



A Quality Rating and Improvement System for
Early Care and Education in Indiana

Preschools in Public Schools Guidebook

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Table of Contents

Preschools in Public Schools Guidebook.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	6
Paths to QUALITY™ roles and responsibilities	6
Agencies and companies involved in the implementation of PTQ	6
Paths to QUALITY™ processes	7
Program eligibility	7
Enrollment process.....	7
Location change	7
Enrollment process for programs with multiple sites	8
Program re-enrollment.....	8
Fast tracking.....	8
Inactive Voluntary Status	9
Inactive-Involuntary Status due to Loss of Good Standing	9
Program compliance issues	9
Loss of accreditation.....	9
Potential Major Licensing Violations	10
Loss of Good Standing	10
Program rating	11
Rating process	11
Request for rating.....	11
Minimum number of children for rating visit.....	11
Scheduling the rating visit.....	11
Rating visit.....	11
Insufficiencies found during a rating visit	12
Level approval	12
Appeals process.....	12
Child Care and Development Fund tiered reimbursement rates	13
Eligibility for higher CCDF reimbursement rate due to PTQ Level increase	13
Reduction in CCDF reimbursement rate due to PTQ Level decrease	13
PTQ guidebook structure	13
Standard.....	13
Paths to QUALITY™	15

Level 1	15
Standard 1.....	15
Paths to QUALITY™	16
Level 2	16
Standard 1.....	16
Standard 2.....	16
Standard 3.....	18
Standard 4.....	20
Standard 5.....	22
Standard 6.....	25
Standard 7.....	27
Standard 8.....	30
Standard 8, Indicator 1	30
Standard 8, Indicator 2	31
Standard 8, Indicator 3	33
Standard 8, Indicator 4	35
Standard 8, Indicator 5	36
Standard 8, Indicator 6	38
Standard 8, Indicator 7	39
Standard 8, Indicator 8	40
Standard 8, Indicator 9	42
Standard 8, Indicator 10	43
Standard 8, Indicator 11	45
Standard 8, Indicator 12	47
Standard 8, Indicator 13	48
Standard 9a.....	49
Standard 9a, Indicator 1	50
Standard 9a, Indicator 2	52
Standard 9a, Indicator 3	54
Standard 9a, Indicator 4	55
Standard 9a, Indicator 5	56
Standard 9a, Indicator 6	58
Standard 9a, Indicator 7	59
Standard 9a, Indicator 8	61
Standard 9a, Indicator 9	62

Standard 9b.....	63
Standard 9b, Indicator 1	63
Standard 9b, Indicator 2	65
Standard 9b, Indicator 3	66
Standard 10, Indicators 1-10	67
Standard 11.....	71
Standard 11, Indicator 1	71
Standard 11, Indicator 2	72
Standard 11, Indicator 3	73
Standard 11, Indicator 4	75
Standard 11, Indicator 5	76
Standard 11, Indicator 6	77
Standard 11, Indicator 7	79
Standard 11, Indicator 8	80
Paths to QUALITY™	82
Level 3	82
Standard 1.....	82
Standard 2.....	83
Standard 3.....	84
Standard 4.....	85
Standard 5.....	88
Standard 6.....	89
Standard 7.....	90
Standard 7, Indicator 1	91
Standard 8.....	92
Standard 8, Indicator 1	93
Standard 8, Indicator 2	94
Standard 8, Indicator 3	96
Standard 8, Indicator 4	97
Standard 8, Indicator 5	99
Standard 8, Indicator 6	101
Standard 8, Indicator 7	103
Standard 8, Indicator 8	104
Standard 8, Indicator 9	106
Standard 8, Indicator 10	107

Standard 8, Indicator 11	109
Standard 9.....	110
Standard 9, Indicator 1	111
Standard 9, Indicator 2	112
Standard 9, Indicator 3	114
Standard 9, Indicator 4	115
Standard 9, Indicator 5	117
Standard 9, Indicator 6	118
Standard 10.....	120
Standard 10, Indicator 1	120
Standard 10, Indicator 2	122
Standard 10, Indicator 3	123
Standard 10, Indicator 4	124
Standard 10, Indicator 5	126
Paths to QUALITY™	128
Level 4	128
Standard 1.....	128
Standard 2.....	129
Glossary.....	131
Nationally Recognized Early Childhood Professional Organizations	135

Paths to QUALITY™

Indiana's Early Childhood Quality Rating System

Introduction

Research shows that providing children with high-quality early learning experiences is critical to preparing them for school, work and life. Early childhood programs are essential to a child's brain development, their families and the community in which they live. High-quality programs boost parent education and income. This is why states across the nation use Quality Rating and Improvement Systems to improve the quality of early childhood and education environments. Indiana has implemented Paths to QUALITY™, a QRIS system that provides an easy-to-recognize quality symbol. The Paths to QUALITY™ system is informally referred to as PTQ.

Indiana's children will encounter high-quality early experiences and future success with a quality rating system for early childhood programs. The system is free and voluntary and provides information to parents on how to find and choose quality early childhood programs.

Paths to QUALITY™ roles and responsibilities

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration has assumed responsibility for the oversight and administration of the Paths to QUALITY™ program in Indiana. It will manage and control the budget, system development, policy and procedures, contracts and appeals.

The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning coordinates Paths to QUALITY™ closely with child care regulations. It has a web-based system integrated with the Regulatory Data System to increase inter-agency coordination, accountability and quality control.

Agencies and companies involved in the implementation of PTQ

A Paths to QUALITY™ implementation plan was developed in collaboration with CCDF quality partners. A high level of coordination and collaboration is necessary between all partners to move childhood programs through the system. OECOSL has contracted TCC Software Solutions to re-verify level compliance and verify level achievement by children's education and care programs.

Early Learning Indiana Statewide Support

- Paths to QUALITY™ Marketing Plan coordination
- Develop support for statewide public and private partnerships

Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (Indiana AEYC)

- Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® Scholarship program
Indiana Non-Formal CDA Project
- Program scholarship support for accreditation

The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning

- Provide enrollment incentives
- Program awards for Levels 2, 3 and 4

Paths to QUALITY™ processes

Program eligibility

Participation in Paths to QUALITY™ is voluntary and free for Licensed Child Care Homes, Licensed Child Care Centers, Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministries and LLEP Public Schools that meet the following requirements:

- Currently in good standing (not on a probationary license) with their licensing or registration status. This means that programs must be certified in all four categories of the Voluntary Certification Program (Ministries only).
- Be certified in all four categories of the Voluntary Certification Program and meet the CCDF Program Eligibility Standards (Ministries only).
- Traditional public schools that choose to administer and offer preschool programs and wish to participate in Paths to QUALITY™ must be licensed or become a CCDF Certified Unlicensed Provider. Once the school preschool program is certified or licensed, they are required to join a Paths to QUALITY™ Introduction Session and submit the Paths to QUALITY™ Enrollment Form and Memorandum of Agreement to OECOSL. After completing the appropriate documentation, the school will be enrolled at Level 1.
- If your program moves to a different physical location, you need to sign a new Memorandum of Agreement and get a new rating.

Enrollment process

If you wish to participate in Paths to QUALITY™, you are required to submit the Paths to QUALITY™ Enrollment form and Memorandum of Agreement to OECOSL via email. The Enrollment form and Memorandum of Agreement are issued at the Paths to QUALITY™ Introduction Session.

After receiving your Enrollment form and Memorandum of Agreement, OECOSL will verify that your program is in good standing as part of the enrollment process. Those determined as not in good standing will be referred for review. Once approved, you will enter Paths to QUALITY™ as a Level 1. When the enrollment process is complete, you can begin working toward meeting Paths to QUALITY™ standards. You will also receive the Program Tool Kit, Paths to QUALITY™ Guidebook and additional resources. A program may request a Level 2 rating visit as soon as they confirm that they are meeting all the standards listed for Level 2.

Location change

If a program's location changes, the participation and levels may transfer. A new license or registration will require a new Paths to QUALITY™ Enrollment form and Memorandum of Agreement to be signed and a new rating completed. Eligible providers must be in good standing with OECOSL and complete the application for consideration. Upon approval, the new program site will maintain its previous PTQ Level (3 or 4) and must have a maintenance rating visit within 30 days of approval. Providers will have 90 days to correct any insufficiencies, which OECOSL hopes will help alleviate any challenges for programs. Please contact OECOSL at Qualitysupport@fssa.in.gov if you have any questions or concerns. Programs can submit a request for approval here: <https://forms.office.com/g/489XhJdPHi>

Enrollment process for programs with multiple sites

Paths to QUALITY™ participation and levels are assigned to a location and license number. programs with multiple sites must enroll each location they want recognized as a Paths to QUALITY™ program and each location must have its own qualified director. Each site will submit separate Paths to QUALITY™ Enrollment Forms and sign separate Memorandum of Agreement forms.

Program re-enrollment

If you had previously participated in Paths to QUALITY™ and want to re-enroll and apply with the same license/registration number as previously enrolled, you would need to sign a new Memorandum of Agreement; however, the Paths to QUALITY™ database has a record of the level awards that have already been given and you will not be given the same incentives/awards again.

Fast tracking

After achieving a new level rating, programs must wait at least six months to request a level increase. However, a program may “Fast Track” to a Level 3 or 4 in certain circumstances. Fast tracking is when a program advances a level(s) by skipping a level or the six-month waiting period.

Below are the circumstances in which a program may fast track:

- A center or ministry may fast track from Level 1 to Level 3 or 4 at any time if they have been open for at least a year and/or have operated a program of the same auspice for at least a year.
- A home may fast track from Level 1 to Level 3 or 4 at any time if the lead caregiver has at least 12 months experience as a caregiver in a licensed child care setting.
- An LLEP public or private school may fast-track from Level 1 to Level 3 or 4 at any time if they are in the process of becoming eligible for OMW Pre-K.
- Any program may fast track from any level to Level 4 at any time if they are accredited or become newly accredited and have been open for at least a year and/or has operated a program of the same auspice for at least a year or any licensed child care setting for homes.

If a program wishes to fast track, then they must make a request with OECOSL. However, other programs operated by the same entity must be in good standings with licensing and PTQ.

Programs wishing to fast track but not approved under these conditions may submit an appeal to the PTQ Appeals Committee under the appeal guidelines.

Inactive Voluntary Status

When a Paths to QUALITY™ program needs to submit for an Inactive Voluntary Status, the program should submit a request to OECOSL using the electronic Inactive Voluntary Status form. The request should detail the conditions necessitating the inactive status (such as a Natural Disasters Emergency, Closing Medical/Family, Emergency Seasonal or Program Closing) and the time needed. Requests will be approved on a case-by-case basis for up to a maximum of 90 days and for no more than one occurrence within any 12-month period. Inactive status allows the program to remain enrolled in Paths to QUALITY™ at the current level.

Inactive-Involuntary Status due to Loss of Good Standing

A program may be placed in Inactive-Involuntary Status, temporarily suspended from participation, by decision of the Loss of Good Standing Committee. If a rating request has been made and the program subsequently is placed in Inactive-Involuntary Status, the rating request will be canceled by OECOSL. After the program resumes good standing, the program will contact OECOSL to request a rating. Once the program's readiness is determined, a new rating request can be made. If the program's biannual rating date occurs while their status is inactive, a rating request will be made within 14 calendar days after the program returns to active status.

Program compliance issues

Loss of accreditation

The standards for Paths to QUALITY™ Level 4 require that a program achieve and maintain accreditation by an OECOSL approved nationally recognized accrediting body. Accreditation is an indicator that the program has achieved the highest standards for high-quality early care and education.

If a program is approved for Level 4 in Paths to QUALITY™ and then loses its accreditation, the following procedures shall be taken regarding their Paths to QUALITY™ participation:

- The program is responsible for notifying OECOSL of the change in their accreditation status immediately after the action is taken.
- The program will be given 90 days to regain its accreditation. The program will be allowed to remain at Level 4 during this time period.
- OECOSL will document the accreditation status change and track the 90 days in the Paths to QUALITY™ database.
- If the program decides during the process not to attempt to regain accreditation, a special rating request can be made immediately to the rating agency to establish the appropriate new level of participation based on a determination of readiness by OECOSL.
- However, if Level 1 is requested, only a Request for Change in PTQ Level form will be completed and submitted to OECOSL and not a rating request.

- After 89 days, if the program still has not regained accreditation, a special rating request will be made to the rating agency by OECOSL to establish the appropriate level of participation. the program's Paths to QUALITY™ level will be adjusted to the appropriate level as determined by the rater at the special rating visit.
- According to the appeals policy, if the program wishes to appeal the decision to lower their level, they must send a written request to the Paths to QUALITY™ Appeals Committee (see Program Rating section).

Potential Major Licensing Violations

Coaches and Raters are required to report Potential Major Licensing Violations or concerns they observe and are responsible for reporting any violations to the appropriate licensing or registered ministry manager for appropriate follow-up. If a potential major licensing violation is observed during a rating visit, the rating visit is canceled and the potential major licensing violation observation form is filled out.

OECOSL will cancel a rating request if a licensing violation issue is not resolved. The program can continue with coaching and technical assistance.

Loss of Good Standing

Your early childhood program's licensing or registration status must be current and in good standing to enroll and continue participating in Paths to QUALITY™. Good standing means that your program is in compliance with Indiana's regulations for licensed or registered care and does not have any pending negative action against or probation on their license or registration. to learn more about compliance, refer to the licensing regulations. If a negative action is initiated after you have enrolled, you will be noted in the database for Loss of Good Standing, which the OECOSL regulatory staff can only initiate. This will impact your ability to participate in the Paths to QUALITY™ system and will:

- Stop a rating visit
- Stop Recognition Awards
- May stop program supports
- May trigger technical assistance
- May result in loss of participation in Paths to QUALITY™
- May result in termination from the Paths to QUALITY™ system

Another factor that determines the loss of good standing is a probationary license. However, probation is not considered a negative action. Coaching and technical assistance can continue with programs that have been indicated as on probation. Flagged programs will not be eligible to receive any recognition awards, accreditation supports or rating visits while on this status without specific approval from OECOSL.

Program rating

Rating process

A rating process determines the level of standards achieved or maintained within Paths to QUALITY™. OECOSL will use independent Raters to assess whether or not the standards have been met for the programs to move through the levels of Paths to QUALITY™. The rating process includes:



The rater will have no contact with the program before the rating visit. Additionally, the rater will have contact with the program during the visit. If a rater determines any insufficiency, they will remain in contact until evidence of meeting the standard/indicator is submitted. The rating process is used to determine the level of standards achieved by the program and includes a rating visit and a rating report.

Rating visits

Level 2 and 3 programs that are maintaining their level will have an unannounced visit. A program will contact OECOSL to request a rating visit if they would like to increase their level to level 3. Before a rating visit, a program must review the level standards with staff, if applicable, to ensure that educational and in-service requirements have been met. Level 4 programs will not have rating visits but must submit proof of Accreditation if requesting a Level 4 visit for the first time. Additionally, proof of re-accreditation must be submitted to renew a program's level 4.

Minimum number of children for rating visit

Early childhood programs must have a minimum of two children present during a rating visit. If the program enrolls additional children, the rating visit can be performed. If a program does not have the recommended minimum number of children present for the rating visit, the rating visit will be attempted again.

Planning for the rating visit

In the event that the program director/owner/lead caregiver is not available for the rating, an authorized person must be available. Programs will complete the Program Closure Information form to let the raters know of any planned closures for the program in their rating quarter.

Day of the Rating visit

The rating visit is typically completed within one day. The standards are assessed through observation, review of documentation and interview. A detailed description can be found near the end of this document under “What to Expect at Your Rating Visit.” At the conclusion of the rating visit, the rater will email the letter of recommendation or insufficiency report to the program indicating the level they will recommend to OECOSL. If any insufficiencies are determined at the visit, the program will be provided the list of corrective action necessary to pass the level requested, typically via email. Programs will be advised to contact OECOSL Support Specialists for technical assistance to address the insufficiencies.

Insufficiencies found during a rating visit

Insufficiencies are due to a lack of compliance with PTQ level standards. Programs requesting a biannual maintenance rating visit will be able to correct insufficiencies through photos, paperwork or a second visit.

If insufficiencies are identified during a biannual maintenance visit, the program will be asked to provide documentation to the rater within 90 days. If the program does not provide the necessary documentation to correct the insufficiencies, the rating level will be lowered to the level achieved.

When insufficiencies around dated paperwork are found during a level increase visit, programs have 10 days to provide compliance documentation. If dated documentation is not provided within 10 days, it will be reported to OECOSL and the program will be approved at the highest level the rater was able to verify. If a new rating visit is needed for level increase, the program can request after 90 days from the previous visit.

Level approval

OECOSL approves each program’s level recommendation. Early Learning Indiana issues marketing materials and OECOSL issues signage, congratulatory letter and certificate, as well as information regarding the new visit date. PTQ marketing materials and signage are sent upon receiving a new rating. After OECOSL approves a program’s level, programs must wait six months to request another level advancement.

Notification of Accreditation After Rating Visit

If a program is in good standing, receives the notification of accreditation within 30 days of the OECOSL rating approval date and completes the steps to achieve a Level 4 rating, the program can request a rating increase from OECOSL by submitting a Request for Change in Paths to QUALITY™ Level form along with the Accreditation Certificate.

Appeals process

A program can appeal a level decrease or approval of an increase by sending a written request within 15 days of the date of notification. The Director of the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning must review the decision of the Paths to QUALITY™ Appeals Committee within 15 days and respond in writing. Programs have to appeal their adverse action within a certain amount of time or they may forfeit their right to appeal.

Child Care and Development Fund tiered reimbursement rates

Eligibility for higher CCDF reimbursement rate due to PTQ Level increase

A program enrolled in Paths to QUALITY™ is eligible, on an ongoing basis, to receive an increased maximum reimbursement amount through the Child Care and Development Fund voucher program. CCDF reimbursement rates are tiered based on the Paths to QUALITY™ level, county and program type and the state will pay more for higher quality rated programs.

The new Paths to QUALITY™ level is automatically reflected once a successful rating visit has been approved and submitted. Each program is responsible for communicating CCDF changes to families as needed.

Reduction in CCDF reimbursement rate due to PTQ Level decrease

If a program's Paths to QUALITY™ rating level decreases, the Eligibility Office will adjust all existing vouchers to reflect the new rate of CCDF reimbursement.

PTQ guidebook structure

Standard

What is the Standard/Indicator?

The full standard will be written at the beginning of the section.

Any indicators will follow.

Why is the Standard/Indicator important?

Paths to QUALITY™ standards are research-based. This section describes how meeting the standard will impact the quality of care of children and families.

Required evidence

Use this section to learn what evidence you will need to demonstrate your program is meeting this standard. The three forms of evidence are documentation, interview and observation.

Ideas to help you get started

- This topic section will describe where and how you can start collecting evidence and begin or improve practices.

What does it look like?

Scenarios and examples are provided in this section.

The following sections consist of additional information on meeting/exceeding and implementing the standard and indicators...

Helpful hints

Follow-up steps

One step further

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- This section brings forth a series of reflective questions that ensure early education and care programs are providing access to equitable and inclusive experiences for all children and families.



Paths to QUALITY™

Level 1

Standard 1

Why is the Standard important?

Participating in Paths to QUALITY™ demonstrates your commitment to offering the best possible education and care to all the children and families you serve.

Preschool Classrooms in traditional public schools meet the standards for a level 1 rating providing the following Required Evidence is met:

Required evidence

The Child Care Development Fund Provider Eligibility Standards are met and verified by Family and Social Services Administration, the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning.

Standards regarding teacher child ratios and group sizes have been met as defined in IC12-17.2-4.

Indiana School House regulations for sanitation, fire safety and food service standards are being met as required for public schools as verified by the appropriate state agency.

Ideas to help you get started

- Create a system that allows you to successfully track the status of your license.
- Implement health and safety standards consistently by making sure your staff receives training.
- Track your staff's compliance with health and safety standards.



Paths to QUALITY™

Level 2

Standard 1

What is the Standard?

All requirements of Level 1 are met.

Required evidence

Provider Eligibility and CCDF requirements must be met and in good standing (not probationary) and Exempt Certificate must be prominently posted with date of expiration and exempt number.

Standard 2

What is the Standard?

Administrator receives orientation and trains staff on the Indiana Early Learning Standards.

Why is the Standard important?

The intent of this standard is to ensure that all individuals working with young children in the state of Indiana understand and incorporate the Indiana Early Learning Standards (formerly the NEW Indiana Early Learning FOUNDATIONS to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5) in their daily practices with young children. By outlining specific skills and concepts and giving examples of instructional strategies, these Standards will support teachers, parents and caregivers as they develop appropriate experiences for young children to help ensure success in kindergarten.

The Indiana Early Learning Standards have been developed by the Indiana Department of Education in collaboration with individuals with expertise in children birth to age five years and are based on the latest national research and findings for all content areas and domains.

A note regarding the Indiana Early Learning Standards: The Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards (Foundations) were originally developed in 2002 with content for children three to five years of age. In 2007, a revision was done to add content for children from birth to age three. A second revision was completed in 2012 to align more appropriately to the use of the ISTAR-KR, the Indiana Academic Standards (2007) and the Common Core State Standards. The most current revision occurred in 2015 where feedback from professionals and practitioners included the addition of Approaches to Play and Learning, Health and WIDA Early English Language Development to name a few. Each revision has provided direction and guidance to the field toward developmentally appropriate expectations that support young learners. With each revision, the name has also changed. The Paths to QUALITY™ standards will reference an older version, the FOUNDATIONS to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children Age Birth to Five. The most current version is now titled Introduction to the NEW Indiana Early Learning FOUNDATIONS. As of 2023, the new Indiana Early Learning FOUNDATIONS changed to Indiana's Early Learning Standards to align to the 2023 Indiana Academic Standards. The standards provide core elements that children should achieve from birth to age five to be ready for future success. The standards set forth common language and expectations for all staff working in early care and education. The Guidebook has tried to update the title where appropriate.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Administrator has received orientation to the Indiana Early Learning Standards and can demonstrate with a certificate(s) with the instructor signature, length of course and outline of the orientation training.
- **Documentation:** Staff has received training in the Indiana Early Learning Standards and can demonstrate training with a certificate(s) with instructor signature, length of course and outline of the orientation training.

Helpful hints

- Have documentation of your training attendance with all required elements as listed.
- Support the staff to attend the Indiana Early Learning Standards training.
- This training must specifically be for Indiana Early Learning Standards.
- Indiana Early Learning Standards training expires for the purpose of training hours, but does not for the Foundations standard.
- Must show proof of training at every rating visit for all staff members. this training will count towards your PTQ training hours if it has been completed within 12 months of your Paths to QUALITY™ expiration date.

Follow-up steps

- Attend the Indiana Early Learning Standards training which can be found on Indiana Learning Paths through your ILEAD account. have documentation of staff training attendance with all the required elements listed above.

One step further

- To be intentional, educators must know how children typically develop based on their developmental stage. That is why it is critical for teachers to become very familiar with the Indiana Early Learning Standards and use them to plan age-appropriate activities and experiences for each learning domain.
- Reflect with staff on Indiana Early Learning Standards and how they will implement it in their classrooms.
- Even though this is only required to be completed once, retaking this training ensures continued understanding and practice. It also ensures you are up to date on the latest version of the Indiana Early Learning Standards.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Am I familiar with what the state of Indiana's Department of Education expects my daily practices and teaching strategies to be?
- How can I ensure all staff implement best practices from prior FOUNDATIONS training?
- In what ways does our program increase access to high quality child care and help children reach their full potential?

Standard 3

What is the Standard?

Administrator is a member of a nationally recognized early childhood organization.

Why is the Standard important?

The Early Care and Education field includes multiple organizations that support the professional development of educators and leaders to promote continuous improvement.

Becoming a member of an accredited organization demonstrates your commitment and service to the profession. It allows you to stay current on early childhood issues and participate in group efforts to promote change.

Benefits of professional membership include:

- You can take advantage of the opportunity to network with other professionals who may be directing or working with young children in child care settings.
- Better access to resources including, but not limited to, journals, periodicals, newsletters, websites and conferences.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Current membership card and/or letter, demonstrating membership is current. Other membership resources, such as journals or periodicals may also be used in determining membership (note membership expiration date).

