

A B C Quality



**ABC Quality Infant Toddler Intentional
Teaching Tool Clarification Guide**

Element V: Teaching and Learning

Infant-Toddler Intentional Teaching Tool

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Standard A: Responsive and Sensitive Care

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

1. Demonstrates physical warmth through touching, holding, hugging, patting, rocking, and/or keeping a child close to the teacher’s body.

Clarification: Observe at least 3 instances when teachers physically interact with children in sensitive, careful and gentle ways.

Examples: Hugging, cuddling, rubbing a child’s back, holding a child’s hand or rocking a child while reading a story.

Observer Notes: Under no circumstances should children be shaken, jerked around, picked up by one arm or handled roughly in any way. If physical touch is used to control children’s behavior, credit cannot be received. **One instance of a teacher not handling a child carefully will result in no credit on this indicator and will be reported to Child Care Licensing.**

2. Contributes to the overall positive tone of the classroom, by being respectful and calm.

Clarification: Show genuine care, affection, and kindness toward children and other adults in the room. Positive or neutral tone and talk will receive credit as long as no negative instances are observed.

Examples:

- Teacher speaks in calm voice.
- After a baby babbles in the teacher’s lap, she smiles and repeats the sounds the infant made.
- Teacher smiles and makes silly faces with toddlers.
- Teacher validates child’s disappointment when a block structure falls and encourages him to rebuild.

Negative examples: Screaming, yelling, criticism, comparison, bias, favoritism or harsh/angry tone of voice.

Observer Notes: Assess the teacher’s tone and attitude by observing the reactions of the children. Neutral tone and talk would receive credit as long as no negative instances are observed.

3. Spends the majority of time engaged with children.

Clarification: Teachers interact with children throughout the day, even during required routine responsibilities such as cleaning.

Examples:

- While wiping down the table, a teacher talks to nearby children about their play.
- When preparing for activities, the teacher maintains conversations with children.
- Teacher talks with children during routine care activities.

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

4. Responds immediately and appropriately to support a child’s expression of emotions.

Clarification: Teachers must acknowledge children as they express a wide range of emotions. The initial response should immediately (less than one minute) follow the expression of emotion. An appropriate response should support the emotion in a positive way. The teacher recognizes that a child's cry is a call for help and that the child is unable to handle the situation by himself. The teacher finds out what the child wants/needs and helps the child handle his problem.

Examples:

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

Negative Examples:

- The teacher says things such as: "Stop crying." "Don't cry." "It's nothing to cry about." or "Only babies cry."
- The teacher is dismissive of a child’s emotion, by stating “You are fine” or “You’re okay,” without offering comfort.

Observer Notes: **Credit will not be received** if any teacher ignores or is dismissive of a child’s expression of emotion when support is needed. If a teacher *inadvertently* misses a child’s expression of emotion because they are actively engaged with other children credit may still be earned. If substantial child aggression is observed due to the lack of a teacher responding to a child’s expression of emotion, credit cannot be received.

5. Recognizes children’s need for attachment by demonstrating patience and understanding.

Clarification: The teacher responds to children in a way that is supportive and sensitive to build children’s feelings of security. Teacher demonstrates patience and responsiveness with children.

Examples:

- Supports children as they are transitioning from home to school.
- Allows children to be close and provides a secure base from which to explore.
- Uses a watch, ask, and adapt strategy to ensure that children are provided adequate support and security.
- Provides comfort when children are scared or sad.
- Talks with children about their families throughout the day.
- Greets children and families as they arrive and depart.

Observer notes: Credit will not be received if any instance is observed of a teacher demonstrating impatience, is dismissive of, or is consistently disengaged with children.

6. Respects children’s privacy and maintains confidentiality.

Clarification: Teachers keep discussions about child’s personal history, background, disabilities, problems/family information private and confidential.

Examples:

- Teachers schedule times to discuss developmental progress of children. “Ms. Smith can I set up a conference to talk to you about Dillion? When are you available?”
- Teachers use the private office to call a parent whose child has hurt another child.
- Discussion occurs in hallway with teacher and parent. “Ms. Lowman, I regret to tell you that another child bit Suzanne today.”

Negative examples:

- “Mandy is our special child, who we think has autism.”
- “Brian had a brain tumor when he was 6 months old and that is why he has a scar.”
- “Vanessa is our biter.”
- Public posting of allergies/medications in plain view.

Observer Notes: Credit will not be received if any instance of talking about a child in front of him is observed. Teacher to teacher conversations about children for the purpose of sharing caregiving information is acceptable.

