organized and arranged to support play and routines.
5. A protected space is available throughout the day for children who choose to have individual or solitary time.
6. Materials represent the unique backgrounds of children and families.
7. A variety of relevant and meaningful display is easily visible to children.
8. Materials used in the outdoor space are sufficient for children to be actively engaged.
9. Portable play materials used in the outdoor space promote a range of skills.
10. Outdoor space is planned as a play and learning environment.
11. The outdoor environment has a variety of vegetation.

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

**Clarification:** Sufficient materials allow for children to be engaged, reduce competition, and enhance play and learning. To receive credit, there must be a minimum of 20 different material types when 10 or less children are enrolled in the observed group. Groups with 11-20 children must have at least 2 different material types per child enrolled. If a group has over 20 children enrolled, there must be 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, gears toys, kitchen, plastic dolls, doll accessories, pots/pans, dishes, play food representing various countries, serving utensils, small pitchers, shopping baskets, menus, cash register, play vacuum, dress-up clothes and hats, role playing accessories, puppets, woodworking toys, action figures, dancing ribbons/scarves, parachute, karaoke machine, drums, maracas, castanets, bells, sand blocks, xylophone, sensory bin with accessories, blocks, interlocking toys, and building materials, vehicles of varying sizes, people figurines, road signs, toy animals, easel with brushes, paint, crayons, markers, stencils, pencils, assorted papers, glitter, pipe cleaners, collage materials, beading kits, looms, scissors, playdough, clay, soft seating, clip boards, picture books, magazines, reference materials, writing materials, bean bag toss, various types of balls, hoops, board games, magnifying glass, prisms, nature collections, tape measure, rulers, magnet set, scale, tangrams and pattern blocks, abacus, sorters, counting sets, computer, printer.

**Observer Notes:** The primary space where children spend the majority of their time is assessed for sufficiency. Materials that are available for children to reach and use for any amount of time during the observation are counted. If more children are present than enrolled, the number of children present is used to calculate the number of material types needed. The material type (e.g. puppets) is counted, and not each individual item (e.g. cat puppet, dog puppet, and turtle puppet). Within each material type, if there are differences that promote various skills, such as foam balls versus plastic kick balls, each variety within the material type may be counted. Material types that are sets, such as blocks, tangrams, and construction materials must have at least 10 pieces to be counted. If an item is unable to be used because a companion piece is missing, such as crayons without paper, that material cannot be counted. Accommodations are in place for children with varied ability levels to use the materials.

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

**Clarification:** Children will engage in richer, more complex play when they have hands-on experiences with a variety of material types and equipment. A variety of materials is measured in two ways, breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are available. 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, Reading/Literacy, Writing, Music, Technology, Academic Support, Nature/Science/Sensory, Math, and Gross Motor.

Examples of material types within the categories:

- *Nature/Science:* natural collections (e.g. rocks, shells), magnifying glass, binoculars, science-related cards/board game, solar system puzzle, and science magazines.
- *Engineering/Construction:* wooden blocks, interlocking blocks, animals, people representing varying abilities, and vehicles.
- *Art:* paper, scissors, skin-toned colored pencils, beads, craft sticks, glue, tape, stapler, clay, loom work, and collage materials.
- *Gross Motor:* balls, hula hoops, corn hole, parachute, bowling set, and global music for movement activities.

**Observer Notes:** To receive credit, sufficient material types in Standard F, indicator 1 must be met. Material types found in the same category are often organized into interest areas, play spaces and/or designated rooms (e.g. cafeteria, media center, computer lab, or gym). All of these areas are included when assessing for variety if children can reach and use the materials daily. Material types are counted within each category based on how they are organized in the indoor space. If the outdoor space is used to assess sufficient in F.1, it may be used to assess variety. Although materials may be duplicated within categories or moved by children from area to area, individual items representing identifiable categories are grouped and organized together.

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

**Clarification:** Children will engage in richer, more complex play when they have hands-on experiences with a variety of material types and equipment. A variety of materials is measured in two ways, breadth and depth. Breadth refers to how many categories are available. 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, Reading/Literacy, Writing, Music, Technology, Academic Support, Nature/Science/Sensory, Math, and Gross Motor.