Ideas to help you get started

- Choose from the organizational options and send in the membership requirements.
 - **ACEI:** Association of Childhood Education International
 - **ACSI:** Association of Christian Schools International
 - **AMS:** American Montessori Society
 - **CEC-DEC:** Council for Exceptional Children-Division for Early Childhood
 - **DEC:** The Division of Early Childhood
 - **HighScope:** HighScope Curriculum Membership Organization
 - **IAN:** Indiana After-School Network
 - **IASP:** Indiana Association of School Principals
 - **IO:** Infancy Onward
 - **ISTA:** Indiana State Teachers Association
 - **OMEP-USNC:** Organisation Mondiale pour L'Education Prescolaire (World Organization for Early Childhood Education)-United States National Committee
 - **MCEC:** Military Child Education Coalition
 - **NAA:** National AfterSchool Association
 - **NAC:** National Accreditation Commision
 - **NABE:** National Association for Bilingual Education
 - **NAECTE:** National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators
 - **NEA:** National Education Association
 - **NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children
 - **NAESP:** National Association of Elementary School Principals
 - **NAFCC:** National Association of Family Childcare
 - **NAREA:** North American Reggio Emilia Alliance
 - **NBCDI:** National Black Child Development Institute
 - **NCCA:** National Child Care Association (formerly the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies {NACCRRRA})
 - **NCCCC:** National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers
 - **NHSA:** National Head Start Association
 - **SECA:** Southern Early Childhood Association
 - **OMEP-USA:** World Organization for Early Childhood Education
 - **ZERO TO THREE:** National Center for Infant, Toddlers and Families
- File the membership card and/or letter to validate membership and the expiration date of that membership.
- Keep journals or periodicals that are part of the organizational membership in an easily accessed location.

Helpful hints

- Membership must be for the person listed as the Administrator.

- Make sure you keep your receipt for your membership in case it is needed as documentation before you receive your card or certificate.

Follow-up steps

- Create a system that allows you to keep your membership up to date.

One step further

- Become an active member of the organization(s) you have chosen to join.
- Share information from the membership with your staff for potential professional development opportunities.
- Encourage staff members to join an organization as well.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What do I need to read, access or attend that would further my professional development?
- What organizational options are available for my professional development?
- How do I consider the cultural identities (ex., race, national origin, language, religion, dis/ability, gender, orientation, etc.) of the families I am serving when creating a plan for my professional development?

Standard 4

What is the Standard?

Public School has a written philosophy and goals for children.

Why is the Standard important?

This standard intends to ensure you establish the rationale and decide on the approach that will be the foundation for all the decisions, actions and goals you will make about the children in your program. At a minimum, a well-thought-out philosophy statement guides the choice of daily activities and experiences for the children:

- Knowledge of child development and learning Knowledge of each child's growth and development
- Understanding of the social and cultural context
- Use of multiple sources of expertise in professional decision making

Goals for children's growth and development are created and influence the design of lesson plans, the choice of the materials that enable teachers to carry on with their plans, the facilitation of those experiences and how teachers gather and use data about the children's progress to inform their teaching are determined by your philosophy and goals.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** The written philosophy and goals are available for review.

Ideas to help you get started

- Research various philosophy examples using other ECE websites such as NAEYC.
- Make a draft of what you believe about children and the services you will provide to families. (Tip: It would be a positive step to do this with your staff, as well.)
- From the things you believe about children, create the goals that connect to those beliefs.

What does it look like?

Perhaps you have stated in your philosophy that you believe children develop at varying rates from child to child. Then your goal might be to offer many open-ended experiences to allow each child to develop at their own pace. For example, in practice, instead of having all the children make the same thing with play dough, the children would be encouraged to create in their own way at their own levels. Your philosophy states your program goals and mindset, which will guide what experiences and interactions happen with the children and their families.

Helpful hints

- Create a written philosophy and goals from the ideas you brainstormed in your draft.

Follow-up steps

- Keep the philosophy and goals in an accessible location.
- Add your program's philosophy and goals to your Parent Handbook, Staff Handbook, and social media posts.
- Have a system in place for revising and reviewing your philosophy and goals.

One step further

- Within the written philosophy, it is recommended to include the program's philosophy on guidance, while defining the principles about "teaching" young children. It may be beneficial to include a separate discipline policy.
- Before enrolling children in the center, go over your philosophy with families. Make sure that their values and goals for their children are compatible with the center's.
- After enrollment, review the written philosophy and goals for children with families.
- Make sure families understand what they will see in your center and give each family a copy for their own reference.
- Post the written philosophy in an area where other relevant information is kept for families to easily view.
- Compare your written philosophy and goals to the Introduction to the Indiana Early Learning Standards. Modify your goals to coincide with the Academic Standards.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does our center determine whether or not the choices/decisions we are making benefit all children within our program?

- What students and families have historically benefited from the policies and practices of our program? What families and children have not benefited?
- What processes do we have in place to engage with current research surrounding early childhood education and child development?
- Are our language, policies and practices consistent with what our field of study has found out about how children develop and learn?

Standard 5

What is the Standard?

25% of teaching staff, including the Administrator, have either a Child Development Associate credential or equivalent certificate or an early childhood degree or equivalent degree or have completed 45 clock hours of educational training leading to an Early Childhood/Child Development degree or CDA credential.

Why is the Standard important?

Staff education is one of the highest predictors of quality in a child care setting. Research demonstrates that adults with education in early childhood provide higher quality programs for young children, implement more appropriate activities and do a better job of preparing children for school. The intent of this standard is to ensure that 25% of staff possess a degree and/or CDA credential.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Child Development Associate credential or equivalent certificate available with current expiration date for review; OR a Transcript for an early childhood degree or elementary education degree; OR Education and Training Summary form completed and in the teaching staff's file documenting attendance of 45 clock hours of training, transcript with completed courses, certificates, other written documentation, or letter from sponsoring organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation that meets the requirements set by the Council for Professional Recognition; OR A license in Early childhood, elementary or Special Education is acceptable and meets requirements for public school staff. Transcripts could be reviewed for those working towards an Early Childhood degree if needed to meet standard. Please see the chart below.

Educational options and their requirements

EDUCATIONAL OPTION	TYPE	REQUIREMENTS
CERTIFICATES	CDA	Awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition Must be current
	CDA equivalent	Completed 12 ECE/CD/EI Ed credit hours
		Certified Child Care Professional (CCP) Preschool Associates Credential (PAC)
		Child and Youth Care Worker, Certification (CYC), previously Indiana Youth Development Montessori certificate
		Graduate Administrator certificate from Ball State University
		AIM4 Excellence Administrator certificate (USI) Administrator Certificate from Ivy Tech
	Non-credit-based training hours leading toward a CDA	Completed training hours during the last three years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 2: 45 hours Level 3: 60 hours Level 4: Accreditation requirements Must document training on Non-Credit Based CDA Training form, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date Name of training Name of organization Hours CDA competency
TRANSCRIPTS	Completed college credit hours in ECE/CD/EI Ed from an accredited college/university	Completed credit hours with a grade of C or higher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 2: 3 credit hours Level 3: 6 credit hours Level 4: Accreditation requirements
	Current enrollment in a credit-based ECE/CD/EI Ed program	Completed training hours during the last three years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 2: 45 hours Level 3: 60 hours Level 4: Accreditation requirements
DIPLOMAS	Degree in ECE/CD/EI Ed from an accredited college/university (must provide transcript if major is not stated on diploma)	Bachelors (EC/CD/EI Ed)
		Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Associate of Science in Early Childhood
	Equivalent degree from an accredited college/university	Must have at least 15 credit hours in ECE/CD/EI Ed and provide a transcript in addition to the diploma with a grade of C or higher

Ideas to help you get started

- Identify which staff members need further education.
- Identify what percentage of the teaching staff now meets the requirement.
- If further education is needed, contact Indiana AEYC for Education opportunities.
- Assessment and credentialing of child care providers is administered by the Council for Professional Recognition. Visit <http://www.cdacouncil.org/> to learn more about earning your CDA Credential.
- Scholarships and Financial Incentives through Indiana AEYC: The Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (Indiana AEYC) offers financial assistance for training through T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® INDIANA and the Indiana Non-Formal CDA projects. Both projects pay for the majority of the CDA training classes, required texts and the CDA Assessment. Upon completion of training a bonus is awarded. In addition, professionals are available to guide the candidate through the training and assessment which lead to attainment of the CDA credential. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® INDIANA also has scholarships available for those seeking associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood.

For additional information, please contact Indiana AEYC at pd@inaeyc.org, 317-356-6884 or 855-484-2392.

Helpful hints

- The staff includes the Administrator, teachers, support staff and anyone else that may count in ratio more than eight hours per month. If neither the degree nor the credential has been earned, staff must demonstrate work toward one or the other.
- Transcripts must be provided if the diploma does not specify what the degree is in.
- The Non-Credit Based CDA Training form must be filled out for all staff who are currently pursuing a non-credit based CDA showing at least 45 hours completed within the last three years of Rating Visit Date.
- Examples of individuals not included in the total staff are those who do not count in ratio such as kitchen staff, bus drivers, outside support visitors (ex., First Steps or therapists), volunteers, additional office or business staff.
- Current students can count their approved courses, both completed and actively enrolled using the approved form.
- Keep in mind that non-credit based CDA and Director Credentials need to be renewed.
- Approved college courses and transcripts never expire.
- If using training hours for the Education equivalency, make sure you are using the Non-Credit Based CDA Training Summary form to document all training that has been completed in the past three years.

Follow-up steps

- Support staff to begin courses of study or training.
- Collect and file required documentation of all training, courses or certificates received.
- Store documentation in an accessible location.
- Connect with T.E.A.C.H.

One step further

- Look into creating an Education Plan or Professional Development goal for each staff member.
- Align pay scale based on Education levels. have a plan in place to ensure coverage in classrooms that provides opportunities for staff to complete coursework and degree requirements during business hours

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What percentage of the staff currently meets the requirements of this standard?
- Are the qualifications of the staff (and myself) documented?
- What do we still need to do to meet this requirement?
- How can I support staff when it comes to implementing what they are learning in their coursework?
- How do we interrogate our biases, beliefs and assumptions when developing goals surrounding staff development?

Standard 6

What is the Standard?

At least 50% of teaching staff participate annually in a minimum of 15 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood

Why is the Standard important?

Ongoing professional development is one of the highest predictors of quality in a child care setting. The field of early childhood education is evolving and continuous professional development ensures the most up to date practices. It is important as professionals to continue training in such areas.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Use the In-Service Training Summary form or another similar form for each staff member to demonstrate participation in a minimum of 15 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood.

Documentation will include, but is not limited to, date of training; number of clock hours of training; type of training content/subject of the training; name and credentials of the trainer/or the training organization. When calculating the percentage of staff, round up. As an example, if you have 13 staff, 50% is 6.5, so you would round up to 7. For teaching staff employed less than one year, in-service hours should be prorated based on the number of months since the date hired.

Ideas to help you get started

- Find dates/times that will be most advantageous for those receiving the training.
- Identify the most beneficial types of training.
- Types of in-service training may include, but are not limited to, CDA coursework; college courses; Child and Adult Care Food Program Training; state/regional conferences on multiple topics; workshops.

- Methods of in-service training may include, but are not limited to, direct instruction such as Indiana Learning Paths, Face-to-Face Trainings and conferences; video viewing (maximum of four clock hours annually); and independent reading and study (maximum of two clock hours annually).
- In-service training may be conducted by an approved designated training facilitator. You can find approved trainers as well as apply to be an approved trainer on the Indiana AEYC website, inaeyc.org.
- Professional development plans can be helpful in planning topics and trainings to help you and your assistants. Information about professional development planning can be obtained by contacting SPARK Learning Lab.

Helpful hints

- The In-Service Training Summary form or another similar form must be filled out for each staff member.
- Proof of training may include certificates, transcripts, current ECE Coursework, documentation or Indiana Learning Paths transcripts. the following in-service training may not be used to meet this standard: First Aid; CPR; Universal Precautions; hours of mentoring and technical assistance provided through the Paths to QUALITY™ system including the Introduction to Paths to QUALITY™ webinar and any cohorts or group learning.
- Reference Rating Visit Date for determination of “annual.” For example, if your rating visit is on June 15, 2022, certificates dated from June 15, 2021, will be counted.
- Training documentation must include:
 - number of clock hours of training;
 - type of training;
 - content/subject of the training;
 - name and credentials of the trainer/or the training organization.
- All users can upload additional training certificates to their transcripts on Indiana Learning Paths.
- Administrators have the capability of assigning training to staff in Indiana Learning Paths.
- Consider making binder containing staff training available so staff can update their own logs.

Follow-up steps

- Follow up with staff to make sure that registrations, paperwork, etc., are completed to allow attendance at training events.
- Collect and file required documentation from all staff who attend training.
- Ensure each staff person has an updated Training Summary Form.
- Store all documents in an easily accessed location.

One step further

- Have staff share what they’ve learned in each training event with other staff.
- Follow up with each staff member to see how the training has impacted classroom experiences.
- Share current and upcoming training events in a central location or share in emails, newsletters, texts or apps—however is the most effective way to communicate with all staff.

- Create Professional Development plans with your staff to identify training opportunities that meet their current needs and interests. have all staff complete training since they and the children will benefit from it.
- Consider having a budget for Professional Development stipends so staff might attend training that have a cost associated with them.
- Plan for a debriefing session with staff after training to discuss what they learned, how they plan to apply what they have learned, what they would need to implement what they have learned and plan for a follow up session to see how the application is going.
- Review the Common Knowledge Competencies to gauge the level of understanding and application of Child and Youth Development; Health, Safety and Nutrition; Observation and Assessment; Learning Environment and Curriculum; Family and Community Connections; Leadership and Professionalism; Organizational Development and Administration.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What types of training, in relevant early childhood topics, would most benefit the staff, family and/or children?
- How can I support each staff member to obtain training needed for clock hours to continue their individual growth?
- How can I support staff to apply what they have learned?
- How am I incorporating staff evaluation data in relation to the training support needed for their professional development plan?

Standard 7

What is the Standard?

A system is in place for communicating pertinent information to families daily and at an annual conference.

Why is the Standard important?

Effective communication is essential for building trusting relationships with families. Establishing a system for daily communication allows you to have a more fluid exchange of information.

Teachers have a system in place for communicating important information daily with families, both at arrival and departure time. At arrival time, you may want to gather information about how the child slept that evening or how the child is feeling. At departure time, you may want to share information about special activities the child engaged in during the day or how the child ate.

This daily communication can include oral communication with the family, but might also include other creative ideas such as a communication notebook or a bulletin board that displays daily activities. Other forms of communication can include weekly or monthly newsletters, phone calls or emails to parents, social media and parent engagement apps.

In addition to daily communication, teachers should have a process in place for scheduling, at least annually, conferences with each family. The purpose of annual conferences is to discuss the progress and development of each child, share significant events and communicate any concerns.

Remember: Serious problems and concerns should not be discussed with families during daily communication. When these concerns arise, the teacher and/or administrator should instead immediately schedule a private conversation with the family without the child present.

Required evidence

- **Observation:** oral and/or written communication with each child's family.
- **Interview:** Describe your system for daily communication of pertinent information for all families.

Family Conferences:

- **Interview:** Describe your system for conducting annual family conferences for each child.

Ideas to help you get started

- Involving the staff and families, whenever possible, determine the most important information needed to help each child's needs/experiences/progress.
- Create a list of how each specific piece of information could best be communicated (a checklist, a conversation, a notebook, a bulletin board, newsletter, email, etc.).

Helpful hints

- Keep a schedule of last year's family conferences during the past twelve months.
- Family conferences should focus on the child's strengths, abilities and progress and not be used to address issues or concerns for the first time.
- Have a system in place for communication between teaching staff to ensure the staff who communicate with the families at the end of the day know how the children's day went or any information that needs to be shared with the families.

Follow-up steps

- Brainstorm with your staff ways to communicate with families for specific circumstances both during arrival and departure and make a plan accordingly.
- Create a classroom calendar of family conference dates/times with each classroom teaching staff.
- Follow up with the communication system chosen by observing staff at arrival and departure times.
- Communicate, early and often, about the family conferences dates/times.
- Check below ("One Step Further") for items that will help create success in communication.

One step further

- **Daily Communication:**
 - Make sure to create a system so you can communicate with each family at arrival and departure times.

- Use daily communication sheets and regular notes home to communicate with families and for families to communicate with the program.
- Create a communication board which is somewhere near the spot where children's individual items are stored, such as their cubbies. This can serve as a method to keep families informed of daily activities, special events and other useful information. Avoid using this to communicate about individual children or posting behavior charts.
- Try a communication notebook as a method to communicate with families.
- **Regular Communication:**
 - Use a variety of methods to share child related information with families throughout the year.
 - You might want to consider creating a family newsletter as a way to keep families informed.
 - Gather useful resources, such as health and safety information and make it available to families.
 - For those parents who work, you can occasionally send emails or use a communication app to let them know what is going on during the day.
- **Family Conferences:**
 - Clearly define your goals for the conference. Let families know it is to discuss important information about their child.
 - Setting a schedule and sticking to it and having clear goals for each conference will help you guide the conference and stay focused on the child's needs.
 - Conferences should be scheduled with each child's family at least annually.
 - Make sure you have appropriate written material to review with families.
 - Make sure you schedule conferences at times that are convenient for families, perhaps during lunch hours or in the evening.
 - You can keep a portfolio or file outlining the child's growth and development throughout the year, as well as a series of individual child observations.
 - Refer parents to other professionals when needed for the well-being and development of their child.
 - Document all conferences and information shared with/by families.
 - Ask for children's input on what they would like to share with their families to highlight their strengths and what they have been doing while at school.
 - Set goals for the child with the parents to help create a partnership in the child's growth and development.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do staff members determine what specific information they wish to communicate daily about each child?
- How does staff increase positive relationships and family engagement especially with families from differing racial, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds?
- How does staff use intentional and differentiated communication and language to best meet the needs of the families they are serving?
- What processes are in place for families to share important information about their child and/or feedback about the program?

- How does the center utilize a variety of different engagement strategies to ensure families are both willing and able to participate in family conferences? This might include providing translation services, hosting both virtual and in-person options, and/or hosting conferences at a variety of different times.

Standard 8

What is the Standard?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Why is the Standard important?

The child's first teacher is their family, followed by educators and then the classroom environment. Having an environment that allows children to grow and thrive through a feeling of safety and belonging is the foundation of their learning experience. Educators and the environment support growth and development through providing one on one quality interactions, modeling appropriate emotional responses, feeling confident and building self-regulation skills, providing opportunity for responsibility and problem-solving skills and encouraging the value of play.

Meeting all of the following 13 indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 8, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 1. Each child and his/her family are warmly acknowledged upon arrival and departure.

Why is the Indicator important?

To acknowledge the children and their families with positive verbal and non-verbal communication during arrival and departure shows that you care about them and sets the impression for a cordial, welcoming and respectful program atmosphere. When you warmly greet children in the morning, it sets the tone for the day and provides a sense of comfort that both children and families need. When you send children and families off at the end of the day using kind words and a positive attitude, you strengthen your relationship with them.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Warmly greets the child and his/her family are acknowledged upon arrival and departure with either a positive verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement.
- **Interview:** Can you describe what happens when children arrive and leave?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe the arrivals and departures in all rooms in the center routinely.
- Consider what would give the most positive message and build the strongest rapport with the child and his/her family.

What does it look like?

When the child arrives, the teacher can say something of specific interest to the child to help entry and to relieve anxiety for the family/caregiver (“I know how much you like to build blocks. Look at the block area today! There are blocks just waiting for an amazing builder to make something special!”). When a child leaves, the teacher can ask if the child would prefer a hug, high-five or just a “warm goodbye” (looking in the child’s eyes and saying, “I’m glad we had time to be together today. I can’t wait until we have a chance to have more fun tomorrow. Have a great night with your family!”).

Helpful hints

- Have easy access, in each classroom, to the lesson plans and daily schedules for the day to reduce anxiety for parents as they leave.
- Ensure classroom environments are welcoming to both children and families. This will help children ease into their learning space and families will feel more comfortable as they leave.
- Ensure there is more than adequate amount of staff during these times.

Follow-up steps

- Make periodic checks to see if optimal positive interactions are happening at arrival and departure.
- Support the staff, whenever possible, during these times with your presence, encouragement and help.

One step further

- Encourage parents to spend time helping transition their child at arrival and departure times.
- Talk with children about their feelings to comfort them during arrival time.
- Try to greet each parent and child by name upon arrival and departure.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What behaviors would make children and their families/caregivers feel noticed, welcomed and positively regarded?
- What equitable practices can the program put in place to ensure families feel warmly acknowledged upon arrival and departure equally and consistently?

Standard 8, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 2. Each child feels safe, accepted and protected. This is supported by daily practices that reinforce respect for people, feelings, ideas and materials.

Why is the Indicator important?

The intent of the indicator is to demonstrate an environment that allows all children the opportunity to grow and learn to their optimal potential, to develop close child/teacher relationships and to promote interactions with other children which are respectful and cooperative.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** The teaching staff demonstrates behaviors such as physical affection, eye contact, tone of voice and smiles. Teaching staff's voice expresses caring, empathy and concern. Daily practices by the teaching staff reinforce respect from people, feelings, ideas and materials so that each child feels safe, accepted and protected.
- **Interview:** Describe the program's philosophy for ensuring respect for people, feelings, ideas and materials.

Ideas to help you get started

- You can find lists of children's books that can help you support positive relationships and respect for each other and individuals at the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning website.
- Review your program's philosophy for what is written about respect for people, feelings, ideas and materials. If not present, consider adding this practice.

Helpful hints

- Have safe spaces, personal cubbies with pictures that allow the children to feel a sense of belonging when they arrive on a daily basis. have this safe space set up and cubby labeled before the children's first day.
- Conduct training with staff on social and emotional needs.

Follow-up steps

- Support the staff in respectful, kind and empathetic interactions.
- Point out those times when you observe respect and concern for the children being positively demonstrated.

One step further

- Teacher has established a special place, within the line of supervision, designed to allow one or two children the opportunity to play and have privacy, such as a quiet corner. This space is available for all children throughout much of the day.
- Teacher is in plain view of children at all times.
- Remember to use children's names throughout the day.

- Look for books at the library that support the ideas of respect for one another, problem-solving and getting along.
- Make sure to include training on how to do this with all assistant teachers.
- Create lessons on empathy, compassion, etc., especially focusing on the classroom community and surrounding community.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What are the best ways to create classrooms that are safe, inclusive and give all children regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, language, dis/ability, religion etc., a sense of belonging?
- What practices are in place to acknowledge and value all children, staff and families' differing feelings and ideas surrounding child care?
- What culturally responsive materials does each classroom have in place to show a value in diversity across race, ethnicity, dis/ability, religion, etc.?

Standard 8, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 3. Children are under adult supervision at all times.

Why is the Indicator important?

For the child's safety, physical and emotional, adults must be constantly aware of the children's physical and social-emotional well-being.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** All children are observed having the teacher's attention and no child is left unattended or in a place where observation would be minimal or non-existent.
- **Interview:** Describe how the room arrangements facilitate observation and adult attention.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom and try to discover physical boundaries that hinder or eliminate ease in adult supervision.
- Brainstorm (with the staff, if possible) ways/systems through which children might be moved safely from one location to another (ex., from the classroom to the playground).
- Make "spot checks" to ensure all children are observed and supervised at all times.

Helpful hints

- Ensure that maximum group sizes are maintained for capacity in each area (ex., gross motor room, playground).
- Ensure at least one “extra” staff member is available on site at all times to cover staff breaks and cover ratio as needed.
- If any children are not supervised during a rating visit, then the rater will stop the visit due to the potential major licensing violation and licensing will be notified.
- Supervision includes being able to see and hear children (sight and sound).
- A classroom will be counted as “out of ratio” if a teacher steps outside of the classroom for any period of time.
- Make sure everyone is aware of the procedure in place to correct ratios in case of an unplanned emergency.

Follow-up steps

- Have teachers do a “walk-through” of the places where boundaries pose a risk to safe supervision.
- Compare notes from your own walk-through and problem-solve together how to create the safest possible environment for supervision purposes.
- Help teachers to understand and how to implement a safe supervision plan when children are taken from one location to another in groups.
- Develop and communicate a plan of what should happen if a classroom would become out of ratio (ex., if an additional child comes in, a staff member needs to step out for a minute, etc.).
- Ensure all staff members are aware of the requirements around nap time and have a plan in place in case a classroom becomes out of ratio due to children waking up.

One step further

- Facilitate a community-based program in which all adults feel not only responsible for all the children, but for everyone’s safety throughout the program.
- If a classroom has several children who are toilet-training, consider utilizing an extra staff member to help with toileting and ensure the classroom stays in ratio at all times.
- Complete name to face attendance periodically in the classroom and every time leaving and entering a new space/room.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do you set up your environment to make supervision and tracking effective?
- What times or areas would supervision become harder for the adults in this environment?

Standard 8, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 4. The environment includes representation of each child and family (including all age groups, abilities and cultures), which might include books, pictures, photographs, music/songs, games, toys, dress up clothes/materials and foods).

Why is the Indicator important?