7. Positions body to interact and engage with children on their eye-level.

Clarification: Observe at least 3 instances of teachers interacting with children on their level. If any teacher remains in one position on the child’s level during over half of the observation, credit can be received.

Examples:

- Stoop or squat in order to be close children.
- Sit (can be an adult-sized chair) when bringing the child to her level, such as placing a child in her lap.
- Hold babies individually throughout the day.
- Cuddle children while reading a book or playing with a toy.

Observer Notes: The intent of this indicator is to determine that teachers are engaging with children on their level.

8. Respectfully and actively listens when a child talks or attempts to communicate.

Clarification: Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit. Recognize that communication comes in many forms: a child with developmental delays or disabilities use sign language, picture communication or gestures.

Examples:

0-12 months: An infant is sitting on a mat and touches or pats the teacher. The teacher asks “Do you want to cuddle or do you want me to pick you up?” If this is not what the child wants, the teacher keeps asking questions.

12-24 months: Raoul is trying to tell the teacher something that the teacher does not understand. The teacher listens with interest and keeps asking questions while trying to understand what Raoul is telling her.

24-36 months: The teacher is wiping a table when Ebony comes to her and tries to tell her something. The teacher stops wiping the table to listen to what Ebony has to say.

Negative examples:

- The child says, “Me went to the zoo.” The teacher responds by saying, “It’s time to clean up for snack.”
- A child says, “Sing Jingle Bells.” The teacher says, “No, it’s not Christmas”.
- After a child talks, the teacher says, “shh.”

Observer Notes: This indicator does not necessarily require the teacher to speak. The response can be observed by nodding, smiling, eye contact or expressed interest while actively listening. Any instance of a teacher not listening respectfully when a child attempts to communicate will result in no credit.

Standard B: Language and Communication

The program staff supports children’s language development through a variety of personal and meaningful interactions throughout the day.

1. Regularly initiates communication with individual children.

Clarification: Must observe at least 3 instances of speaking to individual children to receive credit. When using sign language or gestures, they must be accompanied by verbal language. Communicating with children individually includes conversations pertaining to interests, explorations, experiences and environment.

Examples:

- While the teacher is sitting on the floor with children, she makes a point of talking to individual children (This is done without a request or a child trying to get the teacher’s attention).
- The teacher talks with infants and toddlers about what they are hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting.
- The teacher invites children to talk about the art they create.
- The teacher makes specific, nonjudgmental comments about what children have done: i.e. “You put a lot of feathers in this corner.”

Dual Language Learners- The teacher says at least a few words in a child’s home language, such as greetings, words for favorite people and things, and words or phrases for common events and routines. The teacher is not required to be fluent in the child’s home language.

Observer Notes: This does not include speaking regarding guidance techniques or giving instructions to children as to where to go or what to do, or when the teacher addresses a group of children.

2. Responds verbally to all types of a child’s communication attempts.

Clarification: Must observe at least 3 instances to receive credit. Teacher may repeat what the child says, ask for additional information, or give relevant comments to children's questions/comments. When children are non-verbal the teacher responds and encourages the child’s attempts to communicate through a spoken response.

Examples:

- Child smiles while looking at a book of animals and the teacher says, "You like the little dog, don't you?"
- Child is pulling on teacher's hand and the teacher says: "You want to go outside, don't you?"
- Child says: "Me." and the teacher says: "Do you want to be held?"
- When children cry, grunt, squeal, make letter sounds (goo, da, ma), or use word/sounds, the teacher repeats the sounds or words, encouraging them to use more sounds/words.

Dual Language Learners- Imitate and repeat the child’s motions, sounds, and attempts at words in different languages and in a positive and encouraging manner.

3. Models back and forth communication with individual children. This includes both verbal and non-verbal exchanges.

Clarification: Must observe at least 3 instances of back and forth communication to receive credit. Back and forth communication is defined as having at least one full exchange where the communication continues following a response. Baby signs may be used before children are verbal. Signs, pictures, or gestures may be used for children with developmental delays or disabilities.

Examples:

Non-verbal child:

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

Verbal child:

- The teacher sits near 18-month-old Toby, as he plays with a toy car. Teacher asks, “Where is your car going?” Child responds, “To park.” Teacher says, “Oh, what will you do at the park?”

4. Helps children connect words with actions by using self-talk.

Clarification: Self-talk is the teacher describing what he or she is doing as it is being done. Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit.

Examples:

- As a teacher picks up a child she says, “I’m picking you up now, so I can change your diaper.”
- Teacher says, “I am putting the toys over here so you don’t trip.”
- During pretend play at the kitchen, the teacher states, “I’m putting lunch in the oven right now.”