Examples of material types within the categories:

- *Nature/Science:* natural collections (e.g. rocks, shells), magnifying glass, binoculars, science-related cards/board game, solar system puzzle and science magazines.
- *Engineering/Construction:* wooden blocks, interlocking blocks, animals, people representing varying abilities, and vehicles.
- *Art:* paper, scissors, skin-toned colored pencils, beads, craft sticks, glue, tape, stapler, clay, loom work, and collage materials.
- *Gross Motor:* balls, hula hoops, corn hole, parachute, bowling set, and global music for movement activities.
- *Technology:* computer, printer, headphones, software/games, internet and note-taking supplies.
- *Academic support:* dictionaries, rulers, calculators, 3-hole punch, paper, index cards, highlighters, pencils, and pencil sharpener.

**Observer Notes:** To receive credit, sufficient material types in Standard F, indicator 1 and “some variety” in Standard F, indicator 2 must be met. Material types found in the same category are often organized into interest areas, play spaces and/or designated rooms (e.g. cafeteria, media center, computer lab, or gym). All of these areas are included when assessing for variety if children can reach and use the materials daily. Material types are counted within each category based on how they are organized in the indoor space. If the outdoor space is used to assess sufficient in F.1, it may be used to assess variety. Although materials may be duplicated within categories or moved by children from area to area, individual items representing identifiable categories are grouped and organized together.

#### 4. 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 age appropriate for the children enrolled.
- Storage shelves, carts, or supplies are conveniently located and readily available for use.
- Play spaces are divided for older and younger children to facilitate age-appropriate experiences.
- The block area provides adequate space, surfaces, and support for construction activities.
- The dramatic play area provides sufficient space for the number of children allowed in the area.
- Interest areas are labeled to promote access to materials.
- Furnishings are organized to promote independence and appropriate use of materials.
- Art materials are stored and used in a space that has surfaces which are easy to clean.
- Pathways are arranged for all children and adults to have easy availability to indoor 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.
- Appropriate space and materials are available for children to complete homework.

##### Negative Examples:

- Appropriate tables and seating are not provided for homework.
- The block area does not have sufficient space for building.
- A child in a wheelchair is unable to enter all indoor spaces due to the furniture arrangement.
- Children play in overcrowded areas with minimal materials, causing disruptive behaviors to occur.

**Observer Notes:** All indoor spaces that children use are assessed. If the outdoor space is used to assess sufficient in F.1, it must be added to the spaces assessed. Credit cannot be received if 2 or more negative examples are observed.

## 5. A protected space is available for children who choose to have individual or solitary time. (1pt)

**Clarification:** A space for children to have individual or solitary time is a designated location where a child can retreat and relax by themselves or with a friend. This space provides an area for one or two children to have self-selected separation from the large group. The teacher ensures that the designated space remains protected from large group interference. To receive credit, a protected space must be available for children who choose to have individual or solitary time.

### Examples:

- Cozy reading nook.
- Loft.
- Canopy.
- Quiet corner with a small seating arrangement.
- Movable seating that is comfortable for reading.
- Sheer curtains, shelving, or short room dividers used to create separation from the group that do not interfere with supervision.

### Negative Examples:

- The teacher does not protect the space by allowing more than two children to be in the space that is designated for a place to retreat.
- The teacher disallows or interferes with one or two children creating their own space to be alone.
- The teacher sends a child to the designated space as punishment for misbehaving.
- A child asks to find a space for solitude, but the teacher says it's not an appropriate time.

### Interview Question:

- How do you accommodate a child who wants to play alone?
- How is the space used?

**Observer Notes:** If additional children attempt to join the space and the teacher redirects them to other areas, credit may be received. The reading space may be counted if the space is protected and limits the number of children. Credit cannot be received if there is not a protected space for children to have individual or solitary time, the space is available for a limited time, or a negative example is observed. Only the primary space where the children spend the majority of the day is assessed for a protected space.

## 6. 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 3 different material types representing at least 2 examples of uniqueness must be observed.

**Examples:**

- *Skin tone:* dolls, action figures, crayons, or other art supplies.
- *Traditions:* handicrafts representing the children's heritage, food packages, global art and displays, music from various genres, books and labels 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 or posters on the wall depicting multiple generations.

**Observer Notes:** The space where children have [availability](#) to the most materials is assessed. Contrasting examples must be present within a material type to receive credit.



## 7. A variety of relevant and meaningful display is 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, the room must have at least 3 examples of relevant and meaningful display. At least 1 of these examples must reflect the enrolled children.