The intent of this indicator is to foster a sense of belonging with the children. Children should begin to have an understanding about the differences of one another. A child's sense of safety within his/her environment stems from a feeling of belonging and acceptance; no matter what the ability level, cognitive level, race, ethnicity, economic background, etc., of the individual child. Fostering this sense of safety is the foundation for a child's willingness to interact with others and their openness to learning and trying new ideas and skills. Once the child sees himself/herself reflected in the environment, the child will feel comfortable to fully engage with others and with the learning opportunities offered in a positive way that encourages meaningful growth in all areas of development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** The environment includes the representation of each child and family (including all age group abilities and cultures such as music/songs, games, tasks, dress up clothes/materials and food).
- **Interview:** How do you include representation of each child and family that you provide for?

Ideas to help you get started

- Do a "walk through" of each classroom with the roster of children in that class in hand.
- Check off each name when you have found items that would create a place where the child could see himself/herself reflected in a material or visual aid.
- Be sure that you understand what makes up culture and representations that are appropriate to cultural experiences.

What does it look like?

When reading a book that has many cultural/ethnic groups represented in the illustrations, the teacher might point that out by saying something like: "what are you noticing about the children in this picture?" (This is a good assessment for what children do notice too! Misconceptions can be addressed, if needed.)

Helpful hints

- Think about your community or other family dynamics that are not immediately present in the classroom but you could also represent.

- Make sure that potential children and families are also represented, not just the children currently enrolled.
- Ensure children of differing abilities are represented and can successfully access all materials in the classroom.

Follow-up steps

- After the “walk through” to determine the need, find items that obviously represent the children who might not have been represented already in each classroom.

One step further

- Encourage each family to bring family photographs. Display pictures of children and their families, at eye level, throughout the caring environment.
- Create a family scrapbook, which includes information about each child and his/her family and is shared in the environment.
- Teachers will encourage families to share their gifts and talents. For example, a family whose grandmother speaks Spanish might visit weekly to teach the children new words and phrases in Spanish.
- Materials and activities are reflective of both traditional and contemporary cultural beliefs and/or customs.
- Avoid posting multicultural pictures without intent or purpose.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What are the characteristics that define our cultural experience as human beings?
- How do you embed the idea of differing cultures and ideas into the classroom?
- Looking around the center, do you see every single child and family represented in multiple ways (photos, posters, books, materials, dress up clothes/materials, dolls, etc.)?
- Are there any exceptions? Did you consider family configuration (ex., other primary caregivers, single parent families, interracial families, etc.)?

Standard 8, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 5. A place for storage of each child’s personal belongings and possessions are labeled with the child’s name.

Why is the Indicator important?

To develop a sense of ownership and belonging, children need to have a designated space, properly labeled with their names, to place their belongings.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Each child has a specifically labeled space, such as a cubby, basket or bag to hold individual belongings. If bags are used, they must not be a safety hazard.

Ideas to help you get started

- Obtain appropriately sized and safe containers/cubbies for each child.
- Support the teachers to find an easily accessible and logistically reasonable location for each container.
- Support the teachers to find durable, personal and legible labels for each container.

Helpful hints

- While children may not be able to read. Seeing their name in print promotes literacy.
- Using the child's picture with their name can foster that connection.
- Make sure children's personal materials are not touching. For example, you can use large storage bags or containers for children to place their items in if it is not possible to space them far enough apart.
- If you provide part day options and cubbies are shared between morning and afternoon classes, you could add a name tag on a string to switch out between sessions so that cubbies are still labeled for each child.
- To avoid sticky residue from removing previous labels, you can place a baby wipe on top, press it down and let it sit for about 20 minutes and the sticky adhesive will come off.

Follow-up steps

- Have a system in place to communicate when new children come or children move out of the program, so that new cubbies/baskets can be labeled before their first day in the center.

One step further

- Area should be accessible for all children and conveniently located, so as not to disrupt daily activities.
- Area should be clearly labeled with the child's first name and a picture for easy identification.
- Keep in mind this area is for storing children's personal belongings. Any personal or private information should be treated in a confidential manner and not placed in plain view or easy access by others.
- Ensure children have some access to their storage area (hooks, cubbies, etc.) and when developmentally appropriate, can help put their belongings in and out of their storage areas.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Where is the best place to store personally labeled cubbies or baskets?
- How will you ensure children have labels for their cubbies before their first day?
- How can labels be appropriately displayed to be durable, long lasting and represent the children being served?

Standard 8, Indicator 6

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 6. Teachers communicate with and listen to children (both verbal and non-verbal messages) with lots of one-on-one attention throughout the day and usually at eye-level, including time when the teacher is down on the floor with the children.

Why is the Indicator important?

Children's development depends significantly on the quality of the one-on-one interactions between them and their caregivers/educators. Children should be provided with eye-level conversations and interactions whenever possible to learn social rules of communication and develop foundational language skills.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teacher is consistently observed communicating with and listening to children with one-on-one attention. Teacher is consistently observed at eye level with the children and is observed, whenever possible, spending time down on the floor with the children.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe each classroom directly and specifically for teacher-child eye contact and for direct interactions/direct contact with children during varied times of the day.

Helpful hints

- Use free choice time to interact with children in their play, have back-and-forth conversations, engage in play with them, enhance and extend their experiences, etc.
- Sit on the floor or at the table with them. Sitting gives the sense of staying awhile and being there and not ready to leave or move on.

Follow-up steps

- Challenge the staff to consider how many times/ways they can have conversations with the children. Support their creative choices (ex., as children are climbing on a climber or while tying shoes).
- Consider a discussion about "active listening" during a staff meeting.

One step further

- Use meals and snacks as time for back-and-forth conversation. While sitting with the children encourage them to talk about daily events and talk about things children are interested in.
- Use diapering time to talk with children and make eye contact.

- Provide materials that encourage children to communicate in a variety of interest centers. Small figures and animals in the block area, puppets and flannel board pieces in the book area, toys for dramatic play outdoors and indoors. Get down on their level in these interest centers.
- Balance listening and talking appropriately depending on children's developmental stages during communication activities and allow time for children to respond.
- Ask children open-ended questions to encourage them to give longer and more complex answers. For younger children ask "what" and "where" questions and for older children ask "why" and "how" questions.
- Talk to children about ideas related to their play, asking questions and adding information to extend children's thinking.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do teachers communicate that they are actively listening to children via one-on-one interactions?
- What activities are in place that welcome teachers to play with and give one-on-one attention on the floor?
- How is the Administrator modeling, observing and providing feedback on expectations regarding one-on-one communication, listening and interaction with children?

Standard 8, Indicator 7

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 7. Children's ideas, requests and questions are acknowledged with a verbal response or physical gesture.

Why is the Indicator important?

In order for children to believe they are seen, heard and valued, their ideas, requests and questions must be acknowledged at eye level and in close proximity. Such acknowledgments help children sense their value to the teacher and to the classroom community.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teaching staff is observed responding positively to children's ideas, requests and questions.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe each classroom directly and specifically for teacher responses to children's ideas, requests and questions.

What does it look like?

If a child wishes to have water in the dry sand, encourage the idea while evaluating the practice itself. (ex., “Thank you for sharing your idea! What do you think would happen if we put water in all of the sand? How can we put some water in the sand and still leave some dry sand?”) by protecting the child’s ideas, you have not only responded to the idea, but you have also encouraged the child to know their ideas are not wrong. It is how we implement the idea that may need evaluation.

Helpful hints

- Create an environment where children are able to try new things, take risks, make a mess, see their ideas through and where teachers are able to say “yes” to trying new things.
- Create an environment where children feel comfortable asking questions by providing time and opportunities.

Follow-up steps

- If, during the initial observation, you saw challenges or concerns with how the teacher(s) responded to the children’s ideas, requests or questions, support the staff to find more appropriate responses.
- Model appropriate responses when you are with the children in each classroom or in common areas of the program.

One step further

- Taking the ideas and questions of the children and building curriculum (or further discussion) from them not only is responding to those ideas/questions, it is saying how valuable the adults in the classroom community feel those ideas are.

What does it look like?

If a child has noticed a worm crossing the sidewalk, you might have a unit of study or a project about worms or dirt. Reference how that study has begun (ex., “Remember when Suzanne saw the worm on the playground sidewalk after it rained. We wanted to find out more about that.

So, at the science center today, there are worms in a fishbowl. It will be fun to see what we can find out about them. Thanks for the idea, Suzanne!”)

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does the program establish an environment where exploration and discovery is encouraged in every classroom?

Standard 8, Indicator 8

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 8. Children’s feelings are acknowledged with an accepting, non-critical verbal response or physical gesture.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children develop empathy when the adults around them model it by recognizing their feelings, labeling them and using appropriate emotional responses.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teaching staff is observed responding to children in a non-critical, accepting manner. Verbal responses and physical gestures are positive.

Ideas to help you get started

- Support and acknowledge positive statements you hear as you walk through the program.
- Help the staff consider how to reframe negative statements into positive statements.

What does it look like?

A child is upset during drop off. They are visibly crying. The teacher could say “I can see you are sad (insert name of adult) left. How can I help you feel better?.” a teacher notices a child knocks over another child’s block structure and says, “It looks like you might be angry, your arms are stiff and your hands are in a ball. How did it make you feel when your blocks were knocked over? Can I help you think through how to let (child’s name) know that upset you?”

Teaching staff can support children with physical gestures such as caring expressions, being on eye level with the child, offering a hug. Staff can also offer materials such as books, quiet areas, puppets or a feelings chart.

Helpful hints

- Provide materials that promote conversations around emotions. This might include books, pictures, posters, puppets, a mirror and a feelings chart.

Follow-up steps

- Provide social-emotional training for your staff.
- Identify support for teaching staff on co-regulation and managing their emotions during challenging situations.
- Ensure the teacher is near the child and able to calmly address them at the child’s eye level and not from across the room.

One step further

- Respond sympathetically to help children who are upset, hurt or angry. Notice, validate and accept a child’s feelings, even if the child is showing emotions that are often considered unacceptable, such as anger or impatience.
- Show warmth through appropriate physical contact.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do I respond verbally and non-verbally when a child is upset/sad/angry/scared/etc.?
- What processes do I use to name and teach emotions (ex., naming my own, naming and acknowledging emotions in children, having resources surrounding emotions and feelings available)?
- What strategies do I use to remain calm in response to big feelings and forms of expression that challenge me (ex., checking my tone and gestures, recognizing and acknowledging personal triggers that may cause me to escalate emotions and/or lose control of my emotions)?

Standard 8, Indicator 9

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 9. Teachers refrain from negative verbal or physical responses to children at all times which includes yelling, criticizing, scolding, threatening, using sarcasm, name calling, yanking, pinching, squeezing or spanking.

Why is the Indicator important?

The goal of all child guidance is for the child to become self-regulated and to be confident in the making of positive life decisions. Fear does not help the child obtain confidence. Indeed, it can diminish confidence. Negative punishments can be intimidating and they do not help early childhood educators meet their overall, long term guidance goals. Problem solving and self-evaluation, instead, help the child through the immediate situation and give the child strategies that last a lifetime, whether an adult is present or not.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teachers never use verbal or physical responses to children that threaten, diminish or intimidate.

Ideas to help you get started

- Know your own long-term goals for guidance strategies.
- Access training and/or find materials which incorporate positive guidance strategies.
- Create a policy for all staff that mandates positive guidance strategies.

Helpful hints

- Practice reframing negative statements to positive statements (instead of saying what a child can't do, share what they can do). Avoid using "No", "Stop" or "Don't do that." the rater will stop the visit if a major licensing violation occurs. Some examples are the following. This is not an inclusive list.
- Any person, while on child care program premises, shall not engage in or direct any of the following actions toward children:

- Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child's body.
- Hit, spank, beat, shake, pinch or any other measure that produces physical discomfort.
- Cruel, harsh, unusual, humiliating or frightening methods of discipline, including threatening the use of physical punishment.
- Placement in a locked or dark room.
- Public or private humiliation, yelling or abusive or profane language (licensing)

Follow-up steps

- Share with staff the benefits to children of positive guidance strategies and the concerns with negative strategies for long-term goals.
- Review with staff on ways the program exercises teacher interactions as stated in the suspension and expulsion policy.

One step further

- Engage with families to discuss an agreed upon way to interact with children
- Ensure staff are able to take breaks and have someone to ask for assistance if they begin losing their patience or start raising their voice

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What strategies do you have in place for personal reflection on why you may react or respond using these tactics when working with children? For example: "I often find myself yelling in the classroom. Why do I use this strategy to address children?"
- After reflecting, what alternative strategies will I use as a replacement that are more positive?
- What mechanisms can you put in place to track patterns or consistencies (ex., time of day, mental health and wellness of providers, whether or not it is the same student or same type of behavior, identity(ies) of student(s), etc.)?

Standard 8, Indicator 10

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 10. Destructive or disruptive behavior is addressed with children (face-to-face rather than from a distance) by the teacher, explaining the effect of the behavior, stating the desired behavior and redirecting or helping the child make alternative choices.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children learn more effectively in the context of any real-life situation. Active learning is not exclusive to curricular topics. Therefore, the best time to learn social/emotional skills is in the real-life context of a real situation. The best time for the teacher to impact that learning is also in real situations as they occur.

Explaining the behavior, stating the desired behavior and helping the child make alternative choices can facilitate long term learning and, ultimately, the child's life skills.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teacher responds to destructive or disruptive behavior in a manner that:
 - provides for the safety of the child;
 - provides for the safety of others in the center;
 - is calm; is respectful to the child; provides the child with information on acceptable behavior; and
 - assists the child in making alternate choices.
- **Interview:** How do you respond to destructive or disruptive behavior?

Ideas to help you get started

- Have the teaching staff consider how they could effectively deal with destructive or disruptive behaviors. Having a plan can help them feel better prepared when the behavior does occur.
- Ensuring staff are familiar with and trained on discipline policy, suspension and expulsion policy and any other positive guidance resources.
- Help the caregivers to understand the steps of problem solving as they relate to young children.

What does it look like?

A 5-year-old child is seen knocking over a bookshelf and throwing toys at a child. The teacher walks over to the child and assesses to make sure no children nearby may get hurt.

After making sure no one is nearby, the teacher recognizes that the child is not at a point where she is able to talk and hear what the teacher is trying to share. The teacher gives her a basket of bean bags and says that she can throw the bean bags at the target on the wall until she is ready to talk.

Once the child has calmed down and seems ready to talk with the teacher, the teacher explains how dangerous it is to knock over a bookshelf and throw toys at children. She asks questions to identify why the child was doing those things. The teacher learns the child was upset because another child took her favorite car when she wasn't finished using it. The teacher and child talk about other ways she could have let the child know she was not finished using the car.

Helpful hints

- Make sure all staff members are trained on what the process is when a child's behavior has escalated to the point of hurting others. For example, call for an extra staff member to step in, have a space area where the child can go and not hurt themselves or others, etc.
- Research training opportunities on finding the reasons behind the behavior and how to respond to escalated behavior effectively.
- Avoid saying "no," "don't" and "stop": follow up and give words or acceptable activity of what they CAN do instead.

Follow-up steps

- Observe and reflect how teachers respond to disruptive and destructive behaviors and are seeking to understand why the behaviors are happening.
- Identify strategies to decrease the frequency in disruptive and destructive behaviors, such as consistent routines and schedules, arrangement of environment, proactively suggesting more calming areas and activities for children who need that space.

One step further

- Having all staff members trained in positive child guidance strategies will protect the children, strengthen the program and help teachers have a repertoire of positive guidance strategies.
- Review resources and complete trainings that are available regarding this topic.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What is the program's policy surrounding destructive and disruptive behavior and teaching positive behavior interventions and supports?
- What training is available and offered to staff surrounding responding to destructive and disruptive behavior?
- How do teachers teach children how to make positive behavior choices?
- What strategies does the teacher have in place to recognize when destructive and disruptive behavior might occur and how do they proactively minimize the escalation?

Standard 8, Indicator 11

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 11. Conflicts are resolved by/with children through a problem-solving approach (acknowledge feelings, listen to children share what happened, ask for ideas or solutions and follow through).

Why is the Indicator important?

Learning to responsibly and peacefully solve conflicts, while getting one's needs met, is difficult for all people. Helping young children resolve conflicts is teaching a life skill that will be utilized in every relationship, of any kind, throughout their lifetimes.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** If conflicts arise, the teacher is observed coaching children through the problem-solving process.
- **Interview:** What types of conflict resolution or problem-solving approaches do you use? How is this modified for non-verbal children?

Ideas to help you get started

- Decide on the steps to follow that help children learn to resolve conflicts.
- Create a policy for all staff that mandates positive guidance strategies.
- Train staff in positive guidance techniques.

What does it look like?

Preschoolers Kali and Brianna want the same toy. There is only one. They are tugging at the toy and raising their voices. The teacher approaches and acknowledges the feelings of both girls by saying, “You both look angry.” She then asks for the children to state the problem. After listening closely, she says, “You both want the toy but there is only one.”

She asks, “What can we do to help both of you feel like you can have fun playing?” (Example answers might include: “I had it first. Give it to me.”; “We should share.”; “We could take turns.”)

The teacher helps the children evaluate those responses. “Having the toy first sounds like one way to decide who will start playing with the toy, but how will you decide when Kali gets a turn?” Once both children agree on a solution, the teacher allows the 2 children to decide their choice. Later, the teacher returns to the children and says, “Look! Your idea is working! You are really learning how to solve problems!”

Helpful hints

- Use Social Stories to model and address conflict resolution skills. have visuals available that support and guide conflict resolution.
- Make sure you go beyond “sharing is caring” and telling the children the answers.
- Teach them what they can do and support them as they try it out.
- Train teaching staff in conflict resolution.

Follow-up steps

- Share with staff the benefits to children of positive guidance strategies and the concerns with negative strategies for long-term goals.

One step further

- Roleplay common conflict scenarios with the children or model appropriate behaviors.
- Have in place a Conflict Resolution area for the children to utilize.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How is conflict resolution viewed as a positive skill and used in everyday life? At work? At home? In public?
- How can your experiences help you teach children the normalcy of conflict and the benefits of productive conflict resolution?
- When conflicts between children arise how am I taking the opportunity to acknowledge and listen to the feelings of all children involved and teach the children how to manage future conflicts?

Standard 8, Indicator 12

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 12. The teacher sometimes joins in children's play, expanding upon their ideas and playing interactively.

Why is the Indicator important?

When the teacher enters into play with the children, the value of the play is demonstrated. In addition, by expanding upon the children's ideas, the teacher is enriching and expanding their cognitive development as well as valuing their ideas.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** Teacher is observed joining in children's play, expanding upon their ideas and playing interactively with the children. During large group time, the teacher is observed actively engaged with the children. During free choice time, the teacher's presence in the play expands upon the child's ideas and does not interfere with the child's play.
- **Interview:** Describe your interaction with the children during playtime.

Ideas to help you get started

- Begin to observe children's play in order to give suggestions to staff about ways to enter play appropriately.
- Model play with children using their ideas as the guiding factor in the play.
- Model expanding the children's play ideas.

What does it look like?

Two children are playing with blocks. They are building a tower that repeatedly tumbles down. The teacher sits down on the floor beside them and begins to build a tower, saying aloud to herself, "I better make sure this big block goes on the bottom." This kind of parallel play strategy offers a new strategy/way of thinking without having the children consider a right/wrong component to their play.

Two children are making breakfast in the dramatic play area. The teacher suggests a new alternative (while protecting their own play theme idea) by saying, "Hi! I'm your neighbor. I just made muffins. Would you like some?" This respects the play and keeps the "theme" of the play going while also extending it to include a new idea.

Helpful hints

- Use open-ended questions to promote thought processes, strengthen critical thinking, and build upon prior knowledge.

Follow-up steps

- Use the play ideas as a basis for curricular investigations and themes.

One step further

- Be responsive to the child's interests.
- Ask if you can play too when joining a child or group.
- Put yourself at the child's level. If they are sitting on a rug on the floor, you should be at their level not standing above them.
- Think of ways to expand play by asking "what would happen" or "what-if questions" that go along with their play theme.
- Take cues from the child, if they are intent on conversation in play, do not interrupt to interject your observations or thoughts, wait for an appropriate time or revisit the child later.
- Be aware of the time you are spending on paperwork and other responsibilities to be able to plan your time to include playing with the children.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- In what way can I include myself when children are playing while still letting the children lead the conversations, ideas and themes?
- What kinds of questions could be asked to extend play while respecting the children's ownership of the play?

Standard 8, Indicator 13

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Indicator 13. The classrooms are generally characterized by varying sound and/or comfortable conversation from engaged children and involved adults.

Why is the Indicator important?

The sound of comfortable conversation is evidence of a relaxed and engaged group of children and adults. An overly quiet classroom can suggest the lack of engagement or over control by the adults. Childhood is, ideally, a time of freedom, imagination, laughter and safety. An environment that not only allows children's conversations but also encourages and invites their thoughts, activity and involvement offers the children a chance to flourish in all domains of development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all 13 indicators in Standard 8 must be met.

- **Observation:** The environment is pleasant, not over stimulating or distracting.

Ideas to help you get started

- Do a walk-through of the program and listen for sounds that are consistent with and linked to children's engagement and play.
- Observe the adults and children for relaxed body language and easy conversations.
- Observe the classrooms to assess what predominant sounds are heard.

Helpful hints

- Answer children's questions respectfully.
- Listen attentively to a child who is communicating with you.
- Guide rather than "boss" children.
- Comfort and reassure children who are upset or distressed.
- Use an even and positive tone when responding to children.

Follow-up steps

- Do another walk-through of the program and listen again for sounds that are consistent with and linked to children's engagement and play. Is there a difference? What is that difference? Is it a positive change?
- Do not continuously play music. Only use it if it has a specific purpose in your plan.

One step further

- Plan for specific music time or other media, such as smart boards or tablets, in your daily lesson planning.
- Involve the children in selecting music or singing, give choices.
- Music is played at a reasonable volume and is not played at all times of the day.
- Always preview new music or other media to make sure language and content is appropriate.
- Be mindful about the amount of print you have in your classrooms. Excessive print is overstimulating for children and may result in behavior issues

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How would I describe the sounds of a thriving classroom, where all children regardless of cultural backgrounds, identity(ies, and/or dis/abilities feel acknowledged, valued, safe and included?
- What sounds am I specifically listening for as I walk into the classrooms in this program?

Standard 9a

What is the Standard?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Why is the Standard important?

Daily schedules for young children should provide predictability in order for them to feel safe and secure to make independent choices. Transitions should be planned to minimize disruptive behavior and maximize learning. Materials that are developmentally appropriate, reflective of their interests, culturally relevant and accessible will lead to the child's ownership of learning.

Meeting all of the following nine indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 9a, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 1. The daily schedule is consistent and predictable.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children need to be able to predict their environment to feel safe and secure. The more predictable their environment is, the safer and more secure they will feel. Therefore, a daily schedule gives the young child a way to know what is next in the day's events and creates an emotional security.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Documentation:** Daily schedule will be viewed.
- **Observation:** Teachers or children mention what comes next.

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the predictability of the schedules in each classroom.
- Understand the difference between predictability and flexibility.
- Determine what is developmentally appropriate for your age group.

What does it look like?



These are two examples of visual schedules that can be used in programs. The one on the left is an example of a simple format that can be used to get started. This uses a movable item, in this case a clothespin, to highlight the part of the day you are experiencing. The one on the right uses real-life pictures of the current children and environments and can be easily updated with each new group. It uses Velcro to be able to be changed or updated based on the needs of the children. Activities can be removed during the day to show the children a countdown. Also, special events can be added, for instance one for when a child's family will be picking them up or a field trip.

Helpful hints

- Teachers can post a visual schedule that children can interact with.
- Schedule is posted at the child's eye level.
- When planning activities, choose activities that can be done in a variety of ways.
- Post your daily schedule for children and parents to see.

Follow-up steps

- Assess whether each classroom has determined and posted a predictable daily schedule of events.
- Observe in each classroom to see if the general order of the daily schedule is linked to actual classroom activities.

- If the daily schedules are not generally being followed, facilitate staff to determine what is not meeting the needs of the children and the classroom.

One step further

- Be consistent from day to day and week to week. A consistent daily schedule will help you organize your day and create meaningful opportunities for the children in your care.
- Create a consistent daily schedule, flexible enough to meet the children's needs.
- Regularly assess the daily schedule to ensure children are engaged and their daily schedule is meeting their needs.
- Make sure your daily schedule provides ample time for projects and activities.
- If possible, allow children to keep projects they are not through with and finish at another time.
- Create time and space so children can spend time alone.
- Make sure your daily schedule includes time for cleanup, transitions and other routine tasks.
- Think about how you familiarize the children with the daily routine. Let them know what the expectations are.
- When changing the daily schedule or routine, plan how you will implement the change slowly and how you will communicate the change to the children, families and any other staff who might be working with the group.
- For children who might have difficulty with routines and transitions, think about creating a personal picture schedule that can be carried with him/her.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How will the Administrator and staff determine the priority events that should occur in the daily schedule of each classroom?
- How will the regular and predictable events of the daily schedule be communicated to families and children?
- How will the program consider the varying needs of children when communicating and displaying the daily schedule?
- What visuals will be used?
- What language or action cues will be provided and taught?