Observer Notes: The intent of this indicator is to link language with actions. Pay attention to who is doing the action. The teacher should be saying what he/she is doing as it is happening. Observe that the language is occurring simultaneously with the action.

5. Helps children connect words with actions by using parallel talk.

Clarification: Parallel talk is the teacher describing what the child is doing, seeing, and hearing, as it happens. Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit.

Examples:

- Teacher says, "You are holding the bottle all by yourself!"
- A child is clapping her hands and the teacher says, "You are clapping your hands."
- A child is building a tower in the block center. The teacher states "Look at you building a tall tower."
- Teacher states, "Look at Luis and Mary. They are pretending to bake a cake".
- A child is excited that they went down the slide and teacher states "You have a big smile on your face because you went down the slide."
- A child is looking at his hands. Teacher states, "Look at your hands, Jalen. You are moving your fingers."

Observer Notes: Parallel talk is a statement (not a question) of what a child is doing as it happens. Asking a child, "Are you bringing me the cup?" would not receive credit. "You are bringing me the cup" would receive credit.

6. Encourages and supports individual children in communicating and labeling their feelings.

Clarification: Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit. Teachers should encourage children to talk about all types of feelings: sad, happy, excited, tired, hungry, frightened, likes, dislikes, etc. Use actions, facial expressions, and/or words to reflect what a child seems to be communicating. Teacher discusses and labels a child’s feelings while asking questions or offering comfort.

Examples:

Non-verbal child:

- The teacher tells a child how he thinks the child feels. If the teacher guesses the wrong thing, he keeps asking until the child lets him know he’s right.
- Following a diaper change the teacher states, “You feel better now that you are all clean.”
- A child cries during drop-off. The teacher says, “I see you are crying. It makes you sad when Mommy leaves for work.”
- A child cries when the teacher stops rocking him. The teacher begins rocking again and says, “You didn’t like me to stop rocking, did you?”

Verbal child:

- A toddler hugs a stuffed dog and says, “Doggie” and the teacher says, “You love your doggie, don’t you?”
- “A child is excited that they went down the slide and teacher states “You have a big smile on your face! You look happy that you went down the slide all by yourself.”

Observer Notes: When teacher asks questions or offers comfort without specifically discussing/labeling a child’s feelings, this does not count as an example of this indicator.

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

Clarification: Must observe at least 3 instances of different open-ended questions. Open-ended question cannot be answered with yes or no and have no right or wrong answers. Wait time is defined as a pause following a question to allow the child time to respond before continuing the conversation. This is still expected when children are non-verbal.

Examples of open-ended questions:

- Where is the truck going?
- What do you think you need to get for the kitty?
- How can we fix it?
- What did you see at the zoo?”
- What do you think....?
- How are you feeling today?

Observer Notes: While teachers may ask many questions, credit may only be received for open-ended questions. Yes/No questions or questions with one answer are not open-ended. Open-ended questions have multiple possible answers and encourage language development and thinking skills.

8. Expands children’s vocabulary by elaborating, extending, and sharing information.

Clarification: Observe at least 1 instance of expanding children’s vocabulary through rich conversations. The teacher must add at least three pieces of information.

Examples:

- “Look at the squirrel with the long, fluffy tail! It is running and jumping all over the yard.”
- “See the yellow daffodil. It grows in the ground. It needs sun and water to grow.”
- “Hola means ‘Hello’ in Spanish and ‘Adios’ means goodbye. Spanish is another language or way to speak.”

Observer Notes: Conversations where two teachers provide information simultaneously will count as one instance. This can occur during group times.

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

Clarification: Observe at least 2 different examples of verbal play. Verbal play is a fun interaction that encourages word and/or sound experimentation, manipulation or acquisition.

Examples:

- Playing back and forth with sounds, coos, or babbles based on an infant’s interest.
- Lap reading and reading simple stories.
- Talking about pictures in books or on display.
- Saying or singing rhymes, poems, and finger-plays.
- Playing sound games, such as imitating various animal sounds with children.
- Encouraging children to help you make up silly stories or songs.
- Singing songs as children show interest.
- Making stories come alive by using different voices and body movements.
- Experimenting with loud/soft and fast/slow rhythms.
- Using puppets and stuffed animals to act out songs, rhymes, and stories.
- Playing games from different cultures that include hand motions with words, such as “Pat-a-cake,” “Todos Los Pescados” and “Itsy Bitsy Spider.”

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

Any of these examples can be done in a child’s home language to support Dual Language Learners.