**Examples:**

- Reflects the children enrolled: Photos of family members and pets, photos of the enrolled children displayed on a clothesline, graphs representing children's selections, birthday boards, banners created by children, children's artwork, writing sample, diorama, creation, or tri-fold board used to display pictures from an ongoing project.
- Realistic pictures of people of different nationalities, everyday objects, animals, nature, and topics related to themed activities.
- Art: Framed photos, paintings, wall hangings, pottery, weavings, tapestry, murals, national or global folk art
- Visual schedule of activities in a portable frame
- Posters displaying healthy eating habits, nutrition, or handwashing procedures.
- Three-dimensional displays (visible to all children): Sculpture, mobiles, 3-D solar system model, windsocks, spinners, chimes, and non-poisonous plants, terrariums

**Observer Notes:** If children use multiple rooms, the schedule is reviewed to determine which space children use the most and this space is assessed for display. 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. Display that reflects the children 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.

## 8. 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, a minimum of 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, basketball hoops, soccer goal, trikes, parachute, scooters, wagons, wheelbarrow, hula hoops, jump ropes, frisbee, dancing ribbons, scarves, potato sacks, outdoor blocks, 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, shovels, hand trowels, watering cans, watering buckets, sidewalk chalk, easel, brushes, sponges, play house, plastic dolls, plastic food, bowls, utensils, small pitchers, outdoor puppet theater, puppets, measuring cups, books, interlocking toys, mailbox, variety of vehicles, animals figures, road signs

**Interview Question:**

When I go outside, is there anything that I may not see that you typically use every day?

**Observer Notes:** If multiple groups use the outdoor space at the same time, the total number of observed children for those groups is 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, such as balls, if there are differences that promote various skills, such as a soccer ball versus a basketball, 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 there is no outdoor space designated for the assessed group.

## 9. 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 support 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, all components must be met.

### Examples:

#### *Components 1: Portable play materials*

Balls of various sizes and materials, batons used for relay races, bean bags, garden tools, hula hoops, jump ropes, obstacle cones, outdoor bowling set, poly spots, pop-up soccer goal, potato sacks, ribbons, scooters, shovels/scoops, construction materials, frisbee, tennis set.

#### *Component 2: Gross motor skills*

Catching, digging, hopping, jumping, kicking, running, pedaling, pushing, rolling, scooping, scooting, throwing, and lifting or manipulating large blocks/boxes.

**Observer Notes:** If children are not observed outdoors, a teacher interview may be used to determine what additional materials are used outdoors. Various types of balls (e.g. footballs, playground balls, soccer balls) may be counted for up to 2 portable play materials. Stationary play equipment does not count as a portable play material.

## 10. 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 looping pathway that encloses an open grassy area for gross motor activity.
- A low stage set among an established grouping of trees with a row of tree stump chairs.
- One or more raised garden beds placed adjacent to a covered patio building exit.
- A large stationary play-gym with a slide and climber surrounded by mulch.
- A gazebo gathering space in a group of trees.

*Component 2: Activity settings are purposefully arranged.*

- A looping pathway encircles a large open grassy area and a climbing structure with a slide surrounded by mulch. A gazebo, in a grouping of trees, is in the far corner of the space. Raised garden beds and a work table are located adjacent to the building's exit.

**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.

## 11. 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 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 outdoor play space 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 row of five fountain grasses, and a grassy field 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 room/group 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/group. Ratios are assessed on both the observed **and** the enrolled number of children and are scored based on the greater of the two. Ratios are assessed in all locations. To receive credit, the room /group must meet the ABC Quality ratios.

Age of Child	ABC Quality Ratio
5 – 6 years	1 adult: 15 children
6 – 9 years	1 adult: 18 children
9 – 12 years	1 adult: 20 children

**Observer Notes:** The room and/or assigned group meets the ABC Quality ratios. If there is only one age group in a room, ratios are assessed by the room. An assigned group is when children are designated to a specific teacher who does not cross-supervise other groups and the children do not intermingle with others. When there are multiple assigned groups in the same space (i.e. Cafeteria) that do not interact with one another, ratios are assessed by the assigned group. If multiple age groups in a large space intermingle or there is cross-supervision by teachers, ratios are assessed by the room/space. Volunteers cannot be included in staff-child ratio. If the room/group is observed to be out of compliance with ABC ratios, **credit cannot be received.**



## 1. The room/group meets the ABC Quality group size. (5pts)

**Clarification:** Group size is determined by the total number of children in a single room/group. 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. 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
5 – 6 years	30
6 – 9 years	36
9 – 12 years	40

**Observer Notes:** Group size is determined by the total number of children in a room and/or assigned group. An assigned group is when children are designated to a specific teacher who does not cross-supervise other groups and the children do not intermingle with others. When there are multiple assigned groups in the same space (i.e. Cafeteria) that do not interact with one another, group size is by the assigned group.

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. Groups and rooms do not combine.



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