Standard 9a, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 2. The classroom is arranged with areas for individual, small group and large group activities.

Why is the Indicator important?

It is important that classroom arrangement considers areas for varying experiences. Allowing children the opportunity to make choices in the classroom develops their self-identity and independence. Boundaries are put in place through the use of rugs, furniture, tables and shelving to separate interest centers, quiet spaces and large meeting areas.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** There is an obvious place for individual, small group or large group experiences present in each classroom.

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess each classroom for immediately obvious spaces for individual, small group and large group activities.
- Interview staff about where these activities occur in each classroom.

Helpful hints

- When arranging the environment, consider separating loud spaces from quiet spaces.
- Look for running paths or how the environment might encourage movement that is not desired.
- Ensure the majority of the classroom is set up for children and their play.

Follow-up steps

- Have a tour and conversation with each classroom teacher about where individual, small group and large group activities occur.

One step further

- Create room maps that document where children are for individual, small group and large group activities. Include in the documentation whether those activities were challenging or productive.
- Assess whether room arrangements need to be changed on an ongoing basis.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How will teachers create classroom space that is conducive to a variety of individual, small group and large group activities?
- How will teachers ensure all children regardless of dis/ability can participate in all activities at their level?

Standard 9a, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 3. Children are encouraged to choose the area in which they want to participate and whether they want to play alone, with one friend or with several.

Why is the Indicator important?

Allowing children the opportunity to make choices in the classroom develops their self-identity and independence. When children's developmental needs are met, they are given appropriate levels of decision-making. They join in activities freely and they can choose how and when to participate in playtime. As a result, the facilitation of large groups exposes children to critical social experiences that are responsive to their individual needs.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Children are observed making decisions about where, how and with whom to play.
- **Documentation:** Daily schedule will be viewed to ensure children have the opportunity to choose the area in which they want to participate and with whom they want to play.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe each classroom during free playtime.
- Document the frequency of choice time during centers to have a clear idea of how many choice opportunities children are given during a specific timeframe or part of the day.
- Also, make sure to note where children play the most, with whom and with what. This will allow you to tailor classroom activities to their interests and build upon them.

Helpful hints

- Remember this is child directed/choice time and not teacher directed/led. This is time for the teacher to join in their play and not lead the play.
- This is time for the children to choose centers to play in and to choose the materials to use in the centers.
- The children should be able to move freely from center to center.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge staff members who consistently meet this standard and think of ways to utilize their skills to mentor the staff who may need additional support implementing choice time in classroom activities.

One step further

- Utilize the data from your classroom observations and provide quality feedback to teachers. Use the information gathered to inform your staff's performance reviews.
- Pay close attention to the selections and choices children make when they play and use their preferences to inform your lesson plans and how you facilitate the activities.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What choices are reasonable and developmentally appropriate for young children to make concerning where and with whom they play?
- When is it appropriate to make adjustments to environmental rules/expectations to meet the needs of children playing cooperatively and productively? For example, a learning center or play area has more children than typically expected.
- What practices can I put in place and teach children to be able to request to play alone and make decisions concerning their own play?

Standard 9a, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 4. Routine tasks (which might include, labeling, sorting, classifying, folding clothes, counting while cleaning up or setting the table) are used as learning opportunities.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children learn best when the activities and interactions they are exposed to are relevant to their real-world experiences. That is why the classroom's routines and transitions should be used to foster their independence, develop ownership of their learning and build community.

Therefore, using routine, everyday tasks as the vehicle for learning will help the child understand the concept more quickly and more deeply.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Children are observed helping with the routine care of the classroom and other routines. The teaching staff uses these experiences to teach self-help skills and to further logical thinking structures. Teaching staff may be observed using routine tasks with infants as learning opportunities.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in the classrooms to notice if the children are included in classroom routines or if the adults exclusively handle all such tasks. For example, cleaning up their own items after a meal, setting their own place setting for meal, folding their own blanket after nap, putting out and away items for nap, etc.

- Model teaching opportunities during routine tasks.

Helpful hints

- Review your schedule and reflect on when children could have a part in the transition/routine.
- Use job charts for children to ensure each child has the opportunity to take ownership in the classroom.

Follow-up steps

- Offer recognition to the staff who consistently embed learning opportunities in all classroom activities and routines.
- Offer support to staff who need additional support meeting this indicator by allowing them to observe exemplary teachers. Provide opportunities for feedback, reflection, and action planning.

One step further

- The teaching staff receives training in how to build a meaningful and relevant curriculum.
- Classroom activities, experiences and interactions are intentionally planned or designed with the children's interests and needs in mind.
- Labeling bins of materials will encourage children's self-help skills as they can put their materials away.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What structures do I put in place to allow all children to participate in classroom tasks and chores?
- What classroom routines are best suited to support children's autonomy?
- What additional skills can be taught to children during classroom routines?

Standard 9a, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 5. Transitions are generally relaxed, allowing time for play and completing activities. Children are transitioned from one activity to the next to avoid idle sitting and waiting time.

Why is the Indicator important?

When teachers plan their classroom transitions, they minimize possible misbehavior and maximize learning opportunities. An intentional teacher knows that idle time is one of the leading causes of disruptive behavior in the classroom and, therefore, they facilitate smooth transitions. A transition is whenever the class is moving from one activity to the next, such as finishing Center Time by cleaning up and getting ready for Outdoor Time.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Teachers are engaged in transitions with children. Teachers use verbal and non-verbal cues to prepare children for changing from one activity to another. children respond to transitions positively and are engaged in meaningful activities.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom during transitions. with input from each teacher, determine which transitions are most challenging for the children.
- Find varied ideas to use during transitions (see One Step Further Section).
- Acknowledge the teachers who find creative ways to engage children during transition and support staff who need additional support in this area.
- Offer job-embedded support by allowing staff to spend some time in classrooms where teachers facilitate effective transitions.
- Follow up with a one-on-one conversation for the teacher to share their observations.

Helpful hints

- Give verbal and nonverbal cues such as a five-minute verbal warning as well as setting a visual timer.
- Practice your transitions with the children to establish expectations for before, during and after. have a variety of transitional activities ready in case of unexpected waiting times
- Minimize the number of transitions by carefully analyzing schedule

Follow-up steps

- Find varied ideas to use during transitions (see below).
- Acknowledge and support the staff members who are finding creative ways to engage children during transitions.

One step further

- Use a signal to remind children that transition time is approaching, a five-minute warning can be given, then four minutes, three minutes, etc. Let children know what is coming next. For example, say, "In five minutes, we are going to clean up so we can go outside."
- It is important that children be allowed to finish activities between transitions.
- Try to keep transition times calm and unhurried.
- Involve all the children in the transition. When they are finished cleaning up their interest area, for example, give them the opportunity to help someone else clean up.
- Keep your daily schedule consistent and the transitions the same, for example use the same signal or sing the same song.
- Give children who have difficulties during transitions specific jobs to complete during this time. have a specially designed set of songs, games or other activities you use during this time that are fun and "special" for the children and they maintain their interest.
- Make sure to allow extra time for children who might have a challenging time with transitions.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Where are the transitions in each classroom's daily schedule?
- How are transitions modeled before, during and after to reinforce the children's expectations?

Standard 9a, Indicator 6

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 6. Mealtimes are relaxed, with no scolding or nagging. Children are encouraged to sample new foods but allowed to eat the foods of their choice.

Why is the Indicator important?

Relaxed mealtimes are more pleasurable, more social and less challenging for all the participants. Positive encouragement and positive interactions help children eagerly anticipate and enjoy the meal time experience. Eating meals in a social setting is a lifelong skill. Creating anxiety over social skills or food preference inhibits the learning that might happen in this context and diminishes the pleasurable experiences that are possible.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Teacher is observed creating a relaxing atmosphere when food is served.
- **Interview:** How do you encourage children to sample new foods?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe children at lunchtime. Does the mood and body language of all participants appear relaxed?
- Consider a policy concerning the tasting of new foods. Explain and discuss the benefits of such a policy for the children.

What does it look like?

The teacher is sitting at the table with the children enjoying the same meal they are served. During this time the teacher questions the children about their lunch. "What are we having today? What are these?" As she holds up a blueberry. She can then ask the group about the food. "What food group is it? What color is it? I wonder how it tastes?" The teacher could then have the group taste the blueberry at the same time and then have the children describe the experience.

Helpful hints

- Caregivers should assist, supervise, converse and sit with the children during all meals and snacks.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge the teachers who find creative ways to make mealtimes enjoyable and relaxed for children and support staff who need additional support in this area.
- Offer job-embedded support by allowing staff to spend some time in classrooms where teachers do not force children to eat.
- Follow up with a one-on-one conversation for the teacher to share their observations.

One step further

- Well balanced, nutritious meal provided.
- Children are encouraged to eat independently.
- Children help during meals/ snacks (set table, serve themselves, clear table, wipe up spills).
- Teacher is present during the meal, seated at the table.
- Adequate table space and seating is provided for children at mealtime.
- Ensure a variety of food is readily available, ensuring many cultures are represented.
- Teachers converse with the children about things other than food they are eating. For example, what they learned earlier in the day or what to expect later in the day.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What makes mealtimes pleasurable and how can teachers and program providers ensure children have these experiences?
- If a child does not taste a new food or does not eat a full plate of lunch choices how should teachers positively respond to encourage being open to trying new foods?

Standard 9a, Indicator 7

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 7. Nap time is relaxed with alternative, supervised activities available for non-nappers.

Why is the Indicator Important?

Meeting individual needs is always a primary responsibility of all quality child care. Individual children will have differing evening schedules, differing physical needs and differing abilities to relax enough to sleep in a group setting. Therefore, it is critical that the children, who cannot sleep, for any reason, do not feel “punished” by having to lie still for long periods of time. The intent of this indicator is to allow children’s individual sleep needs to be met in group care.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Relaxed naptime is observed, with children who are non-nappers engaged in supervised activities.
- **Interview:** What are the alternate activities for non-nappers?

Ideas to help you get started

- Identify the number of children who regularly do not nap and their ages.
- If nap/rest time is offered, nap/quiet time is relaxed with alternative, supervised quiet activities available for the non-nappers and early risers.
- Meet with the staff, if possible, to formulate a plan for non-nappers (ex., individual classrooms with activity bags, one non-napper room with rotating staff, etc.).
- Ensure all children's heads are uncovered and faces can be seen
- Ensure proper spacing between cots and head/toe placement is used when needed
- Teachers should periodically walk around the classroom to check the wellbeing of all students

Helpful hints

- Place children who usually nap in one area of the classroom and the ones that do not nap in another.
- Have a diagram/map of the placement of the cots for substitutes to use.

Follow-up steps

- Observe the behavior and engagement of non-nappers with the activities provided for them. Is it positive?

One step further

- Provide soothing experiences and materials (cuddly toy, soft music, back rub) to help children feel relaxed during nap time.
- Space is conducive to resting (dim light, quiet, cots placed for privacy but where they can still be supervised).
- Non-nappers are provided with quiet activities in an area that is not disruptive to the children who are napping.
- Nap time is not used for planning time to ensure teachers remain responsive to children who are awake. Have paid planning time beyond nap time.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What kind of activities would work best for non-nappers?
- Do parents/caregivers have the opportunity to share about sleeping routines that could be helpful?

Standard 9a, Indicator 8

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 8. The teacher has a system for rotating toys and materials for variety so that unused toys are stored and later reintroduced.

Why is the Indicator important?

Having a variety of toys and materials promotes new thinking and new interest. Rotating materials and toys that are not being used by children at a given time serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it promotes new thinking as children rediscover new ways to engage with classroom materials. On the other hand, it reduces classroom clutter.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Storage area for materials to be rotated.
- **Interview:** What is your system for rotating toys and materials?

Ideas to help you get started

- Determine how many toys and materials will be rotated in order to determine the space needed to store those out of rotation.
- Create an easily accessible storage area.
- Create a system by which the toys and materials will be utilized in a scheduled way.

Helpful hints

- Think about rotating and sharing materials between classrooms if they are developmentally appropriate.
- Consider using checklists to identify materials within centers to help manage materials and rotate as needed.
- Materials are rotated according to learning objectives and children's interests.

Follow-up steps

- Assess the effectiveness of your materials and toys' rotation system by observing the children's behaviors when using these materials.

One step further

- Establish a space to store unused toys and materials and determine their rotation frequency based on the children's interests.
- Use the rotation time for thorough cleaning and repair of toys.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What system could be used to rotate toys and materials?
- How are you using your materials to ensure children are meeting goals and advancing developmentally?
- How are you considering children's differing needs, interests and dis/abilities when making decisions about rotating toys and materials?

Standard 9a, Indicator 9

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests and abilities of each child.

Indicator 9. TV/VCR/DVD, if used, is primarily an educational experience. Teacher discusses what is viewed with children and provides an alternative activity; or TV/VCR/DVD is not used at all.

Why is the Indicator important?

TV/VCR/DVD use does not replace real, relevant, meaningful and hands-on experiences.

Children learn in the context of natural interactions and experiences. TV/VCR/DVD is an abstract way to get information, whereas real materials are a concrete way to get that information.

TV/VCR/DVD use for entertainment purposes or merely keeping children occupied is not considered educational. If used at all, alternate activities will provide children a meaningful learning experience for those who wish to be up, moving and actively engaged with a learning environment.

Required evidence

All nine indicators must be in evidence for completion of Standard 9a.

- **Observation:** Educational experiences include programs/movies designed to stimulate children's thinking and physical activity. They do not include violent, sexually explicit or culturally insensitive material. If TV/VCR/DVD is used, the teacher views the program/movie with the children. The teacher actively engages in conversations with the children about what is being viewed, asks questions and provides comments about the show. Alternate play activities are planned for children who do not wish to view the program, as well as follow up activities reinforcing concepts included in the program.
- **Interview:** How often do you use TV/VCR/DVD per week? What is your typical practice for the use of TV/VCR/DVD?

Helpful hints

- This includes any screen time and games played on a computer/tablet.
- Be mindful of advertisements and screen for inappropriate content.

Follow-up steps

- Determine how often screen time is being used in any classroom.
- Analyze what screen time is being utilized to do.
- Observe, when screen time is being used and what is the teacher's role?

One step further

- Videos/TV shows are planned, scheduled and related directly to a topic or theme of interest to the children.
- Videos/TV shows are age appropriate for the viewing audience
- Follow up activities are planned to expand the video or program
- Teacher is actively engaged in viewing the video/TV with the children, such as asking reflective questions to the children during or after the video, recalling specific events, or discussing different aspects of the video topic.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How will staff make sure the program/movie is linked to the lesson or topic covered in the classroom recently and embedded into the daily activities and experiences?
- How will staff ensure the program/movie is in alignment with the mission/vision of the program and representative to the children they are serving?
- How will staff make sure that the program/movie is not teaching biased values and beliefs?

Standard 9b

What is the Standard?

Standard 9b. Outdoor play time

Why is the Standard important?

Scheduling play outdoors should be an equally important aspect of the daily schedule for all children to explore their natural world. Providing these opportunities or indoor gross motor activities when weather conditions are not permitting, allow children to not only strengthen their fine and gross motor skills, but allow them unstructured time to develop their imagination and increase social interactions.

Meeting all of the following three indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 9b, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9b. Outdoor play time indicators must include:

Indicator 1. Outdoor play is included when weather, air quality or environment safety conditions do not pose a health risk. Active indoor play may be a replacement when necessary.

Why is the Indicator important?

Physical activity is crucial for children's brain development as well as their physical health and development. Spending time outdoors promotes gross motor skills and allows children to discover the world around them and make connections.

Required evidence

All three indicators must be evident for Standard 9b to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Direct observation of outdoor play.
- **Interview:** Under what circumstances would you replace active indoor play for outdoor play? What activities would you provide for the children?

Ideas to help you get started

- Set clear guidelines for what constitutes a health risk condition under which the children would be kept inside for the entire day.

Helpful hints

- Center time does not count as active indoor play.
- Active indoor play is large/gross motor play.
- Examples of active indoor play can include:
 - Free dancing
 - Obstacle courses
 - Parachute play Tunnels
 - Hula Hoops
 - Stepping Stones/Mats
 - Exercises

Follow-up steps

- Observe to see if all classrooms had outdoor play each day.
- Observe to see if alternate activities are active and allow freedom of movement, if play is indoors.

One step further

- Train staff in the benefits of outdoor play.
- Have a list of resources for active indoor alternatives to outdoor play.
- Assure children have access to outdoor play multiple times a day.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How can physical activities, both indoor and outdoor, be linked to the lesson plan to support children of all abilities?
- What would a child miss if they could not experience an outdoor environment daily?

Standard 9b, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9b. Outdoor play time indicators must include:

Indicator 2. Outdoor/large motor activities and plentiful play materials for a variety of skills are offered (for example, climbing, running, jumping, balancing, riding and playing with balls).

Why is the Indicator important?

Large motor experiences are critical to a young child's physical development. Having a variety of opportunities available will give the child experience with a wider range of motion and develop large muscles more effectively. In addition, these experiences will help develop skills of balance and coordination.

Required evidence

All three indicators must be evident for Standard 9b to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Outdoor play materials appropriate for the number of children and skill level are available. Materials promote three or more physical skills.
- **Interview:** What types of outdoor/large motor activities do the children participate in?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe children in outdoor play. Are there a variety of experiences available and is there space to fully explore the possibilities of each one?

Helpful hints

- Add materials beyond the climbing/playground structure.

Follow-up steps

- If there are limited experiences in outdoor play, determine what must be done to facilitate a wider variety of opportunities.

One step further

- Train the staff in the benefits of outdoor play and ways to facilitate physical development.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- In what areas of physical development do your outdoor experiences facilitate individualized child growth?

Standard 9b, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9b. Outdoor play time indicators must include:

Indicator 3. Outdoor play areas are safe and supervised appropriately.

Why is the Standard important?

All children need a safe outdoor environment to interact with others which includes active supervision from all staff members. Active supervision is the most effective strategy for creating a safe environment and preventing injuries in young children.

Required evidence

Active supervision for outdoor play requires the children to be within sight and sound of staff members at all times.

Ideas to help you get started

- Implement a daily outdoor play area safety maintenance checklist that includes checking playground equipment for potential damage and hazardous materials/debris.
- Review your program's outdoor play schedule and staff coverage to ensure ratio and group size are maintained for proper active supervision.

Helpful hints

- Consider implementing supervision zones in your outdoor play areas have the administration and staff complete the Keeping Children Safe: Supervision, Tracking and Follow Through training.
- Designate staff members that will complete the daily outdoor play area safety maintenance checklist for consistency.

Follow-up steps

- Create a space to come together and discuss potential playground barriers or concerns.
- Observe outdoor play times to ensure safety and supervision procedures are followed at all times.

One step further

- Implement program systems to help staff follow safety and supervision procedures such as using a daily tracker.
- When assessing the outdoor play area and equipment, get down at the child's level when looking for safety concerns.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How will you ensure your program is following procedures where all staff members are actively supervising children when on outdoor play areas?

- How will you engage in ongoing conversations that encourage staff members to review and problem-solve for potential barriers or concerns around play area safety and active supervision?

Standard 10, Indicators 1-10

What is the Standard?

Standard 10. The classroom is arranged and utilizes enough materials and activities to provide a variety of age and developmentally appropriate interest centers that invite children’s explorations. Each interest center must contain at least three different items.

Interest centers must include:

Indicator 1. Reading: Materials might include books, soft washable seating/pillows for use while reading.

Indicator 2. Writing: Materials might include writing tools, paper, envelopes, typewriter or keyboard, letters, numbers.

Indicator 3. Art: Materials might include drawing materials (crayons, markers, thick pencils, variety of paper, sizes and types, not color books or dittos/worksheets), painting materials, tools (scissors, hole punch, tape), staplers for school-age children, three-dimensional materials (play dough, clay with tools), collage materials (catalogs, magazines, paper scraps, fabric pieces, string, yarn, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, craft sticks).

Indicator 4. Blocks: Materials might include different sizes/types of blocks and accessories such as small people, animals, vehicles and road signs to enhance building, sticks, stones, tape, string, craft sticks, interlocking blocks.

Indicator 5. Dramatic Play: Materials might include dress-up clothes (such as work boots, high heels, a variety of hats, career gear/attire, uniforms, purses/billfolds and multicultural outfits). Other items would also include large pieces of fabric/scarves, child-size play furniture, dishes, pots, pans, dolls (multicultural included), dollhouse or other play sets, accessories for dolls and “props” for different themes.

Indicator 6. Math/Numbers: Materials might include small objects count/sort/classify, measuring tools (scales, rulers), numbers/shapes, number games, puzzle and pattern blocks.

Indicator 7. Music and Movement: Materials might include audio equipment, a variety of tapes/CDs, music boxes, musical toys and instruments, dance props such as scarves and streamers.

Indicator 8. Nature and Science: Materials might include collections of nature items (shells, rocks, flowers, bugs), living plants, pets to care for, science games, toys, magnets, magnifying glasses, cooking opportunities.

Indicator 9. Sensory Play: Materials might include water, play dough, sand or similar materials, along with kitchen utensils, measuring containers, shovel, trough, buckets, small cars and trucks and water-play accessories for pouring, measuring, squeezing and basting.

Indicator 10. Small Motor/Manipulative: Materials might include blocks, puzzles, crayons, pencils, scissors, interlocking blocks and other small building toys, pegboard and pegs, games, counting materials, sorting or classifying materials and containers.

Why is the Standard important?

Research has shown that young children benefit from exposure to a variety of interesting and stimulating materials and activities. It is important that the learning environment offers a balance of activities with emphasis on first-hand experiences and active learning in all areas of development. A variety of learning interest centers and materials will support observations of children's interests and abilities. Build your program's interest learning centers to help you engage children, plan for child-driven outcomes and engage families.

- **Reading:** Exposure to print and language found in books is critical to literacy development in young children. Consistent read-aloud opportunities are essential for young children to begin to develop reading comprehension skills. The book selections available to children must be relatable to their real-world experiences. It is important to offer a variety of books that children can independently access. As children's interests widen, the categories of the books to which they are exposed should widen as well. Books will have more relevance if they include children's life experiences. Books will also inspire children to consider other experiences and give them a greater depth of language learning if they are across many possible categories. [Indicator 1]
- **Writing:** Exploratory and experimental writing experiences are an introduction toward understanding how to produce print. Children need to have diverse opportunities to develop emergent writing skills that allow them to recognize how letters and words are formed. They will also need ample time to do this kind of free exploration with encouragement as the initial "scribbles" appear. Free exploration with paper and crayon/marker/pencil are to be valued for their contributions to early literacy. Having multiple writing implements and materials from a real-world context helps young children have choices about what engages them, helps them find materials to explore that seem most comfortable and helps them to see the link to the real-world items in their own environments for writing. [Indicator 2]
- **Art:** Creative self-expression is a critical part of a child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. The chance to bring an idea that is in the mind into the real, concrete world through art materials is highly advantageous for young children. The more ownership the child has of the final art product, especially if the idea was his/her own (vs. the idea of the adult), the more learning can be accomplished. Open ended art materials are a uniquely critical part of a child care setting. [Indicator 3]
- **Blocks:** Blocks foster problem solving, spatial reasoning, math skills, eye-hand coordination and concrete representations of internal ideas, social skill building and critical thinking. They are a highly productive material with learning outcomes that are important to the developing young child. [Indicator 4]
- **Dramatic Play:** Dramatic play offers young children the chance to make sense of their own world, explore the worlds of their play peers and develop social understanding and skills. Dramatic play has within it emotional release and spontaneous thinking components that are critical to so many facets of development. Story development is a possible additional outcome.[Indicator 5]
- **Math/Numbers:** The foundations for math and numbers are learned best through the exploration of concrete, active materials. The more experiences young children have with these types of materials, the greater number of cognitive links to abstract math concepts will exist for them in their later educational experiences. [Indicator 6]
- **Music and Movement:** Music and movement are very natural methods of self-expressions for young children. They relate to the rhythmic nature of music and are drawn to free movement. Having materials that inspire that kind of exploration gives it both value and practice. [Indicator 7]
- **Nature and Science:** Nature and science are all around the world of the young child. Freedom to explore the materials that make up their world is a critical part of any curriculum for young children.