10. Facilitates peer-to-peer communication to promote social interaction.

Clarification: Children should have the opportunity for peer interaction by being close enough to each other to engage in communication (verbal or non-verbal). Consideration is given to each child’s interests, abilities and temperament. If a child uses a specific communication technique, the teacher takes special care to facilitate peer-to-peer communication to build classroom community. Recognizing that some children may need to be eased into group settings at their own pace, teachers should still provide opportunities for children to be near enough to each other to support language and communication attempts and opportunities as they wish.

Examples:

- Non-mobile infants are placed on the floor near each other, so they have opportunities to positively interact.
- Children sit at a table where communication is easy during eating routines.

Negative Examples:

- Teacher isolates child to play alone.
- Children are placed in confining equipment that is away from other peers.

Observer Notes: Children must be allowed to have opportunities for communication by not being confined or isolated for the duration of the observation. Observe and document how teachers create opportunities for children to be near each other. Note specifically how they encourage peer-to-peer interaction (vs isolating children in cribs or devices). If children are in confining equipment, but are placed near and around other **children** so that communication is possible, credit can be received. **Credit not be received** if any child is isolated or confined without the ability to communicate with peers for the entire observation.

11. Encourages children to communicate and share language with each other.

Clarification: Observe at least 2 instances of teachers prompting children to communicate with, engage with, or notice each other.

Examples:

- Teacher places a non-mobile child on the floor and says, “I’m putting you here by Sam so that you guys can talk.”
- Teacher encourages children to interact with peers.
- One child is watching another child playing with blocks. Teacher asks, “Would you like to play with blocks too?”
- Encourage children to notice what others are doing when they are pretending. “See the way Maya is using the block for a race car.” Or “Look at Luis and Mary. They are pretending to bake a cake.”

Standard C: Guidance

The program staff guides children’s social skills with respect to each child’s development, culture, and abilities.

1. Uses positive guidance techniques.

Clarification: To receive credit, 1 positive strategy must be observed. If no instances of disruptive behaviors occur due to the teacher using effective classroom management strategies, such as Conscious Discipline, PBS (Positive Behavior Supports) or PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), credit will be received.

Examples:

Redirection:

- One child takes a toy from another. The teacher gently takes the child to another part of the room and gives him another toy. Then she goes back to the child who had the toy to see if that child is okay. Teacher provides a verbal cue for re-directions.

Anticipation/elimination of potential problems:

- If a child is in the biting stage, he is closely watched when near other children. The teacher stays close to act quickly to prevent most biting. The child is provided many appropriate things on which to chew.
- When young children cluster together, there are likely to be disputes over toys, so the teacher will watch for clustering and gently move each child to other areas of the room and provide toys for each child to use.
- A teacher provides a child their comfort item to avoid distress.

Offering Choices:

- A toddler throws a block. The teacher says, “Blocks are for building. Balls are for throwing. Would you like to build with blocks or would you like to throw balls in a bucket?”
- If a toddler tries to grab a toy from another child, offer two other similar toys to choose from.

Modeling safe practices:

- Explain why and how unsafe actions can hurt them and others.

Negative examples:

- Confinement to a crib, swing, bouncy seat, bucket seat table or exersaucer as a result of the child’s behavior.
- The use of time-out.
- The use of threats such as, “Do you want me to call your daddy?” or “I’ll put the toys away if you can’t share them.”

Observer Notes: If any instance of negative discipline is observed, credit is not received.

2. Guides children’s behavior by telling them what to do when an undesirable or disruptive behavior occurs.

Clarification: Must observe at least one teacher use a positively-phrased guidance statement. Positive guidance statements tell children what to do. “No” is used only in an emergency situation to prevent harm, and is followed immediately by a descriptor of the appropriate behavior. An emergency situation is when a person is in immediate risk or danger. If no instances of disruptive behaviors occur (due to teacher preventing, modeling, and/or contributing to the overall positive classroom climate), credit will be received.

Examples:

- “Walk”, instead of "No, don't run."
- "Feet stay on the floor", instead of "No Climbing."
- “Use gentle touches” instead of “No hitting.”
- “We build with the blocks,” instead of “Stop throwing the blocks.”

Observer Notes: In some instances, using direct language such as “stop” and “no” is appropriate for children with behavior plans. Therefore, you may need to ask a supplemental question to determine if a teacher is implementing strategies from a plan. If more than 2 negative phrasings are observed, **credit cannot be received.**

3. Demonstrates consistency with all children.

Clarification: Children are given equitable support, access, attention and opportunities to participate. Teachers demonstrate consistent and/or unbiased treatment of all children.

Examples:

- Teacher ensures that non-mobile children or those with limited mobility can access materials or group experiences.
- Teacher speaks in the child’s home language so that DLL’s can fully participate in an activity.
- Teacher allows all children access to all materials regardless of gender.
- Teacher establishes expectations for behavior and reinforces them consistently with all children.