Exploration and experimentation are the foundations for later science learning and for developing the critical thinking skills of the scientific method. [Indicator 8]

- **Sensory Play:** Sensory experiences are vital for a young child. They give an emotional release, a sense of volume/mass, the experience of movement, conservation, addition and subtraction as well as potentially developing story lines. However, the sensory stimulation alone is a satisfying and calming experience for most young children. [Indicator 9]
- **Small Motor/Manipulative:** Small motor/manipulative experiences are a significant part of motor development and are a foundation for later writing productivity. In addition, many manipulatives develop critical thinking, classification skills and math concepts. [Indicator 10]

Required evidence

- **Observation:** Evidence of this standard will include direct observation of a minimum of all ten interest centers, with a minimum of three different types of materials in each center.

Ideas to help you get started

- Ensure all 10 centers are set up and available daily.
- Consider the materials you currently have and, with the indicators required, assess what materials you might need to have available in order to comply with the required evidence.
- Create a list of those materials needed for compliance.

What does Art look like?

The teacher has materials that could easily make a pinecone turkey. However, she realizes that if the children use their own ideas, it will be a stronger choice. So, she sets out the pinecones, feathers, bits of construction paper, chenille stems, scissors and glue. One child does make a turkey. One makes a pinecone sailboat. Another makes a pinecone man. The teacher is really pleased with her decision because she realized that the art products are from the imaginations and minds of the children. Their own creativity has been achieved and that makes this art project a high level of success.

What does Math/Numbers look like?

The teacher has put a large number of buttons out on a table. Some of the children are fascinated by them. In freely exploring the buttons, children's comments include, "Look at this one. It's huge!" (Size comparison); "I'm going to put a purple one on top of every one of my red ones." (One-to-one correspondence, equivalence); and "My pile is too little. I'm going to put more of these in it." (Addition). Exploring these manipulatives clearly offers a foundation for math concepts. When the teacher adds her comments, such as, "What do you notice about these two?", even more possibilities for understanding those concepts can be gained.

What does Nature and Science look like?

The children have gone on a nature walk around the neighborhood. During the walk, the children collected a lot of fall leaves. When everyone returns to the center, the teacher helps the children notice the differences in those leaves. The children find color, shape and size differences. These kinds of comparisons are indicative of scientific observations which focus on detail. Later, the teacher suggests they have a "leaf race" to see if the leaves move differently. She guides them, in that experience, to consider color, shape size and amount of "wind." This kind of experience offers children practice in deductive reasoning.

Helpful hints

- All 10 centers must be out and accessible in every classroom.
- There is a minimum of three different items required for each center, however, ensure there is enough materials for the group size of the classroom.
- Look for resources on the NAEYC website for ideas on how to embed writing opportunities in the day, center and activities and recognize emergent writing as it happens.
- You can combine interest centers as long as you have a minimum of three items for each center area. Items cannot be counted for more than one center. For example, if you combine Math and Manipulatives you will need at least six different types of materials.
- “Accessible” means at children’s level where they can reach and use independently.

Follow-up steps

- Obtain the materials necessary to have available for interest center rotations.

One step further

- Materials should be organized. You can keep them in boxes or baskets. Items with small pieces should be kept together.
- Shelves can be labeled with pictures and words to help with autonomy and increase a print rich environment.
- Ensure each center has enough materials for each child to explore and manipulate Try to provide three or four identical items of popular toys.
- Provide materials that are appropriate for the children’s skill level. Toys that are too complex or difficult to operate will result in frustration. Toys that are too simple will be uninteresting and boring. Frustration and boredom may result in destructive and disruptive behavior.
- Organize shelves and materials in a way that is not overstimulating. Materials should be rotated each week based on children’s interests

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- When are the optimal times in the daily schedule to offer interest center experiences?
- How does your program evaluate the learning environment and interest centers regularly to ensure the learning needs of all children are met through the variety of materials and activities provided daily?
- How does your program allow families to influence and guide developmentally appropriate materials and interest centers to support children?
- How does your program individualize centers and materials based on a child’s age, ability level, and/or family experiences?
- How often do you evaluate environments to ensure materials, centers and other useful items are labeled in children’s home language?

Standard 11

What is the Standard?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Why is the Standard important?

Language and literacy skills start at birth. Providing exposure to a variety of relevant and meaningful literacy opportunities encourages development with early reading skills. Examples outside of a variety of books include storytelling, singing, back and forth conversations and a variety of writing activities. Dictation allows children to connect their own words to meaning.

Meeting all of the following eight indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 11, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 1. Teachers read and/or look at books with children daily, including during quiet, individual lap time.

Why is the Indicator important?

Exposure to the printed word and to the story language found in books is critical to literacy development in young children. Repeatedly reading to young children, especially in a “lap time” event, can predict their success in reading.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Children are observed being read to by the teaching staff during various times of the day. For school-age only programs, children are observed being read to or reading.
- **Interview:** During what times do you typically read or look at books with children daily?

Ideas to help you get started

- Obtain a wide selection of age-appropriate books from which to choose from.
- Limit the number of books that include tv/cartoon characters to less than 25% of books being offered.
- Observe teachers to see if lap time reading occurs during free choice periods.

Helpful hints

- Add reading to the daily schedule and on lesson plans.
- Classroom-made books are great options to showcase the children in the program.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge the staff members who routinely read to their classes and to individual children.
- Provide support to the staff who may be struggling with this indicator. Consider having teachers who need additional support observe exemplary teachers.

One step further

- Create a reading area that invites and engages children in independent reading of books.
- Provide time for children to “read” to the adults. have books available in all areas of the room.
- Choose books for children wisely. Books should represent what is considered good children’s literature.
- Choose award-winning books with a variety of styles of illustrations, depicting a variety of cultural themes that depict children of different abilities and people of all ages.
- Book choice can also be based on the use. For instance, pick books without a lot of text to be read during large-group time. Books read at group time should have large and distinct pictures, so that all can see.
- Read something every day.
- Books should be rotated to maintain children’s interest and reflect differences in the classroom.
- Engage children in selecting books they would like to read or have in the reading area.
- Piquing their interest will help them engage more in the books.
- There are many books that can go along with the theme of the week or unit of study.
- Consider ways to obtain books that incorporate the weekly theme or unit.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- When are the optimal times in the daily schedule to offer a book-reading experience in each classroom?
- How and when can we take advantage of spontaneous moments for reading books?

Standard 11, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 2. Books are available and accessible daily for children to look at and enjoy on their own.

Why is the Indicator important?

For young children to develop an appreciation for books, they need to be relevant and meaningful to them. In addition, independent access to books gives children the opportunity to make selections based on their individual interests

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11a to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Books are readily available and accessible.

Ideas to help you get started

- Walk through each classroom with the teaching staff and decide where an accessible place could be for a reading area.
- Contact your local library and see what the lending policies would be to centers. find out what resources (ex., support in finding books that link to learning themes) are available at the local library.

Helpful hints

- Add relevant books to all interest areas (ex., construction books to the block area).

Follow-up steps

- Obtain a wide variety of books (wordless books, fiction, nonfiction, books with real pictures and classroom-made books) for each classroom.
- Find safe and age-appropriate equipment to house the books at the level of and for the ease of the children in each classroom.

One step further

Create a system for arranging the books so that children can know where to find and where to return the books of their choice.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How many books would be necessary to stock each classroom with enough books to give every child multiple choices?
- How do you teach children to use books?
- What do you do when books become worn or torn?
- What processes can we put in place for rotating books in/out as developmental levels, abilities, family experiences, home languages and interests change during transitions and as children develop?
- Where can the books be obtained that would be of low or no cost to the center?
- What books do my children really enjoy and how do they reflect their interests?
- How do the books that are provided represent the children in my classroom, including family structures, home language, cultural background and abilities?

Standard 11, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials. Indicators must include:

Indicator 3. Children are invited to tell stories or “read” picture books.

Why is the Indicator important?

Oral language and storytelling are clear evidence of young children's interests in stories, plot, character and settings. The more often the children experience the oral traditions of story, the more they will have experienced the basis for written stories. Therefore, oral storytelling is a critical part of literacy development for young children.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Teaching staff is observed inviting children to tell stories or “read” a picture book.
- **Interview:** How and when do you encourage children to tell you stories or “read” a picture book?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom for stories being told by the children. Note the staff members' reactions and responses.
- Model “reading” pictures with the children from each classroom.

Helpful hints

- Create a photobook with family pictures for children to look at as they choose.
- Consider transition times: can the children read during these times?
- Engage in shared/group stories that provide opportunities for children to explore language and storytelling components.
- Individual stories written on a picture they have drawn and made into a class book.

Follow-up steps

- Provide recognition to the staff who consistently provide children with self-initiated reading time.
- Recognize the efforts of the teacher who need additional support and discuss ways to help them meet this standard in a collaborative setting.

One step further

- Ask teachers to record/document sample stories being told in the classroom.
- Plan activities that help children communicate without oral language, such as charades or pantomiming.
- Encourage children to communicate verbally, by asking questions and being attentive in their communication.
- Remember language is learning and can be fun.
- Create picture books with the children in your classroom. This helps them build a sense of belonging and community.
- Consider creating a picture book of children in your classroom. These could be pictures provided from home or pictures you take while the children are playing. This will provide the children with a sense of belonging in the classroom.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How can I reinforce the connections of the stories told by children in their own words to the different parts that make up a book? For example, connecting the beginning, middle and end of a child's story to that of a favorite picture book.
- How can the stories of young children be encouraged? Validated? Valued?

Standard 11, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 4. Children are encouraged to explore print and writing. Examples might include scribbling, inventing spellings, writing their name or other words or making books.

Why is the Indicator Important?

Active exploratory and experimental writing opportunities are a crucial first step toward understanding how to produce print. In the same way that children might explore a new material or piece of equipment, they will need to explore how writing tools work, what they have noticed about print and how letters/words are formed. This process should be initiated in the context of play and exploration, making sure encouragement is offered as the initial scribbles appear. With more exposure to print and the conventions of print, children will develop conventional forms of print. Therefore, the free exploration with paper and crayon/marker/pencil are to be valued for their contributions to early literacy.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Samples of children's printed work are available for review.

Ideas to help you get started

- Make sure to make writing tools available for children at all times for them to initiate emergent writing on their own.
- Observe to see if writing implements and paper are easily available and accessible to children in all areas of the room.
- Conduct training with teachers to ensure the understanding of the stages of writing.

Helpful hints

- Ensure multiple languages are represented throughout the classroom including children's home languages.

Follow-up steps

- Observe in each classroom to see if children are exploring and experimenting with print.

One step further

- Have teachers collect/record/document the writing samples of each child. That will enable the teachers/parents/ child to see the progress of the writing over time.
- Create places/activities where the easy production of print is validated and valued.
- Display the children's drawings and written work throughout the classroom at the children's eye level.
- Create a print rich environment, by displaying posters and labels throughout the area.
- Create special bulletin boards for children.
- Let children create their own books and display these in the book area.
- Start exploring writing in a variety of ways. Honor what the children are "writing" at a young age. Even if it seems like scribbles to you, it is the beginning of writing and understanding the written word.

What does it look like?

Provide clipboards with paper and a writing utensil in each learning center. Model using this clipboard to have children write during play. For example, use the clipboard and paper in dramatic play to take an order, make a grocery list or draw pictures of their friends in the area.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What changes do I need to make to my writing center to offer children valuable early literacy learning opportunities for all abilities and developmental levels?
- What materials, other than pencil and paper, might engage a child to explore print based on their interests, life experiences and home languages?

Standard 11, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 5. Teachers write words dictated by children as they tell a story or describe their pictures.

Why is the Indicator important?

Dictation is a great literacy learning tool for children to associate sounds with words. As a teacher writes a word that a child has said, children begin to understand the one-to-one correspondence of the oral word to the printed word, which makes thoughts permanent (relevance of print) and how letters/words are formed—furthermore, this practice heightens the value of storytelling.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Teaching staff is observed writing dictations by children or samples are available for review. Children may be observed writing words.
- **Interview:** When and how do you go about writing words dictated by children?

Ideas to help you get started

- Create an environment that supports the easy production of dictations by the children and teachers.

What does it look like?

Engage with the children in the art center. As they are drawing their pictures, talk to them about their pictures and write down what they tell you about the picture. Some children may not want you to write on their creation so think of ways to add the dictation without interrupting their work, such as adding a Post-it, index card or mailing label. This could also be adding a description under the picture when you put it on display.

Helpful hints

- Create group and individual stories using their ideas.
- Individual stories written on a picture they have drawn and made into a class book.
- Be sure to date dictations of the children's work so that you can monitor growth and development.
- Dictation does not need to (and shouldn't) happen every single time every child is engaged in art.

Follow-up steps

- Provide recognition to the staff who consistently utilize dictation in their teaching practice.
- Recognize the efforts of the teachers who need additional support and discuss ways to help them meet this standard in a collaborative setting.
- Observe to ensure that dictations are read aloud to the child authors.
- Teachers are intentional about modeling proper reading practices to children. for example, as words are being written, teachers orient children to read the words from left to right.

One step further

- Collect/record/document sample dictations for each child. This will enable the teachers/parents/child to have evidence of the storytelling progress over time.
- Display children's dictated work around the classroom.
- Find ways to add dictations in the child's home language. for non-verbal and very young children, write sounds the child made, what they pointed to, how their face looked, etc. For example: while rolling the car in the paint, Emmett smiled and waved his other hand in the air.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What would make the taking of dictation easier for the teachers in the classroom, while also considering the home language of the children and teachers?
- What are the children telling me about themselves and their life experiences in their work?

Standard 11, Indicator 6

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 6. A variety of writing materials and toys to be used while writing is available. Materials might include: markers, child-sized pencils, chalk and chalkboard, paper, envelopes, stamps, tape, paper punch, stickers, magazines, calendars, toy telephones, puppets, tape recorder, alphabet letters or flannel boards.

Why is the Indicator important?

The more children experiment with writing tools and materials, the more successful and confident they will be with emergent writing. In addition, offering children multiple writing materials and implements in their natural context gives children the opportunity to choose the ones that are more comfortable for them. Hence, children make positive connections between print and their environment.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators of 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Writing materials, which include at least three types of materials, appropriate for the skill level of the children are available. Materials to use with writing utensils are also visible. All materials should be developmentally appropriate to the ages of the children.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in the classrooms to see if writing materials are abundant and accessible to the children.

Helpful hints

- Ensure that writing materials are part of your rotation schedule.

Follow-up steps

- Observe to make sure each classroom is well stocked with multiple possibilities for planned and spontaneous writing explorations.
- Acknowledge and support the staff members who facilitate writing explorations and who design spaces that engage children to explore.

One step further

- Collect/record/document the children's spontaneous writing in order to chart their writing understanding and progress.
- Consider having book making materials throughout the room. Use and display the child made books.
- Provide writing materials in other learning centers throughout the environment.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Are there items being discarded that could easily be used as writing experiences/explorations for young children?
- How can I embed writing opportunities in my classroom schedule in a developmentally appropriate manner to meet the abilities levels of all children in the classroom?
- What ways can I incorporate writing in the classroom so that children initiate this process independently and at their own pace?

- How do I scaffold children to the next writing level?
- What do I need to do as a leader to support literacy building skills in my program?
- How are staff trained to recognize the developmental stages of writing and use this information to plan for the different developmental levels of each child?

Standard 11, Indicator 7

What is the Indicator?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 7. Preschoolers are provided language materials daily, in addition to books, which might include puppets, flannel boards, recorded stories and picture card games.

Why is the Indicator important?

In order for young children to fully engage with the potential of their language and to explore the full range of possibilities language offers, multiple ways of expressing and using language must be offered.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** During free play and interest center play, preschoolers have access to books and language materials.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe children in the classroom as they talk with one another. Where are these conversations taking place?
- How could they be facilitated in the areas where they are not taking place and facilitated to be more in-depth in those areas where they are taking place?

What does it look like?

Provide puppets and flannel board materials in your reading area. You can provide picture card games in a variety of centers to meet this standard. You can have the children create a story and use the puppets to tell the story or a timeline of events can be done using the picture cards. Be creative! Let the children create their own picture cards and stories to share!

Helpful hints

- Consider having book making materials throughout the room.
- Use and display the child-made books.
- Record the children reading a book to themselves.

Follow-up steps

- Continue to monitor where the language is taking place most.

- Collect/record/document the children's spontaneous writing in order to assess their writing understanding and progress.
- Make a conscious effort to plan language experiences.
- When working with diverse groups of children, be creative in sharing stories in a variety of languages and cultures.

One step further

- When designing lesson plans, find creative ways to embed language learning experiences that are relevant to the topic or unit of study.
- Using flashcards to have children repeat words or quiz children is not age or developmentally appropriate.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do we encourage the use of home language in a positive, supportive and inclusive way to ensure all children feel accepted and comfortable to engage with the language materials provided in a way that is best for each child's language development?
- What could we use to help a child explore, experiment and practice with a specific use of language?
- What are the kinds of materials that naturally engage children to talk?

Standard 11, Indicator 8

What is the Standard?

Standard 11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials.

Indicator 8. Books for preschoolers must include a variety of imaginative, rhyming and informational books.

Why is the Standard important?

Preschoolers are actively exploring many parts of their world. That will also be true of their learning about books. As their interests widen, the categories of the books to which they are exposed should widen as well. Books will have more relevance if they include content that represents the current experiences of the children. However, books will also inspire children to consider other experiences and give them a greater depth of language learning if they are across many possible categories. Having rhyming books help with literacy skills such as sound and language formation.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all eight indicators for 11 to be considered met.

- **Observation:** Books for preschoolers are accessible and are reviewed for a variety of imaginative, rhyming and informational content.

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the books currently in each classroom. Categorize them by type of book.

- Discover what categories are missing, if any.

Helpful hints

- Plan to have at least one book available for every child plus two.
- Have a plan for books that are “injured” like a Book Hospital for repairs.

Follow-up steps

- Acquire books in all categories.

One step further

- Widen the categories offered to preschoolers in their book choices may include:
 - Multicultural books
 - Books with humor
 - Author/character sets of books
 - Biographies
 - Math books
 - Interactive books
 - Seasonal books
 - Books concerning important moments in a preschooler’s life
 - Books on friendship/social skills
 - Poetry
 - Wordless books along with fiction and nonfiction

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What are the categories of books that are available to readers and how do they reflect the interests of the children?
- How do you ensure the books in your program are developmentally appropriate and reflective of all home languages spoken by children within the classroom?



Paths to QUALITY™

Level 3

Standard 1

What is the Standard?

All requirements for Levels 1 and 2 are met.

Why is the Standard important?

Each level builds on the foundation of the previous one, resulting in significant quality improvements at each stage and in national accreditation at the highest level. The system validates child care programs for ongoing efforts to achieve higher standards of quality and provides incentives and awards for success.

Required evidence

All documentation for Levels 1 and 2 are available for review.

Ideas to help you get started

- Gather all documentation in an easily accessible format for Levels 1 and 2.

Follow-up steps

- Create a system that helps you access each item easily. For example, have the documentation labeled with the standard and indicator to which it is attached.

Going further for best practice

- Organize your documentation by standard/indicator in the exact order it appears in the Checklist.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Am I familiar with the requirements for Levels 1 and 2?
- How have I ensured all the standards for Levels 1 and 2 are consistent, embedded practices in my program?
- How will I plan to ensure all standards for Level 3 will be consistent, embedded practices when advancing to Level 3 for the first time?

Standard 2

What is the Standard?

School has been in operation for a minimum of one year.

Why is the Standard important?

Programs who have been in operation for at least a year have demonstrated their business is financially and programmatically viable. This indicates that your program is ready to advance to the next level of Paths to QUALITY™.

Required evidence

Documentation demonstrating the school has been in operation for a minimum of one year.

Ideas to help you get started

- Gather evidence of the existence of your program over time.

Helpful hints

- A program may fast track from Level 1 to Level 3 or 4 at any time if they have been open for at least a year and/or have operated a program of the same auspice for at least a year.
- A program can also fast track if they are a site that is under a multi-site or corporation.

Follow-up steps

- Create an easily accessible system for retrieving and updating evidence of your program over time.

Going further for best practice

- Create a program history archive file/scrapbook/documentation.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What evidence do we have for the length of time our program has been in operation?

Standard 3

What is the Standard?

50% of teaching staff have either a current CDA or equivalent certificate or an early childhood degree or equivalent degree or have completed 60 clock hours of educational training leading to an early childhood/child development degree or CDA credential within the past three years.

Why is the Standard important?

Staff education is one of the highest predictors of quality in a child care setting. Research demonstrates that adults with training in early childhood education provide higher quality programs for young children, implement more appropriate activities and do a better job of preparing children for school. The intent of this standard is to ensure that 50% of staff, including the Administrator, possess a degree and/or CDA credential. If neither the degree nor the credential has been earned, staff must demonstrate work toward one or the other.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Child Development Associate credential or equivalent certificate available for review, with current expiration date; OR a transcript for early childhood degree or equivalent degree; OR Education and Training Summary Form completed and in the teaching staff's file, documenting attendance of 60 clock hours of training, transcript, certificates, other written documentation or letter from sponsoring organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation that meets the requirements set by the Council for Professional Recognition; OR A license in early childhood, elementary or Special Education is acceptable and meets requirements for public school staff. Transcripts could be reviewed for those working towards an Early Childhood degree if needed to meet standard. Please see the chart below.

Ideas to help you get started

- Identify which staff members need further education.
- Identify what percentage of the teaching staff now meets the requirement.
- If further education is needed, contact Indiana AEYC for education opportunities.
- Assessment and credentialing of child care providers is administered by the Council for Professional Recognition. Visit the cdacouncil.org website to learn more about earning your CDA Credential.
- Scholarships and Financial Incentives through Indiana AEYC: The Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (Indiana AEYC) offers financial assistance for training through T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® INDIANA and the Indiana Non-Formal CDA projects. Both projects pay for the majority of the CDA training classes, required texts and the CDA
- Assessment. Upon completion of training a bonus is awarded. In addition, professionals are available to guide the candidate through the training and assessment which lead to attainment of the CDA credential. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® INDIANA also has scholarships available for those seeking associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood.

For additional information, please contact Indiana AEYC at pd@inaeyc.org, 317-356-6884 or 855-484-2392.

Helpful hints

- Transcripts must be provided if the diploma does not specify what the degree is in.
- The Non-Credit Based CDA Training form must be filled out for all staff who are currently pursuing a non-credit based CDA showing at least 45 hours completed within the last three years of Rating Request Date.
- Examples of people not included in the total staff amount are kitchen staff not counted in ratio, bus drivers, outside support visitors such as First Steps or therapists, volunteers, additional office or business staff who do not count in ratio.
- Current students can count their approved courses, both completed and actively enrolled using the approved form.
- Keep in mind that non-credit based CDA and Director Credentials need to be renewed.
- Approved college courses and transcripts never expire.
- Non-ECE Courses can be submitted for approval using the Non-ECE course verification.

Follow-up steps

- Support staff to begin courses of study or training.
- Collect and file required documentation of all training, courses or certificates received.
- Store documentation in an easily accessed location.
- Connect with T.E.A.C.H.

One step further

- If using training hours for the Education equivalency, make sure you are using the Training Summary Form to document all training that has completed in the past three years.
- Look into creating an Education Plan or Professional Development goal for each staff member.
- Align pay scale based on education levels. have a plan to ensure coverage in classrooms as staff complete coursework and degree requirements.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What percentage of the staff currently meets the requirements of this standard?
- How are qualifications of ALL staff documented, including myself?
- What barriers are preventing us from meeting this requirement?
- How can I support staff when it comes to implementing what they are learning in their coursework?

Standard 4

What is the Standard?

At least 50% of teaching staff, including the Administrator, participate annually in a minimum of 20 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood.

Why is the Standard important?

Ongoing professional development is one of the highest predictors of quality in a child care setting. The field of early childhood education is evolving and continuous professional development ensures the most up to date practices. It is important as professionals to continue training in such areas.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Education and Training summary form (or equivalent form) with supporting documentation such as certificates, transcripts, curriculum schedule from ECE/CD degree program or other appropriate evidence for teaching staff that demonstrates participation by 50% of total teaching staff, including the Administrator, in a minimum of 20 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood. Round up to determine the number of staff required when calculating percentage. For teaching staff employed less than one year, in-service hours should be prorated based on the number of months since the date hired.

Documentation will include, but is not limited to, date of training; number of clock hours of training; type of training; content/subject of the training; and name and credentials of the trainer/or the training organization.

Training can be dated up to the date of the rating visit.

Ideas to help you get started

- Identify the most beneficial types of training.
- Find dates/times that will be most advantageous for those receiving the training.
- Types of in-service training may include, but are not limited to, CDA coursework; college courses; Child and Adult Care Food Program Training; state/regional conferences on multiple topics; workshops.
- Methods of in-service training may include, but are not limited to, direct instruction; video viewing (maximum of four clock hours annually); and independent reading and study (maximum of two clock hours annually).
- In-service training may be conducted by an approved designated training facilitator. You can find approved trainers as well as apply to be an approved trainer on the Indiana AEYC website, inaeyc.org.
- Professional development plans can be helpful in planning topics and trainings to help you and your assistants.

Helpful hints

- The In-Service Training Summary form must be filled out for each staff member.
- Proof of training include certificates, transcripts, current ECE Coursework. the following in-service training may not be used to meet this standard:
 - First Aid;
 - CPR;
 - Universal Precautions;
 - Hours of mentoring and technical assistance provided through the Paths to QUALITY™ system, including Introduction to Paths to QUALITY™ training.

- Reference Rating Request Date for determination of “annual.” For example, if your rating request was made on June 15, 2022, certificates dated from June 15, 2021, will be counted.
- Training documentation must include:
 - number of clock hours of training;
 - type of training;
 - content/subject of the training;
 - name and credentials of the trainer/or the training organization.
- All users can upload additional training certificates to their transcripts on Indiana Learning Paths.
- Administrators have the capability of assigning training to staff in Indiana Learning Paths.

Follow-up steps

- Follow up with staff to make sure that registrations, paperwork, etc. are completed to allow attendance at training events.
- Collect and file required documentation from all staff who attend training.
- Fill out the Training Summary form for each staff person who attended training.
- Store all documents in an easily accessed location.

One step further

- Have staff share with other staff about the things learned in training events
- Follow up with each staff member to see how the training has impacted classroom experiences.
- Keep a posting of upcoming training events in a central location.
- Create Professional Development plans with your staff to identify training opportunities that meet their current needs and interests.
- All staff benefit from further training.
- Consider making binder containing staff training available so staff can update their own logs.
- Consider having a budget for Professional Development stipends so staff might attend training that have a cost associated with them.
- Plan for a debriefing session with staff after training to discuss what they learned. How do they plan to apply what they have learned? What would they need to implement what they have learned? Plan for a follow up session to see how the application is going.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What types of inclusive training would most benefit the staff, family and/or children?
- How can I support each staff member to obtain training needed for clock hours to continue their individual growth?
- How can I support staff when applying what they have learned?
- How am I incorporating staff evaluation data in relation to the training support needed for their professional development plan?

Standard 5

What is the Standard?

Program evaluation is completed annually by families and staff.

Why is the Standard important?

Giving families and staff the opportunity to provide feedback and input into the decisions of your program will strengthen your relationship with them and will allow you to form true partnerships that ultimately result in positive outcomes for the children you serve.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Evaluation completed by families and teaching staff
- **Interview:** Describe or show your system for conducting annual program evaluations by families and teaching staff.

Ideas to help you get started

- Determine what you wish to learn from the evaluation.
- Find or design an evaluation that most nearly addresses what you wish to learn about your program.
- Focus the evaluation on how to best meet the needs of the children and families enrolled in your program.
- Make sure to take a look at your program's vision and mission statement and objectives to craft the questions you will ask families and staff in your program's evaluation. Are the questions you wrote in alignment with your mission, vision and philosophy?

Helpful hints

- Reference Rating Request Date for determination of "annual" Need to provide proof the evaluations were offered within the last year using program's rating request date
- Electronic surveys may be completed but a printed summary or evidence of completion/date should be available Surveys may be completed anonymously. You may get more feedback if this is clearly written on the form
- Staff evaluations are for the staff to evaluate the program and not the administrator evaluating the staff.

Follow-up steps

- Compile the results of the evaluations and seek patterns/messages that are most prevalent.
- Seek ways to make program changes/improvements based on the results of the evaluations.
- Organize the forms in a system that is easily accessed.
- Create a process for the evaluation process for all staff.
- Network with other directors to share sample program evaluation forms.

One step further

- Adapt the evaluation to meet the needs of families with limited literacy skills or those whose native language is not English.
- Discuss the results of the evaluation with staff and families and your plans for program improvement.
- Create a system for the evaluation process of newly enrolled families.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What information am I seeking to improve and grow my program?
- How can I communicate these needs to staff and families?
- When and how often do I need to distribute the needs assessment for staff and families?
- How will I ensure evaluations are accessible to all families and staff (ex., language and dis/ability accommodations)?

Standard 6

What is the Standard?

A strategic plan is completed and includes annual evaluation/goal setting and long range planning/goal setting.

Why is the Standard important?

Strategic planning and goal setting are instrumental in the successful operation of your child care program. The strategic planning process will help you determine where you are going and how you are going to get there. The strategic planning process, if done correctly, can help to improve the overall effectiveness of your program. It will positively impact the quality of care children receive, as well as the effectiveness of staff, retention of staff and the overall organizational strength of your center.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Evidence of strategic plan that includes annual evaluation/goal setting and long-range planning/goal.

Ideas to help you get started

- Determine where you want your center to be in five years, three years and one year. Write these into goal statements.
- Analyze where your center is in terms of the goals you have established.
- Determine action plans to help you meet your goals.

Helpful hints

- Reference Rating Visit Date for determination of “annual.”
- Ensure the plan shows evidence of annual evaluations.
- Ensure the plan shows long range planning/goals.

- Revisit your original philosophy and goals you have for your program. Do you currently meet them? What can you do to further them?
- Refer to your family and staff survey results.

Follow-up steps

- Put the plans into action and evaluate your progress regularly as compared to your established goals.
- Annually review and modify your strategic plan based on evaluation information.
- Have written documentation of your written strategic plan in an easily accessible location.

One step further

- Effective strategic planning begins with a determination of where you want to be in the future and short-term goal setting to help you achieve your long-term future goals.
- Evaluate all aspects of program operation and incorporate your findings into initial strategic planning and annual review of the strategic plan.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How will I create short- and long-term strategic plan goals using the data from annual evaluations and staff/family needs assessments?

Standard 7

What is the Standard?

Standard 7. A written curriculum reflects the program philosophy and goals, is based on child development and appropriate practice and provides for the various ages, ability levels, and developmental stages of the children.

Why is the Standard important?

Effective implementation of a curriculum, purchased or self-created, is a vital part in the development of the whole child. Incorporating the Indiana Early Learning Standards into lesson plans demonstrates how teachers understand creating learning experiences based on appropriate expectations around routines, developmental goals and children's interests. All staff must not only be aware of the curriculum, but also well prepared in how to deliver that curriculum in a developmentally, individually and culturally appropriate way. The effectiveness of your curriculum is validated through assessments that include observations, goal alignment and demonstrated growth in children. Assessments focused on children's strengths are more positive and show the teacher's attention to the individual child's full potential.

Meeting the following indicator is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 7, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 7. A written curriculum reflects the program philosophy and goals, is based on child development and appropriate practice and provides for the various ages, ability levels, and developmental stages of the children. This curriculum meets the following requirements:

Indicator 1. Assessment is appropriate to the curriculum and focuses on children's strengths. It may include portfolios, conversations, anecdotal notes and developmental notes.

Why is the Indicator important?

Assessments that are authentic, taken from actual moment-by-moment experiences in everyday classroom life, give a more accurate, more natural and more individual understanding of each child's development. Assessments focused on children's strengths are more positive and show the teacher's attention to the individual child's full potential. Using this information leads to staff planning for appropriate and relevant experiences for children based on their interests, abilities, and enhancing their growth and development.

Required evidence

- **Interview:** How do you assess/evaluate your curriculum?

Ideas to help you get started

- Access the Program Growth Tool on My SPARK Learning Lab to determine areas of improvement in Learning Environments and Curriculum. This tool shows where the program currently is in its practices and what can be implemented to improve, which supports goal setting and timelines.
- Engage in conversations around what the Indiana Early Learning Standards are, how to intentionally use them and incorporate them in the curriculum process.
- Determine what areas of the curriculum are desired for assessment focusing on the Indiana Early Learning Standards and developmentally appropriate guidelines from NAEYC for the assessment of young children.
- Once areas of assessment are determined, brainstorm with the staff about what a teacher might look for, how that could be recorded and what kinds of goals could be made for future instruction based on the assessments.

What does it look like?

During center time, a teacher might observe a child playing in the block area. This might be a great opportunity to observe what competencies, concepts, skills, and/or actions that show progression within that child's developmental domain. Instead of "pulling out" the child from the classroom activity and showing shapes to the child to identify, the teacher uses authentic assessment. She records what the child has said about the shapes in his structure and records it with a photo of the block structure in the ongoing portfolio she is using for each individual child.

Helpful hints

- Create opportunities for “in the moment” recording of events you see such as Post-it notes around the room, clipboards of paper and writing utensils in each center, recording children to go back and make notes, schedule time to intentionally observe and assess specific children.
- Create a system that works for all staff in a classroom that helps to record children’s abilities in a consistent way. For example, the same teachers observe and assess the same children each time.
- Ensure you are taking advantage of natural, organic opportunities of children’s activities by recording what you see and hear without disrupting what is happening. This is what makes assessments authentic. Recordings do not always have to be planned.
- Skill and drill assessments such as checklists and flash cards do not reflect children’s abilities at the early childhood stage.

Follow-up steps

- Create ways in which teachers can record assessments and a system for keeping/organizing those records.
- Keep records in an easily accessible location.

One step further

- Explore ways in which the children can contribute to recording their own assessments.
- Train staff in creating authentic assessments.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does my assessment and curriculum focus on the strengths of all children?
- What are the benefits of observing a child in their natural, play-based environments during real-time classroom experiences?
- In what ways do I support gathering information through authentic assessment?
- How do I support my program with individualization during assessments to collect data that informs planning for activities, experiences, curriculum, individualized instruction, etc.?

Standard 8

What is the Standard?

Standard 8. Children’s physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Why is the Standard important?

Supporting all cognitive domains is a powerful tool of connection between children and adults with their environment. It ensures the focus on the whole child. Providing opportunities for literacy and language, creative self-expression, math, music and science in a mixture of group and individual experiences in play is critical to positive and enriching learning experiences. Real life context and open-ended questions add relevance and extend children’s learning.

Meeting all of the following 11 indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 8, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children’s physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 1. Many opportunities throughout the day for communication (all ages), which might include sharing information, pointing out logical relationships and encouraging children’s ability to reason.

Why is the Indicator important?

Communication, at any age, is vitally important to feel acknowledged, to have basic needs expressed and to feel connected with other people. How early childhood educators use the tool of communication is critical to many areas of development. Communicating while the child is in the direct context of the learning moment can be particularly powerful in cognitive development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all 11 indicators of Standard 8 must be met to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule and lesson plan will be viewed to ensure these opportunities occur.
- **Observation:** Interaction between the teacher and children indicates intentional communication to foster communication skills.

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom for consistent teacher-child communication that goes beyond giving directions.
- Check each classroom’s daily schedule and lesson plan to ensure that the types of opportunities will exist for extending thinking.
- Provide training to your staff around incorporating communication strategies that allow children to engage in meaningful back-and-forth conversations.
- Understand where children are developmentally and use appropriate language. As children grow, you can use language to help foster their development. Introduce new words into your vocabulary and theirs.

Helpful hints

- As you work with children, tie words to actions. For instance, as you are doing things, you can describe what you are doing out loud. You can also describe what the children are doing concretely.
- Back-and-forth dialogue is when both teacher and children are equally contributing to the frequent conversation.
- Open-ended questions require more than a one-word answer.

- Scaffolding is building on prior knowledge. If a child is having difficulty with a concept you are trying to teach, breaking it into smaller steps.

What does it look like?

The teacher plans activities with concrete materials. For example, the children are exploring dandelions. The teacher has provided many actual dandelions, magnifying glasses, plastic knives, paper, safety scissors, crayons/markers and paper. By planning such an activity and providing these kinds of materials, the teacher has established the kind of activity that ensures communication. As the children explore these kinds of materials, the teacher can ask open-ended questions (“What are you noticing?”), can make comments that provoke thought (“You cut the dandelion’s top off, but I wonder what would happen if you cut it open?”) and can extend the child’s thinking (“Where do you think the dandelion drinks?”). By planning and providing active, concrete materials, the teacher set up the opportunities for communication that creates cognitive links.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support those staff members who use communication effectively in extending the children’s thinking.

One step further

- You can begin to help children see the relationship between written and oral language by allowing them the opportunity to see and experience writing.
- Encourage children to write their names on all their work.
- Give children the opportunity to use language. Have them describe what they are experiencing and doing. Encourage them to describe what is happening.
- Plan activities that are designed to help teach learning skills, such as singing silly songs.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What opportunities do I provide throughout the day for verbal and non-verbal interaction and active listening to each child?
- How do I assure all children’s feelings and ideas are acknowledged, valued and accepted?
- How can conversations and interactions promote growth in a child’s development?
- How can staff use open-ended questions to support analysis, reasoning and integration from previous lessons?

Standard 8, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children’s physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 2. Many opportunities exist throughout the day for reading.

Why is the Indicator important?

Literacy learning requires that children have multiple opportunities with the printed word. Being read to, exploring books independently and having multiple books available provides the core of literacy learning experiences and provides the opportunities for children's successful literacy learning.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all 11 indicators of Standard 8 are completed for this standard to be considered met.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be viewed to ensure opportunities are provided throughout the day for reading activities.
- **Observation:** Children will be observed participating in reading activities.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of language arts concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate language arts skills and activities for their age group.
- Observe in each classroom to ensure reading is occurring throughout the day.
- If reading is only occurring during formal and distinct times, encourage staff to understand the possibilities throughout the schedule for reading opportunities.

What does it look like?

Books in every area (ex., books depicting various buildings in blocks, cookbooks in the dramatic play kitchen, information books in science, art books in the art area, alphabet books in the writing area, etc.) provide opportunities for the teacher to refer children to them as resources and for reading. In addition, the teacher reads to the whole group, to small groups and to individuals throughout the entire day in various locations (including outdoors).

Helpful hints

- Identify books related to the current "theme, focus area, project idea, etc."
- Incorporate books created by the children (family/self portraits, etc.).
- Books about your community (places children visit).
- Making sure your books include diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, pictures books, wordless books (see standard Level 2 11a.1).
- Create a rotation schedule for books just like with materials.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support teachers who are planning and implementing reading and writing opportunities.

- Acknowledge and support teachers who are utilizing various times, locations and taking opportunities to read.

One step further

- Read books that are designed to foster language and imagination. Books that are repetitive and have rhymes can encourage interaction and enjoyment in the use of language.
- Take the opportunity to read with children when they express interest.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do you plan reading in your learning environment?
- How do you encourage reading in an unplanned, natural and play-based environment?
- What materials and tools are supplied?
- When and how often do staff model reading from various types of written material?

Standard 8, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children’s physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 3. Every day children have many experiences and materials available to encourage imagination and creativity.

Why is the Indicator important?

Early childhood is the time when imagination, free self-expression, inquiry and exploration is encouraged and facilitated. One of the most important elements of that kind of development is found in play. Creative and imaginative free play opportunities enrich and extend cognitive, social-emotional and physical development. Have a wide variety and an appropriate number of materials out and available. In addition, cultural understandings are naturally afforded during such play experiences. Play is critical to any young child’s positive development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all eleven indicators of Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Children will be observed at play. Open-ended activities are made available to children.

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the lesson plans in each classroom for ample opportunities for free play.
- Play needs a minimum of 45 minutes to fully develop for preschoolers. When creating your daily schedule, consider this amount of time for free play multiple times throughout the day.

- Observe to see if free play is being provided throughout the day and that opportunities for imaginative and creative play are evident, supported and enhanced.
- Staff is trained in the benefits of free play experiences for young children.
- Teachers are fully engaged with the children throughout all free play experiences by playing alongside them, asking open-ended questions, extending the play, while still allowing children to be in charge of their play.

Helpful hints

- Arrange your classrooms so interest areas that go together are nearby (ex., dramatic play near music). Materials can be used in different areas and in different ways such as a block being used as a phone in dramatic play.
- Try to keep quieter areas near each other as well as the areas that may get louder.
- Although a minimum of three items are required per interest area, it is important to ensure there is enough to accommodate for the amount of children in your class and their interests.

One step further

- Provide time and space for children to follow an experience through. For example, if a child is working on a block structure and has not yet finished, provide a safe space for the child to store their structure to work on again later.
- If the experience does not need to end, provide the opportunity for children to see it through by allowing flexibility within your schedule.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What are the developmental and social emotional benefits of natural play in a learning environment?
- During unstructured free-choice, how do I foster conversations and ask questions to extend learning?

Standard 8, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 4. Children's thinking is stimulated through experimentation, exploration and access to interesting materials and adult support.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children need to have a learning environment that connects to their real-life experiences.

Higher level thinking happens when children are stimulated through hands-on, open-ended learning opportunities. Adult interactions are essential for supporting exploration and to scaffold their learning development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all 11 indicators of Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be viewed to ensure these opportunities occur.
- **Observation:** Children are actively engaged with materials provided.

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the lesson plans in each classroom for activities that would easily, naturally afford children the opportunities to play with and use materials in ways outside of their typical use.
- Observe in each classroom for children's engagement in exploration and experimentation.
- Assess the classroom schedule to ensure enough time is dedicated to providing these experiences.

What does it look like?

Engaging work could be mixing colors, filling containers, children rolling themselves the length of the room, puppet plays, writing with feathers, thick/thin paint or creating a collage of favorite playground equipment. These are active, relevant and meaningful ways for children to be engaged in the curriculum. The emphasis is on children's engagement versus giving simple facts. Printed worksheets would not offer these kinds of opportunities.

Helpful hints

- Teacher questions and prompts are not as much about providing a distinct answer, but about scaffolding and extending children's thinking.
- Examples of open-ended questions and prompts might include:
 - What do you notice about...?
 - What would happen if...?
 - What else could we do to...?
 - Let's find out about...
 - Tell me about...

Follow-up steps

- How children respond will guide your lessons and experiences based on their interests.
- Allow children to show you new ways to use tools and materials through exploration and discovery.

One step further

- Train staff in planning and implementing active engagement activities for young children.
- Train staff in enriching/extending children's thinking through open ended questions and prompts.
- Numerous materials should be made available to children in order to stimulate their interest in a variety of learning opportunities.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do you create and provide daily opportunities to stimulate peer engagement, exploration, experimentation and curiosity through experiences and materials in your learning environment?
- What are the benefits of promoting independent problem-solving?

Standard 8, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 5. Displays of children's art are available at children's eye level and show that most artwork is exploratory and unique to each child.

Why is the Indicator important?

Creative self-expression is natural to the young child. For creative self-expression to exist, children need daily access to creative materials for open-ended expression. Child processed artwork means children have access to materials that they are able to decide how to use and what to create with no right or wrong way of doing it. Work created by the children using their own ideas should be displayed where children can easily see it, at their eye level.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all eleven indicators of Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Children's artwork is displayed at the children's eye level. Most of the artwork reflects children's individual preference in the use of color, materials, tools and style.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of creative arts concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate creative arts skills and activities for their age group.
- Assess the art lesson plans in each classroom. Do those plans suggest the children's own ideas will be utilized in the content and production of the final products?
- Observe children during art. Are they being given step-by-step instructions or are they freely exploring the art materials in their own ways with their own outcomes?
- Examine the physical environment of the classroom and plan where art can be displayed.

What does it look like?

At the art center, there are fall leaves and paint in various colors. The children freely explore the colors as they paint. Some children represent fall in making a fall-colored tree. However, many children simply painted with

the different colors on their paper using the leaves. All products are displayed with equal importance at the children's eye level by hanging them in the windows. The teacher had considered making a cute "fall leaf man" out of pre-cut colored leaves and "googly eyes", but she had realized that the children's creative self-expression would not be present in that activity. Therefore, she decided on the free expression with fall-colored paints instead.

Helpful hints

- All ages and classrooms must have artwork on children's level.
- Ensure at least half of the art at children's eye level is unique to them. Unique and exploratory can also be defined as process art and NOT product art. The teacher does not have an end-product in mind.
- Ideas for displays:
 - Clear plastic jars with artwork inside
 - Books made with children's artwork
 - Laminated and fastened together with string
 - Artwork inserted in sheet protectors and fastened in binders
 - Artwork inserted in photo albums
 - Large soft blocks with pockets to insert artworks
 - Hung with clear self-adhesive paper over them
- Usable space could include walls, the back of shelves, windows and doors. the majority of the artwork displayed is unique to the child and where they can easily see it.
- Move to the floor by sitting or kneeling to see if the displays can be seen from the child's perspective.
- Research resources on process versus product art.
- Coloring pages, copies of pictures, dittos and crafts are not counted as unique and exploratory.
- There should not be a right or wrong on how children complete their art.
- Provide clipboards or clothespins where children can hang their own artwork at eye level.
- Use painter's tape to hang items on shelves and doors pulled down each day to send home.
- Displays need to be readily seen and accessible by students, thus displays need to be included in the classroom.
- Creative art experiences should be individual to each child and based upon his or her individual choice, preference and interests.

Follow-up steps

- Support staff to plan, implement and display children's creations which are self-expressive.
- Incorporate art activities and experiences that allow children to focus on the process and not the product.
- Consider the meaning behind and connection to present learning of what is displayed so the walls and other surfaces are not overcrowded or overstimulating.

One step further

- Open-ended art and creative expression represent children's own ideas and focus on the process. There is still value in product driven art, but ask if it is more of a math activity or assessment of the skill of following directions.
- Train the staff in the benefits and strategies for art education for young children.
- Classroom space is identified specifically to display children's creative work at their typical eye level.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What skills do the children gain when freely exploring and using materials to construct their own product without directions?
- How do you promote self-exploration in the art area?
- Consider how limited your expectations may be for the art area.
- How can you provide opportunities to teach children how to use materials safely and appropriately?
- How do you plan for environmental safety concerns?
- How do you decide where to place displayed art and plan for issues you may encounter with keeping art at the children's eye level?

Standard 8, Indicator 6

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 6. Teachers encourage language and literacy development through interactions which might include books, songs, puppet play and writing/drawing opportunities.

Why is the Indicator Important?

In order for young children to fully engage with the potential of their language and to explore the full range of possibilities language offers, multiple ways of expressing and using language must be offered.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, there must be evidence of all 11 indicators for 8 to be considered met.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be reviewed to ensure language and literacy opportunities occur.
- **Observation:** Teaching staff are observed encouraging language and literacy development through interactions with children, which might include books, songs, puppet play and writing and drawing opportunities.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of language and literacy concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate language and literacy skills and activities for their age group.
- Observe children in the classroom as they talk with one another. Where are these conversations taking place?
- How could they be facilitated in the areas where they are not taking place and facilitated to be more in-depth in those areas where they are taking place?

What does it look like?

The teacher observes that the liveliest conversations appear to be taking place in the dramatic play area and in the block area. She rotates new materials into each of these areas and planfully adds puppets in the block area and a flannel board in the dramatic play. In those areas where conversations seem to be sparse, she rotates in new and/or most favored materials to inspire talk. Books are added in all areas based on the interests of the children.

Helpful hints

- Add books about building and architecture to the block area, books that go along with your dramatic play materials such as cooking books and/or community helpers, animals and insect books for your science area, books on art in your art area.
- Add writing materials to each interest area and encourage children to take notes or document their play/discovery.
- Use songs when transitioning from one activity to another.
- Use puppets to reenact stories or act out social situations.

Follow-up steps

- Continue to monitor where the language and literacy development is taking place most.
- Choose books that link to and extend those areas of conversation and interests suggested by observing the children.
- Make a conscious effort to facilitate children's language learning in planned experiences as well as to take advantage of language in spontaneous experiences.
- Planfully select books and songs that directly link to children's interests and experiences.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do I stay informed of the current language milestones for the age group I work with?
- How do I incorporate a wide variety of materials to help a child explore, experiment and practice with a specific use of language?
- What kind of materials naturally encourage children to initiate conversations and where do I include them?
- How could books and songs be used to extend current knowledge or development?

Standard 8, Indicator 7

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 7. Math experiences are a part of everyday activities and routines.

Why is the Indicator important?

Math concepts are present throughout our daily experiences and lives. Building math skills supports critical thinking, problem solving and even helps to build organizational skills in our brains.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence of all 11 indicators in Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plans are reviewed to ensure math opportunities occur.
- **Observation:** Children are observed engaging in everyday math experiences as part of their everyday activities and routines.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of math concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate math skills and activities for their age group.
- Assess the lesson plans in each classroom for the presence of math activities through building, measuring, counting, sorting, shapes.
- Observe in each classroom for evidence of math activities throughout the day.

What does it look like?

Math activities can be:

- *Estimating which container has more (10 cotton balls vs. five tennis balls) that can be used for counting (be sure to choose a small enough number of items that counting does not become tedious)*
- *Lacing a shoelace through each hole is an example of one-to-one correspondence*
- *Building a block tower represents height and addition*
- *Collage with shapes*
- *Water play with containers (volume)*
- *Play dough (mass)*
- *Make a pattern while lining up to go outside*

Helpful hints

- Math is much more than numbers and counting.

- Look for opportunities to point out the math throughout the day such as finding patterns, recognizing new shapes and making connections to other real-life experiences.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support staff that are planning and implementing math activities throughout the day.

One step further

- Train staff in the benefits of and methods for math education for young children.
- Opportunities to include math principles and concepts should be integrated into typical experiences and play and various interest areas.
- Use “teachable moments” to introduce and reinforce math concepts, especially during transitions or throughout conversations.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do staff ensure developmentally appropriate practice is incorporated into daily math activities and routines?
- What embedded and intentional opportunities throughout the day have supported math concepts?
- How can I support my staff’s ongoing learning and growth of math concepts and development in my program?

Standard 8, Indicator 8

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children’s physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 8. Daily music experiences are available and may include singing, creative movement, a variety of types of music and a variety of musical and rhythmic instruments.

Why is the Indicator important?

Music is highly engaging for young children. In addition to the enjoyment children find in music, however, there are many benefits in music experiences. Within a musical activity there is potential for math (rhythm and beat), creative self-expression (movement and/or creating lyrics or rhythms), science (cause and effect of instruments), language (enhanced vocabulary), social studies (cultural exposure) and socio-emotional release.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence for all eleven indicators for Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be reviewed to ensure these opportunities occur.

- **Observation:** Children are observed in music experiences daily, which might include: singing, creative movement and the use of a variety of musical and rhythmic instruments.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of music concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate music skills and activities for their age group.
- Assess the amount of musical opportunities available in each classroom. Is there enough music that it is easily observed?
- Model music appreciation when music is being used in the classroom. Are there current musical opportunities throughout other daily experiences?

What does it look like?

When an instrumental piece of music is played, a teacher can ask, "When you hear this, how do you feel? What kind of place do you see: a beach, a forest, a playground, your home? What are you doing there?" These kinds of prompts help young children visualize and appreciate the various components of musical expression, as well as help them listen in a more focused way.

Helpful hints

- Consider making your own musical instruments using household items.
- Music can come from more than just traditional instruments.
- Pretend play areas can be a stage for music and movement activities, performances.
- Bringing music outside can provide a fun and different atmosphere to experience music.
- Expand on playing CDs or using apps like YouTube or Netflix by encouraging child and adult participation in what they hear with singing and moving along to the songs and words.
- Refrain from playing radio stations, either local or streaming.
- Music should be intentional, not just used for background noise. For example, calming music for nap time, songs for transitions, etc.

Follow-up steps

- Obtain resources to create variety in the musical experiences offered in the classroom.
- Assess lesson plans to ensure that music is being planned in each classroom.

One step further

- Train staff in creative movement, varieties of musical expression and how to introduce/extend the use of rhythm instruments in the early childhood classroom.
- Offer a wider variety of musical possibilities in each classroom.
- Utilize common household and recycled items to make instruments.
- All music which children listen to should be appropriate for their age.
- Preview all music prior to sharing with the children.

- Learn about the music played in your children's homes based on interests, cultures, heritage or other family dynamics to see what can be added to classroom daily activities.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does staff's personal belief about music affect how they include a variety of music, instruments and tools in the learning environment?
- How and when do staff model, sing or play instruments for and with children?
- What outside resources do we have to add music experiences to our daily activities like family members who sing or play music from various ethnicities and cultures?

Standard 8, Indicator 9

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 9. Science exploration is part of daily activities (examples may include collections of natural objects, living things to care for, cooking and simple experiments).

Why is the Indicator important?

It is a natural and typical part of the development of young children to be curious and to inquire about their world. In science experiences, children have an opportunity not only to experience this kind of activity but also to know that kind of inquiry is valued by the adults in their environment.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, all 11 indicators of Standard 8 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be reviewed to ensure these opportunities occur.
- **Observation:** Children are engaged in activities which encourage science exploration.

Children have access to materials that encourage science exploration, which might include collections of natural objects, living things that are to be cared for, cooking activities and simple experiments. Developmentally appropriate science exploration for infants and toddlers might include knobbed puzzles of animals, realistic plastic fruits and vegetables or an aquarium with fish.

Ideas to help you get started

- Review the Indiana Early Learning Standards expectations for your age group on ideas of science concepts that are appropriate for children's growth and development.
- Ensure staff have training on developmentally appropriate science skills and activities for their age group.
- Assess current lesson plans in each classroom to ensure that science activities are being planned.

- Assess whether planned science activities are with concrete objects in active experiences and if experimentation/exploration is within those experiences.

What does it look like?

Take a nature walk and look for different types of materials the children can bring into the classroom. Ask the children to point out different natural materials found, animals observed, the weather, insects, plants and flowers, rocks, leaves and sticks. Bring bags to collect items, magnifying glasses and pencils and notebooks to document what is found by drawing a picture that the teacher can later capture dictation.

Helpful hints

- Science does not have to be big experiments. It is anything that includes discovery, exploration or problem solving.
- Science can include digging outside, scooping and pouring, light tables, mixing and measuring.
- Include science and sensory books in the science center or with different materials throughout the room.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support staff that are using exploration/experimentation as science activities.
- Follow up on lesson plan assessment to ensure that science is being planned on a daily basis.
- Make sure that you review licensing standards regarding live animals and/or information contained in the resource, Caring for Our Children.

One step further

- Children's own inquiry becomes the basis for many of the science explorations and experimentations done in the classroom.
- Observe to see if living plants are part of the classroom environment in each classroom.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Where and how does scientific experimentation, inquiry and exploration naturally occur in a learning environment?
- How do staff incorporate the interests of the children to support scientific experimentation, inquiry and exploration in the program?

Standard 8, Indicator 10

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 10. The daily schedule provides a balance of activities including: quiet and active, individual and small group and large group, child-initiated and adult-initiated.

Why is the Indicator important?

In order to avoid overstimulation or lack of stimulation, quiet and active times need to be alternated. Individual activity is critical for independence, self-regulation and for avoiding overstimulation. Small and large group experiences are vital for socio-emotional development, especially in skills such as turn taking, “gaining the floor” in group conversations, sharing and negotiating. In order for the children to gain confidence in their own ideas, creativity and self-regulation, it is imperative that child-initiated activities exist alongside adult initiated activities.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all 11 indicators for Standard 8 must be completed for this standard to be considered met.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule is reviewed to see that above activities are included.
- **Observation:** The children are engaged in a variety of balanced activities.
- **Interview (infants only program):** How is the daily schedule adapted for infants?

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the schedules of each classroom to ensure active/quiet; individual, small group and large group activities and child-initiated activities are possible.
- Assess lesson plans of each classroom to ensure active/quiet; individual, small group and large group activities and child-initiated activities are planned.

What does it look like?

A sample portion of a schedule that might contain active/quiet times, as well as individual, small group and large group times might look something like:

- 9:00-9:15 Story time (Large group/quiet)
- 9:15-11:00 Free play (Child initiated/small groups/active)
- 11:00-11:15 Transition for lunch (Small groups/active)
- 11:15-11:45 Lunch (Large group/quiet)
- 11:45-12:15 Rest time (Non nappers only: individual/quiet)

Helpful hints

- Children take an average of 15 or 20 minutes to fully set up their play. Allow time to see their creativity and play through to the end.
- If children are engaged in play, they should be allowed to continue and not be switched to a new activity if possible.
- Make sure the written daily schedule is accurate to what is happening throughout the day and updated when changes are made.

Follow-up steps

- Observe each classroom to ensure that what is scheduled and planned is implemented.

- Ensure each classroom has common understanding on what each type of activity means in practice. For example, child-initiated activities come from children's interests and ideas in real time.

One step further

- Include children's ideas when planning activities to meet growth and development goals.
- Think about what is said during parent/teacher conferences when planning schedules and activities.
- Just because something doesn't work one year doesn't mean it won't work the next year and vice versa. Classroom needs change as children change.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Think of the child's perspective when scheduling activities in a whole group, large group, small group or one-on-one. If children are eating, sleeping and playing within the same classroom all day, how can you provide opportunities that are both energetic and calming?
- Are there opportunities for children to have individual quiet time, when needed?
- How does the class schedule accommodate the needs of all children?
- Where in the daily schedule is there flexibility to extend learning?

Standard 8, Indicator 11

What is the Indicator?

Standard 8. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math and creative development are supported.

Indicator 11. Large group activities are not excessive for any part of the daily routine.

Why is the Indicator important?

Since young children require primarily eye-to-eye/face-to-face interactions to optimally develop, it is critical for the majority of activities to be experienced in either small groups or individually. A variety of group sizes allows for a variety of experiences. Keeping routines are also important in this aspect to support children's needs for predictability.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence from all 11 indicators of Standard 8 must be met to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule is reviewed to ensure that large group activities are not the majority of the daily routine.

Ideas to help you get started

- Large group does not always mean "full group." More than a quarter of your group is considered a large group. Keep in mind the age group of your class.
- Children should be encouraged to join large group activities but not forced in any way.

- Assess lesson plans and schedules for how many activities are planned for every child to do simultaneously with others.

What does it look like?

The plan is that all children are asked to do an art project together at the tables at one time. However, in assessing where small group or individual experiences might be provided, the teacher realizes that the art activity could be an opportunity for children to rotate in and out in a self-initiated way during center time. So, art becomes an individual/small group activity which provides a calmer, more individualized possibility for the children.

Helpful hints

- Consider which activities would have more impact as a large group, small group or one-on-one.
- Large groups are often useful when needed to review concepts such as rules or expectations of an upcoming activity.

Follow-up steps

- Observe to ensure that plans and schedules match the activities that the children are actually experiencing.

One step further

- Evaluate your daily schedule and lesson plans to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the children in your classroom, including time for authentic play.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Ask staff if in their own life, would they wish to do all or a majority of life/living activities in a large group of people?
- How does my staff stay current with developmentally appropriate practice for each age they serve?
- How can the staff meet the needs of each child, when extending learning objectives from the large-group, to each area throughout the day?

Standard 9

What is the Standard?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Why is the Standard important?

For play to actually be considered play, it must be spontaneous, child driven and have no external demands on its content allowing children to make their own choices. Intentional teachers are careful observers to notice children's interests and developmental rates and build upon them. The observations of the children need to be the central criteria for planning choices, including a variety of resources for children to choose from like a wide

range of developmental level, cultural relevance and multi-purpose use. Furthermore, young children might form inaccurate or incomplete conclusions, so it is important to remember the teacher must facilitate and scaffold their thinking. Concrete experiences (vs. abstract experiences) help children link their experience to their thinking. Examples include real-life artifacts, pictures and conversations of life experiences.

Meeting all of the following six indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 9, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 1. Children should be given several free choices daily. Children's choice (individual or small group play) occurs at least one third of the day and includes indoor and outdoor play.

Why is the Indicator important?

In current situations, but more importantly as life skills, young children need practice in making decisions. Having young children make choices gives that kind of experience. In addition, for play to actually be considered play, it must be spontaneous, child driven and have no external demands on its content. Therefore, to offer children actual play experiences, children must make choices about their own play.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all six indicators of Standard 9 must be met for it to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** The daily schedule or lesson plan will be viewed to ensure these opportunities occur at least one-third of the program day.
- **Observation:** Children will be observed actively engaged making choices about activities and materials.
- **Interview** (Infants only program): How is the daily schedule adapted for infants?

Ideas to help you get started

- Help teachers in each classroom identify times in the daily schedule when child choice could be appropriate and possible.
- Plan the schedule around set times (meals, nap).
- Assess whether that time in the schedule is, at a minimum, one third of the full daily schedule.

Helpful hints

- An example of one third of the schedule including free choice: if your program is open for 12 hours, then 4 hours need to be dedicated to free choice/center play/gross motor or outdoor time.
- Free/Choice/Center Play is child directed.
- Children have free movement from center to center.

- Teachers do not limit time.
- Teachers do not dictate when movement from center to center occurs.
- Teachers do not dictate to which centers the children can move.
- Children have several choices of materials and or activities for each center.

Follow-up steps

- Observe in each classroom to ensure that the daily schedule and the actual activities the children experience are consistent.

One step further

- One-third of the “instructional day” (when all children are present) would be free/center play not just at arrival and departure times. The schedule should be arranged so that children have several free choice periods daily.
- Children’s choice (individual or small group play) occurs at least one-third of the day and includes indoor and outdoor play.
- Balance in the schedule is according to the needs of the children. For example, outdoor play might be extended with very nice weather or shortened in case of bad weather. If the children seem especially tired, nap time might be earlier than usual or if they do not seem tired, nap time could be delayed.
- Consider implementing a center management system, such as name cards, lanyards, Popsicle sticks, etc.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does your staff plan free choice in the daily schedule?
- How does your staff provide children with choices during planned and unplanned activities?
- What are the benefits to children making their own choices?

Standard 9, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 2. The teacher supports children’s development by gathering information through child observations that is used to guide lesson planning.

Why is the Indicator important?

To be meaningful, relevant and appropriate, activities must be directly linked to the experiences, development, culture and individual interests/strengths of the children in any given classroom in any given year. Taking plans from resources because they are appealing to the teacher must not be the full criteria for any appropriate planning. Instead, teacher observations of the children need to be the central criteria for planning choices so that those plans are based on the needs of the actual children being taught. Even pre-made lesson plans must be adjusted to fit the interests and developmental needs of the children.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence from all six indicators for Standard 9 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Interview:** Describe your process for observing children. How do you analyze and use the information gathered throughout the observation process?

Ideas to help you get started

- Assess the lesson plans from each classroom for direct links to the children in that classroom.
- Consider what type of observational system works best for you (Post-it notes, notebook, portfolios, index card, etc.).
- Observations can include anecdotal notes, pictures, conversations with children and parents, parent conferences, developmental objectives, group observations, etc.

What does it look like?

You observe Johnny skipping the number five when counting to 10 during group time. Next week on your lesson plan you incorporate a counting activity in the math center. You also follow up by re-observing Johnny to scaffold his learning.

Helpful hints

- Easy steps to meet the indicator:
- Teachers observe children
- Teachers note developmental needs of children
- Teachers plan activities in lesson plans to meet the developmental needs of the children
- If you have pre-written lesson plans from your curriculum, how do you adapt those to meet the needs of the children in your class? Need to have proof of how you adapt the plans.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support staff that are planning with the specific children's needs, interests and experiences as the basis for their planning.

One step further

- Train staff to link planning to direct observations.
- Support the staff in having time to sit and observe their own classrooms free from other teaching responsibilities.
- Observe each classroom and report those observations to the teachers in order to help inform future planning.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How can observations and data be used to support individualized planning for meeting the needs of each child?

- How does data inform your lesson plans for group facilitation?

Standard 9, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 3. The teacher supports children’s play by providing additional materials and experiences that expand on children’s interests and skills.

Why is this Indicator important?

While children’s play must be child driven, in order to be consistent with the definition of play, teachers have many distinct and important roles during that play. One of the most critical roles a teacher has is to provide a variety of resources for children to choose from including resources that offer a wide range of developmental level, cultural relevance and multi-purpose use. The materials given to children during their play can facilitate it, expand and enrich it and show its value to the children.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all six indicators of Standard 9 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Interview:** What are examples in the past that you have added materials and experiences that expand upon the children’s interests and skills?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe the play in each classroom. Have a conversation with each classroom teacher about your observations and brainstorm together what materials might best expand the interests of the children you have observed.

What does it look like?

During observations, you notice that Mathew and Zach are fascinated with building a road in the block area. Indeed, this is the second day they have worked on such a road. In order to incorporate their interests into that area, you acquire or create road signs, block forms that resemble bridges/overpasses and different vehicles to travel on those roads.

Helpful hints

- Consider additional materials and experiences that expand on children’s interests and skills as a part of lesson planning.
- Opportunities can be “in the moment”, such as adding materials you may have on hand to extend children’s play and learning in their areas of interest.

Follow-up steps

- Support the staff in obtaining materials needed to incorporate children's interests.

One step further

- Create and maintain a system using the children's interests or emerging skills for obtaining and rotating toys/materials for use in all classrooms.
- Train staff in facilitating the play of young children.
- Preschoolers learn best when offered a variety of experiences and opportunities to express themselves and experiment.
- Support children's play by providing additional materials and experiences that expand on children's interests and skills.
- Toys are rotated and/or added depending on an interest area or theme. Remove old toys and add new materials.
- Use interests and skills as the basis for lesson planning and not themes.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do staff gather information from families and the children to include each child's interests in the classroom?
- How often do staff exchange the materials in each area, to support and expand the child's interests?

Standard 9, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 4. The teacher extends learning for children by talking about what they are doing and asking open-ended questions to promote critical thinking skills.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children are constructing their knowledge based on what they directly experience. These kinds of direct experiences are vital for the development of any child. However, as the child is directly experiencing their world, the teacher's role is vital. On their own, young children might form inaccurate or incomplete conclusions. In order to guide the children toward meaningful discoveries, the teacher must facilitate and scaffold critical thinking skills through problem-solving, evaluation, predictions and projections.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all six indicators of Standard 9 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Teacher is observed during individual and small group activities talking to children about what they are doing and asking open-ended questions that promote critical thinking such as reasoning, reflecting, observation and problem solving.
- **Interview:** What types of activities do you provide to stimulate a child's critical thinking skills?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom to ensure that the teacher is aware of opportunities for expanding children's thinking.
- Incorporate open-ended questions in your conversations. Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered with a "yes", "no" or single response. Try using "how" and "why" questions within your conversations with children.

What does it look like?

Kori is playing with two dolls, feeding them an imaginary meal. The teacher sits beside her and says, "You are being such a good mom feeding your children. What are they eating?" After a conversation about the meal, the teacher says, "I was just going to the grocery store. Could I pick up something for you? I'll be happy to pick up some fruits and vegetables for your babies. I know that will help keep them healthy." The teacher is entering the child's own choices/world while extending (without lecturing) the child's knowledge.

Two children are playing with play dough. They appear to be more interested in the play dough as a sensory experience versus an experience for creating. The teacher notices this and says, "I wonder what would happen if we added these beans into our play dough?" The teacher is adding materials that will expand the experience, but she is also asking a question that helps children to think and predict.

Kennedy and Danny are at the water table. They are floating different items on the water and pretending that they are boats. The teacher asks, "What do you think makes the boats float?" the children come up with several reasons. The teacher then says, "What do you think would happen if we tried to make our own boats?" The children enthusiastically want to try. The teacher brings paper, foil, clay, waxed paper and toilet paper rolls as beginning resources for their experiment. As the children begin to investigate and create, the teacher asks questions like: "What did you notice about...?"; "What else could you try?"; and "What could change that?" She observes throughout the experiment with comments like: "That really changed it, didn't it? The lighter one really floats differently." She is guiding their thoughts without taking away their discoveries.

Helpful hints

- Teacher questions and prompts are not as much about providing a distinct answer. They are about scaffolding and extending children's thinking.
 - What do you notice about ...?
 - What would happen if...?
 - What else could we do...?
 - Let's find out about...
 - Why do you think....

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support staff whose questions/comments help facilitate and expand children's thinking.

Going further for best practice

- Teacher support includes supervising the play and encouraging children to problem-solve and work out conflicts with one another.
- Ask children to share with you what they are doing or thinking about while they play.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does my staff develop planned open-ended questions to extend a child's problem-solving and critical thinking skills during free choice and planned small or large group?
- How does my staff take the child's lead in unplanned activities, materials or lessons to extend learning?

Standard 9, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 5. The teacher finds ways to help children learn skills when it is developmentally appropriate and when the child shows an interest.

Why is the Indicator important?

Children develop at different rates, so teachers must be mindful about identifying where children are developmentally to provide learning experiences that meet children where they are. In addition, intentional teachers are careful observers to notice children's interest and build upon them. When children are forced too soon to complete tasks they are not developmentally prepared for, they become frustrated and feel defeated. This ultimately leads to social-emotional and possibly academic issues later on in their lives.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all six indicators of Standard 9 must be met in order for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Children are observed engaging in activities designed to teach skills which are developmentally appropriate.
- **Interview:** How do you find ways to help children learn skills when it is developmentally appropriate and/or when the child shows an interest?

Ideas to help you get started

- Observe in each classroom to ensure that developmental needs of the children are being respected.

What does it look like?

In a four-year-old classroom, a few children are making mock letters in their scribble writing. The teacher notices this and points out that one child has written a letter that appears in his name. She places foam and magnetic letters in two areas of the room. She also models writing names in shaving cream in the writing area. She is aware that the children are showing some interest in letters and that they are beginning to be at a developmental level that would make some instruction appropriate.

Helpful hints

- It is important to know and understand the developmental level of the children in your care, either through “Getting to Know You” paperwork upon enrollment, observation or conversation with the families.
- Be aware of the appropriate developmental milestones for the age group you work with, through training and other various resources.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge and support staff that focus instruction on the developmental needs of the children they teach.

One step further

- Train all staff in developmental expectations of young children.
- Assess where children’s developmental levels are using appropriate screenings and tools that can then be utilized to help plan appropriate lessons and activities for both individual children and the group as a whole.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- What are the developmental and social emotional benefits a child receives if taught at their current developmental level?
- What risks could a child experience if they are not willing or developmentally ready to learn a new skill?

Standard 9, Indicator 6

What is the Indicator?

Standard 9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials.

Indicator 6. The teacher takes advantage of the many natural learning experiences associated with daily life and makes “teachable moments” opportunities for learning.

Why is the Indicator important?

Young children learn best in the direct context of any experience. Concrete experiences (vs. abstract experiences) help children link their experience to their thinking. Using those experiences, as they happen, is critical to expanding children’s cognitive development.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence from all six indicators in Standard 9 must be met for this standard to be met.

- **Observation:** Teachers are observed using everyday activities as opportunities for learning.
- **Interview:** Explain in a given day how you take advantage of the many natural learning experiences and make them opportunities for everyday learning. How do you use “teachable moments?”

Ideas to Help You Get Started

In each classroom, observe to ensure that everyday activities are utilized for teaching opportunities.

What does it look like?

When children are drawing, the teacher might point out the shapes within their work or the cause-effect of the marks/strokes on their paper (Math and Science). When children are swinging on the swings outdoors, the teacher mentions how pumping their legs makes the swing go higher (Science). When children are having a conversation about families, the teacher could choose to create an activity such as graphing family size or drawing families (Social Studies).

Helpful hints

- Be open to being flexible when a teachable moment arises for the children to learn new information or connect new knowledge to previous learning.
- Life and self-help skills like putting on a coat, shoes, waiting in line, putting toys on shelves are some valuable teaching moments. Teachers should not jump in to do these things for children.

Follow-up steps

- Acknowledge staff that use everyday opportunities for teaching.

One step further

- Daily routines and experiences are discussed with the children in order to promote sequencing.
- Children’s interests are supported and expanded by providing materials based on individual interest and skills.
- Identify ways in which you analyze and use information gathered through observation.
- While maintaining a predictable schedule, allow opportunities to engage children in spontaneous learning opportunities.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does my staff plan daily opportunities to extend real-world connections and critical thinking?
- Why is it best practice to use natural and unplanned interactions and conversations when supporting daily teachable moments?

Standard 10

What is the Standard?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Why is the Standard important?

To effectively plan and care for children with disabilities and children with special healthcare needs, the entire teaching team needs to understand the distinct goals, adaptations and accommodations which will facilitate the full and rich experience for each child. With spatial limitations or interferences in the environment, children with special needs cannot access all materials or activities provided to the other children in the program, so it is important to assess arrangements. Additionally, materials also need to be accessible and appropriate for all ability levels to support children's individual growth and development.

Communication also needs to be sensitive so both children who are asking questions and the children of whom the questions are about feel respected, valued and understood.

Meeting all of the following five indicators is required for sufficiency in this standard.

Standard 10, Indicator 1

What is the Indicator?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Indicator 1. A written plan is in place for effectively caring for children with special needs.

Why is the Indicator important?

To effectively plan and care for children with disabilities and children with special healthcare needs, the entire teaching team needs to understand the distinct goals, adaptations and accommodations which will facilitate the full and rich experience for each child. Having goals, in writing, ensures communication among staff and parents is clear and understood. Once goals are understood, all stakeholders in the child's success can work toward those goals with clarity and confidence. In addition, writing the goals for each child will help those who advocate for the child determine how to best meet the child's needs in a specific and concrete way.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, the evidence for all five indicators of Standard 10 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Documentation:** A written plan is reviewed to demonstrate the program can effectively care for children with special needs. Even if the child care center has no children with special needs enrolled, a written plan is still in place.

Ideas to help you get started

- Have conversations with children about how there are people different from them and how to speak respectfully and with acceptance. This could mean modeling how to be inclusive toward people who look or act different from them, have different family structures, differing physical abilities and so forth.
- Consider the differing needs of the children enrolled (if none are enrolled, predict what needs could exist in the future) and what challenges exist for fully experiencing the life of the classroom community.
- Prior to enrollment of a child with differing abilities, ensure staff is appropriately trained in the specific accommodation needed for that child.
- Training topics include, but are not limited to, disability specific (such as autism, ADHD, sensory integration, etc.), adapting the environment to meet the needs of the children in care, the Americans with Disabilities Act, etc.
- Consider reading books and having discussions about making accommodations for children in the room and how peers can assist (ex., holding doors open, keeping a quiet voice, etc.). This goes beyond the ADA statement of accepting all children into the program. What are you going to do to accommodate children with differing abilities?

What does it look like?

If you have a child who moves with a wheelchair, some potential challenges could be access to restrooms, utilizing outdoor equipment or being in running activities. One part of the written plan may be making physical accommodations which might include having ramps and wide doorways, lifts or staff able to lift children onto equipment and level places where games of tag, etc., can be accomplished with a wheelchair.

Food allergies and other accommodations also fall under this indicator. How can you make adjustments for children and families when it comes to certain foods?

Helpful hints

- Identify the First Steps Systems Point of Entry and Special Education Cooperative that serves the county in which the teacher provides services.
- Before finalizing the written plan, meet with the teachers, parents, advisory board and other stakeholders to ensure that the plan is both complete and realistic.
- Although your experience in early childhood is important, avoid diagnosis of children.

Follow-up steps

- Assess the effectiveness of the plan through observation and conversations.

One step further

- Teachers should request from parents a copy of the child's Individual Family Services Plan or Individual Education Plan [dependent on the child's age] to incorporate daily lesson plans.
- Teachers should request a meeting, at least every six months, to be convened between appropriate staff members, parent(s) and First Steps (early intervention system for children birth to 36 months of age or older) in order to discuss the plan for the child in the child care setting. This plan should be updated as a child's IFSP or IEP goals are updated.

- Intervention services are allowed to be carried out in a child's natural environment when appropriate. For example, in the child's classroom or a quiet hallway.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does my staff individualize and meet the needs of children who need accommodations and modifications?
- How do I provide continued education for my staff to best accommodate children of all dis/abilities?

Standard 10, Indicator 2

What is the Indicator?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Indicator 2. Space is arranged to provide children of different ages and abilities daily access to materials and opportunities to engage in play and projects without limitation or interference from one another.

Why is the Indicator important?

With limitations or interferences in the environment, the child with special needs cannot access all materials or activities provided to the other children in the program. Those limitations highlight the child's disabilities and diminish the child's experiences. In addition to diminishing the child's experience, the child could feel inner conflicts or feel lessened by the inability to fully engage in all activities.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence for all five indicators of Standard 10 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Children are observed in the space to ensure all children have access to materials and opportunities to engage in play and projects without limitations or interference from one another.

Ideas to help you get started

- Carefully assess your program spaces to ensure children with differing abilities are able to navigate the classroom and other spaces of your program with comfort and with appropriate levels of independence based on their own individual needs.

Helpful hints

- In order to gain the perspective of the children in their environment, the teacher should get at the child's level.
- Work with families to review the program environment for any needed accommodations.

Follow-up steps

- Through observations and conversations, assess how the environment is working for all children involved in the program.

One step further

- Materials should be kept on low shelves that are accessible to children. If necessary, materials should be kept in a clear container that has been labeled with both words and pictures.
- Materials should be placed in a location where a child with limited physical abilities can access them such as on a cookie sheet to reduce materials moving out of a child's reach.
- When encouraging children to interact with peers, place materials at the end of the table and teachers slowly integrate themselves and other children into the play area.
- Provide visual cues in the environment that lead children to appropriate play. For example, tape pictures of block structures in the block area to assist a child to start his/her own structure.
- Child care settings should contain disability-related materials such as inclusive puzzles, posters, dolls, books and more, even if the setting does not currently have children with disabilities enrolled.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How does my staff provide physical accommodations and modifications for each student to have access to daily materials?
- How does the staff use current IEPs to plan and arrange the physical and developmental learning environment?

Standard 10, Indicator 3

What is the Indicator?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Indicator 3. Adaptation of materials occurs to provide children of different ages and abilities daily access to materials and opportunities to engage in play and projects without limitations or interference from one another.

Why is the Indicator important?

For all children to fully engage in the program, all materials and opportunities must be accessible without limitations or interference.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence of all five indicators of Standard 10 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** All children are observed with access to and using materials which are appropriate for their age and ability. Evidence is observed that safe, appropriate adaptation of materials and equipment has occurred.
- **Interview:** Describe how you would adapt materials and activities to ensure all children have age and skill appropriate materials.

Ideas to help you get started

- Perform a walk-through in each classroom of your program to carefully observe how children with differing abilities engage with materials. Take note of the level of independence they have to reach objects and make changes accordingly.
- Different levels of the same item should be available in all child care settings. Examples might include three- or four-piece puzzles, puzzles with knobs, floor puzzles and puzzles with pieces that have been traced.
- Modify toys that children of the designated age would use instead of giving a child toys with which a younger child would play. For example, add a self-stick Velcro to a child's pair of gloves as well as the toy for a child who has limited motor abilities to grasp the item.
- When planning activities, make sure each child's developmental levels are being met and individualized.

Helpful hint

- Only use therapy items prescribed by the child's medical team (weighted blankets and vests, chair straps).

One step further

- Post a picture schedule, with words and pictures, in a visible location that depicts the daily routine for children.
- Review the schedule with children on a daily basis.
- If a child enters the program halfway through the day, after returning from the developmental preschool classroom for example, review the picture schedule with the specific child.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How are the class materials adapted to meet the needs and include children of all ages and dis/abilities throughout the day?
- How does the staff use current IEPs when planning for adaptation and modification of the materials to provide an inclusive environment?

Standard 10, Indicator 4

What is the Indicator?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Indicator 4. The teachers include children in age-appropriate self-help activities, such as dressing, picking up toys, washing hands, folding clothes, serving food and setting or cleaning up meals.

Why is the Indicator important?

Focusing on a child's independent growth is important in the education of all young children.

Helping children become self-reliant in their world is especially critical to young children's feelings of confidence and self-worth.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence for all five indicators of Standard 10 must be met for this standard to be considered complete. The teacher is observed including children in developmentally appropriate self-help activities.

Ideas to help you get started

- Determine what self-help tasks are reasonable developmental expectations in each classroom.
- Determine what challenges might be present for the child with differing abilities in each of those tasks.

What does it look like?

A child with developing motor skills can zip his coat once the zipper is fastened in place. So, the teacher either gets that zipper started or the teacher selects another child to help begin the task with the child. However, in each case, the teacher encourages the child to complete the task independently.

Helpful hints

- Provide materials that encourage zipping, buttoning, snapping, tying or Velcro.
- Create and allow the space and time for children to make attempts at improving their own self-help skills.

Follow-up steps

- Modify materials and the environment to help all children independently accomplish self-help tasks.
- Assess whether modifications have been effective through observations and conversations.

One step further

- Offer assistance to the child appropriate to his/her needs, such as hand-over-hand assistance, physical prompts, verbal reminders, etc.
- Pair children together to complete tasks.
- Provide dress up materials with buttons, snaps and Velcro.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How and when does the staff model a new skill before expecting children to learn the new skill?
- What are the benefits of providing opportunities for children to be independent and work through natural challenges?
- When are children being provided with opportunities to be independent during daily activities and free choice?

Standard 10, Indicator 5

What is the Indicator?

Standard 10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident.

Indicator 5. The teachers answer children's questions about differences in a respectful and factual way.

Why is the Indicator important?

Children respond well to short, factual, sensitive answers to their questions. While every question must be answered for the child to avoid feeling shame or confusion, the answers should be carefully chosen and respectful. Avoiding talking "about" someone as if s/he is not present. If questions about children with differing abilities or special health care needs are handled sensitively, those who ask the questions and those about whom there are questions can feel respected, valued and understood.

Required evidence

In addition to this evidence, evidence for all five indicators of Standard 10 must be met for this standard to be considered complete.

- **Observation:** Teacher is observed responding to questions about differences in a respectful and factual way.
- **Interview:** Describe how you respond to children's questions as they relate to individual differences between children.

Ideas to help you get started

- Include books and materials that show diversity in the classroom.
- Research and build your own knowledge about children's abilities and how to help them in the classroom.
- Normalize talking about differences for all.

What does it look like?

A child asks, "Why don't Jack's legs work?" The teacher's answer is, "He has muscular dystrophy. That is a disease that you cannot catch, that has made his legs have some muscles that don't hold him up. He can really move around well, though, using his wheelchair." This answers the question while focusing on Jack's ability. A child states during Circle Time, "Michelle doesn't look like us and she talks funny." The teacher responds, "Well, we all look different from one another, don't we? It's good that we look different because we can tell each other apart that way. We all talk so that others can understand what we are thinking and feeling. Michelle, would you like to tell us what you are thinking and feeling right now?" Along with her words, the factual tone the teacher uses will be important to both children. A scolding tone would only help the questioning child feel shame and confusion. A sad tone would help Michelle feel diminished. Another crucial piece of this answer is that the teacher doesn't talk about Michelle without addressing her directly and giving her a chance to speak for herself. The focus of the answer is one that values individual difference.

Helpful hints

- Have multiple manipulatives (fidget toys, specialized seating, headphones) for all children to use if children ask.
- Explain the other child's needs for adaptive materials and how it looks different for each child.
- There is a common misconception that if one child has something, then all children will want it, but that is not always the case. Settle their curiosity by explaining the need.
- If other children still want a fidget toy or a special seat or headphones and so on, consider how you can make that happen for the children in your learning environment.

Follow-up steps

- Support staff to openly and intentionally value individual differences and answer questions with a factual, natural and respectful way.

One step further

- Teachers use first person language. "Jenny has Autism" instead of "Jenny is autistic." the disability does NOT define who the child is.
- Teachers keep appropriate child development in mind when answering questions.
- Teachers answer questions in a simple manner.
- Teachers invite parent(s) into the setting to share information about their child as appropriate.
- Teachers provide materials such as a walker, wheelchair or other assistive technology device when discussing disability issues with children in order to provide experiential materials.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- How do you plan and prepare for difficult conversations about differences and similarities between all humans?
- How do you recognize internal biases, values and judgements and hold yourself accountable when responding to children's questions?



Paths to QUALITY™

Level 4

Standard 1

What is the Standard?

All requirements for Levels 1, 2 and 3 are met.

Why is the Standard important?

Each level builds on the foundation of the previous one, resulting in significant quality improvements at each stage and in national accreditation at the highest level. The system validates child care programs for ongoing efforts to achieve higher standards of quality and provides incentives and awards for success.

Required evidence

All documentation for Levels 1, 2 and 3 are available for review.

Ideas to help you get started

- Gather all documentation in an easily accessible format for Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Follow-up steps

- Create a system (either paper or digital) that helps you access each item easily. For example, have the documentation labeled with the standard and indicator to which it is attached.

One step further

- Organize your documentation by standard/indicator in the exact order it appears in the Guidebook.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Am I familiar with the requirements for Level 1, 2 and 3?
- How am I ensuring that the standards are embedded each and every day?

Standard 2

What is the Standard?

Accreditation by an Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning approved, nationally recognized accrediting body has been achieved and maintained.

Why is the Standard important?

National accreditation supports your program's commitment to providing quality early education and care to families within your community. Empower your program's success! Equip your program with the tools to provide the best learning experiences for young children and provide the highest quality professional preparation of educators by meeting national standards of quality. the Accrediting Bodies recognized by the Paths to QUALITY™ system include:

- NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)
- NAFCC (National Association for Family Child Care)
- NECPA (National Early Childhood Program Accreditation)
- COA (Council on Accreditation)
- Cognia
- ASCI (Association of Christian Schools International)
- NLSA (National Lutheran Schools Accreditation)
- NAC (National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs)

Review the Accreditation Decision and Process information found on the Indiana AEYC website, to find out more information about each accrediting body and research which fits your program best.

Required evidence

- **Documentation:** Copy of current accreditation certificate.

Ideas to help you get started

- Carefully consider how your program's mission, values and philosophy align with the accrediting bodies.
- Some accrediting bodies offer membership programs which should not be confused with the accreditation process.

Follow-up steps

- Have a plan to ensure your staff will meet the educational requirements.
- Keep track of your expiration date and have a plan in place to submit renewal materials based on the accrediting body's timeline.
- Contact Indiana AEYC for potential scholarship support before beginning an accreditation enrollment.

One step further

- Inform your families of your decision of accreditation and why it will benefit their children.
- Create tasks for team members so that everyone is part of the process.

Equity, inclusion and self-reflection considerations

- Which accrediting body is right for your organization?
- How long does it take?
- Reflect and identify your stakeholders.
- Which teachers and staff members are asking for more leadership experience?
- Which teachers or staff members may be able to share experiences and materials to support the accreditation process?
- What type of reflections do your teachers regularly participate in and who is willing to share constructive feedback on their own teaching practices?
- Would any staff members benefit from taking on a task group leadership role?

What to expect at your rating visit

- You, as the director of the program, or a previously designated staff member will need to be available for the duration of the rating visit. This person may need to answer questions, find missing items or be the contact in case there is a problem during the rating visit.
- A brief explanation of how the rating visit will proceed will be given to you.
- Please plan on giving a tour of your center and an overview of the program.
- The classrooms that will be observed will be randomly chosen. In general, approximately one-third of the program's classrooms will be observed for at least an hour, including one classroom of each age group. The remaining classrooms will be visited for a shorter duration.
- During the observation time in a classroom, if a PTQ standard is not observed, the rater will interview the lead teacher to verify if the standard is being met.
- Please provide the rater with a place to complete paperwork. This will usually happen after observations but may take place earlier.
- The rater will also need to verify all other paperwork items required. Please make sure you have all of the required documentation gathered and available at the time of the visit as well. If you are unsure of what paperwork you will need, please refer to your Readiness Checklist to see what PTQ standards require documentation.
- When all paperwork has been verified and observations are completed, the rater will meet with you to explain any findings.

- If there are standards not met during the visit, the rater will discuss the insufficiencies and you will receive a copy of the report through email.
- If all Paths to QUALITY™ standards are met, you will be given a letter stating the Paths to QUALITY™ level the rater will be recommending to the Office of early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning.

Glossary

This glossary defines common terms and acronyms used within Paths to QUALITY™. It is not all-inclusive.

Accommodation: A modification or adjustment to an environment or process that will enable an individual with a disability to participate in the program.

Administrator: Authorized personnel that oversees the child care program within the school.

Age-Appropriate Activities: Activities designed for the particular age of child served.

Annual: 12 months previous to the date of the rating request.

Approved Accrediting Body: Any one of a number of voluntary and nationally recognized accreditation systems for early childhood centers, homes or ministries that is authorized and validated by the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission and, more specifically, recognized by the Indiana Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning as an accepted Paths to QUALITY™ accreditation entity.

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI): A worldwide accrediting organization uniquely dedicated to delivering the message of Christ dedicated to school improvement to assist schools in changing for the better in an orderly and systematic way through accreditation.

CDA Equivalent Certificate: Documentation from an accredited college or university that 12 college credits in early childhood education or a similar field of study, with a grade C or better, have been completed.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF): A program authorized through the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and administered in Indiana through the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family Resources, Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, for the purpose of having one single integrated child care funding system that assists low-income families through subsidized child care and increases the availability of quality child care services.

Child Development Associate (CDA): An individual who has successfully completed the CDA assessment process has been awarded the CDA Credential (administered by the Council for Professional Recognition, www.cdacouncil.org) and is able to meet the specific needs of children Preschools in Public Schools Guidebook and work with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

Clock Hour: 60 minutes, rounded to the nearest quarter hour.

Coach: Person who provides support and encouragement over time and is committed to a close working relationship with the purpose being to help other adults to become more effective in their work.

Coaching: A field-based approach to professional development that encourages staff to build their skills within a supportive environment. Coaching is a partnership with the program leader and led by the needs of the program. The Director or Lead Caregiver is empowered to set goals specific to their program and is responsible for taking action to meet those goals.

Cognia: An international school improvement and accreditation organization supporting high-quality education in public and private early learning programs and K-12 schools with a focus on continuous improvement and building leadership capacity.

Council on Accreditation (COA): An independent, not-for-profit, child- and family-service and behavioral healthcare accrediting organization.

Curriculum: Goals for children’s development and learning; experiences through which children achieve goals; what staff and families do to help children achieve goals; materials needed to support the implementation of goals.

Developmentally Appropriate: A program planned and carried out that takes into account the level of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of a child.

Director: Licensed childhood centers and unlicensed registered ministries must have a designated director or site director. This individual is the person designated by the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning in the licensing database who is responsible for the day-to-day program implementation and is present at the center to oversee and or participate in the child care program.

Early Childhood: Birth through 12 years of age.

Equity: The absence of unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically.

The Indiana Early Learning Standards (formerly the NEW Indiana Early Learning FOUNDATIONS to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5): An overview of the Standards document and its relevance regarding the implementation of key principles within the document as a guide to assist young children with knowledge and skills in the early years that will prepare them for success in school. Previous training meeting these criteria will be accepted if documentation can be provided.

Goals (for children): Statements that address learning and development for all children.

Good Standing: The term used to describe a program who is in compliance with Indiana’s regulations for licensed or registered care and does not have any pending negative action against their license or registration.

Inclusion: The practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded.

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA): A health care and social service funding agency established by the General Assembly in 1991 to consolidate and better integrate the delivery of human services by state government.

Indicator: Some of the Standards from the Paths to QUALITY™ Standards for Participation are further clarified by sub-requirements called indicators. A Standard with indicators can only be met if all of its indicators are also met.

Infant (Based on Type of Facility):

Center and Unlicensed Registered Ministry: A child who is at least 6 weeks of age until the child is able to walk consistently unassisted.

Home: A child from birth to 12 months of age.

Interpretive Guides: Interpretive Guides for Licensed Centers, Licensed Homes, Registered Ministries and VCP Ministries are updated annually by OECOSL and posted online. The purpose of these Guides is to provide OECOSL Consultants with a tool for determining compliance with a particular licensing or ministry/VCP rule. The Guides provide information on the purpose of each rule as well as any special instructions necessary for compliance determination. The Guides should also be used by programs to prepare for licensure/registration or to maintain compliance while licensed/registered.

Introduction Session: The forum used to share information regarding Indiana's Quality rating System which must be joined by all early childhood programs prior to their enrollment in Paths to QUALITY™.

Learning Center: A defined area, within the classroom/area, in which children may participate in similar or related types of activities. level (1-4): Distribution of criteria used in the Paths to QUALITY™ framework identifying indicators of higher quality at higher levels.

Licensed Care: Early childhood program which meets certain criteria set by the state of Indiana.

LOGS: Loss of Good Standing: For information regarding Loss of Good Standing as it relates to Paths to QUALITY™ programs, refer to the Program Compliance Issues section.

Memorandum of Agreement: Document identifying specific roles and responsibilities between individuals or agencies.

Multicultural: Relating to, consisting of or participating in the cultures of different countries, ethnic groups or religions.

National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC): A national accreditation that offers early childhood leaders the opportunity to demonstrate and document quality performance using research-based criteria and evidence-based practices

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): A national member organization with a network of state, local and regional affiliates consisting of early childhood educators dedicated to bringing high quality early learning opportunities to all children birth to age eight.

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC): A national organization dedicated to strengthening the profession of family child care by promoting high quality, professional early care and education and strengthening communities where programs live and work.

National Accreditation: Official recognition that a program has met a nationally recognized standards or criterion.

National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA): A national accrediting organization dedicated to encouraging quality and recognizing excellence in early childhood programs in centers. It is authorized and validated by the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission.

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA): provides a service that empowers schools to develop and improve high-quality, Christ-centered education through a voluntary process. NLSA encourages and recognizes schools that provide quality, Christian education and engage in continuous improvement.

Open-Ended: Allowing for a spontaneous, unstructured response.

Participation Incentive: A one-time cash award which is given to Paths to QUALITY™-eligible programs who enroll in Paths to QUALITY™.

Policy: The guidelines and expectations for a program's operation.

Preschool Age (Based on Type of Facility):

Center and Unlicensed Ministry: A child at least 3 years of age and not attending first grade.

Home: A child older than 24 months and not yet attending first grade.

Procedure: An established way of doing things.

Program Eligibility Standards: Legislated standards that must be met by any childhood program before they can receive reimbursement through the Child Care Development Fund voucher program.

Program/Provider: An Early Childhood home, school (public/private) center or ministry.

Provisional License: All newly opened programs will be issued a provisional license. The division may grant a provisional license to an applicant who is not able to demonstrate compliance with a rule because the child care center is not in full operation. A provisional license shall be granted for a limited period not to exceed one year and is subject to review every three months.

Quality rating system: A systemic approach to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

Rater: Individual responsible for assessing whether or not the Paths to QUALITY™ criterion has been met in order for the program or program to move to another level.

Readiness Checklist: A Readiness Checklist is a tool that explains what is required to meet the Standards of a Paths to QUALITY™ level. Programs and SPARK use the tool to determine if a program is ready to be rated for level maintenance or level advancement. Paths to QUALITY™ raters use the tool for the purpose of assessing whether the standards of a requested level have been met.

School-age: A child attending first grade or above.

Self-Help Activities: Those basic skills needed to take care of one's own needs in which children can participate such as setting a table or cleaning up.

Staff: A qualified staff person who must be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma or shall have passed an equivalency test, that is included in child/staff ratios providing direct care and education to children. Substitute staff and volunteers included in child/staff ratios shall meet the minimum assistant caregiver qualifications and the educational or in-service training requirements.

Staff Orientation: Orientation for new staff is important to prevent any harm to children from poorly prepared staff. Staff shall be provided essential information on the philosophy, goals and practices of the facility in order that they can fully assume the duties and responsibilities of their positions and can understand and implement the policies and procedures of the facility and the specific responsibilities assigned to the particular staff member.

Standard: A Standard is a requirement that must be met by a program in order to maintain or advance in the Paths to QUALITY™ system. The Paths to QUALITY™ Standards for Participation is a comprehensive listing of all the Paths to QUALITY™ Standards.

Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® Indiana): A program administered by Indiana AEYC that offers educational scholarship opportunities for people working in licensed, registered or exempt child care centers and homes in Indiana.

Technical Assistance (TA): The timely provision of specialized advice and customized support to resolve specific problems, increase efficiency or enhance capacity.

TCC Software Solutions: The Indiana organization responsible for providing raters for the Paths to QUALITY™ system.

Toddler (based on type of facility):

Center and Unlicensed Registered Ministry: A child who is less than 30 months of age and is able to walk across a room consistently unassisted.

Home: A child from 12 months of age through 24 months of age.

“Topics Relevant to Early Childhood”: The required content areas of educational or in-service training for caregivers to increase their knowledge of working with young children. They are:

- Positive classroom management and discipline including but not limited to, social/emotional growth/development.
- Developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum including, but not limited to, establishing productive relationships with families; providing appropriate learning environment; commitment to professionalism.
- Child development including, but not limited to, principles of child growth and development; observing and recording children’s behavior; advancing children’s physical and intellectual growth.
- Health, nutrition, sanitation and safety Nationally Recognized Early Childhood Professional Organizations

Nationally Recognized Early Childhood Professional Organizations

ACEI: Association of Childhood Education International

ACSI: Association of Christian Schools International

AMS: American Montessori Academy

CEC-DEC: Division for Early Childhood

DEC: The Division of Early Childhood

HighScope: HighScope Curriculum Membership Organization

IAN: Indiana After-School Network

IASP: Indiana Association of School Principals

IO: Infancy Onward

ISTA: Indiana State Teachers Association

OMEP-USNC: Organisation Mondiale pour L'Education Prescolaire (World Organization for Early Childhood Education)

MCEC: Military Child Education Coalition

NAA: National Afterschool Association

NAC: National Accreditation Commission

NABE: National Association for Bilingual Education

NAECTE: National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

NEA: National Education Association

NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

NAESP: National Association of Elementary School Principals

NAFCC: National Association of Family Childcare

NAREA: North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

NBCDI: National Black Child Development Institute

NCCA: National Child Care Association (formerly the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies [NACCRRA])

NCCCC: National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers

NHSA: National Head Start Association

SECA: Southern Early Childhood Association

OMEP-USA: World Organization for Early Childhood Education

ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infant, Toddlers and Families