Negative examples:

- Teacher calls Marquis a “bad boy” when he pulls toys off shelf.
- A child cannot access materials like their classmates due to a disability and no accommodations are made.
- Teacher tells the children that only boys play in blocks and only girls play in housekeeping.
- Teacher disciplines one child for pulling out materials while allowing another to play with them.

Observer Notes: Any instances of name calling, labeling, inconsistent and/or biased treatment of children will result in no credit.

4. Models and promotes positive peer interactions.

Clarification: To receive credit, children interact with each other and the adult is involved with modeling, language or other supports for the purpose of supporting social skill development. If a child uses a specific communication technique, the teacher takes special care to facilitate peer-to-peer communication to build classroom community. Must observe at least 1 instance.

Examples:

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

Observer Notes: This indicator differs from Standard V. B: Language and Communication, Indicator 10 in that this indicator requires teachers to be intentionally involved in promoting social skill development. Indicator 10 in Language and Communication simply looks for ways teachers physically position children to enable them to interact and communicate with each other.

5. Encourages children by acknowledging efforts, accomplishments and helpful behaviors.

Clarification: Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit.

Examples:

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

6. Demonstrates realistic expectations for each child.

Clarification: Realistic expectations should be based on a child’s age, development, culture, and special needs. To receive credit, 1 positive strategy must be observed.

Examples:

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

Negative examples:

- Children are forced to share.
- Mandatory circle time (children made to sit in whole group when they are not engaged).
- Extended wait times.
- Shaming children for a mistake.

Observer Notes: An unrealistic expectation is when teachers assume children should be able to do something that they are not yet capable of doing. If more than one unrealistic expectation is observed, credit is not received, regardless of whether the unrealistic expectations are the same type repeatedly or multiple types. The teacher using the word “share” does not mean that credit cannot be received. Observe to see how “sharing” impacts the children. If sharing causes a negative reaction or a child is forced to share, count as one instance.

7. Designs and manages the classroom environment to promote positive interactions.

Clarification: Physical space and classroom management strategies effectively guide behavior, facilitate peer interaction and enhance engagement. Three examples must be observed for credit to be received.

Examples:

- Teacher moves the block shelf to open up additional space to accommodate two children building a tower together
- Teacher relocates a small group of excited children to a larger area of the room during a music and movement activity to alleviate overcrowding.
- At least 4 sets of duplicate toys are provided.
- Low shelves are organized to separate space, increase visibility and allow access and protection for children to enter into play activities.
- Soft areas are provided for children who need a space to be alone.
- Teachers rearrange or modify flexible spaces to support self-directed play activities based on children’s interests.

Negative examples:

- Circle time escalates into chaos as crying children climb all over the teacher and each other in a small cramped circle time area without intervention.
- Children use a large space to run from side to side, thus running over others trying to play in designated spaces.
- Children play in overcrowded areas with minimal materials, causing disruptive behaviors to occur.

Observer Notes: Focus on classroom arrangement and environmental issues that impact children’s behavior. **Credit cannot be received** if one negative example is observed.

8. Anticipates children's actions to prevent potential conflict or danger by intervening when appropriate.

Clarification: If no instances of dangerous or aggressive situations occur due to teacher interaction, prevention, modeling, and/or overall positive classroom climate, credit will be received. Credit can be received if children are observed to be in aggressive or dangerous situations, if the teacher addresses the child's behavior in an appropriate way to prevent a second occurrence.

Examples:

- Teacher patiently redirects children to help guide them toward controlling their own impulses and behaviors.
- Teacher sits near children in play and positions herself as a support for non-mobile infants to play near each other without climbing on top of each other.
- Teacher waits until children finish eating snack before diapering a child to prevent any mishaps during the meal, such as children eating off each other's plates or food that has dropped on the floor.
- Teacher moves into the block area to prevent a child from climbing on the shelf.

Standard D: Program Structure

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

1. The room meets the ABC ratios.

Clarification: Apply ratios to the youngest child in age group. Ratios are determined by the number of teachers: children. The indicator will be assessed on both the observed **and** the enrolled number of children in the classroom, and will be scored based on the greater of the two.

Age of Child	ABC Ratio
0- 12 months	1 adult : 4 children
12-24 months	1 adult : 5 children
2 -3 years	1 adult : 7 children
3-4 years	1 adult : 11 children

Ages of Children	Observed Ratio	Enrolled Ratio

Observer Notes: Ratios are assessed based on the age of youngest child in the room and not majorities. In a mixed-age room with twos and threes, the two-year-old ratio will be applied. If the classroom is observed to not be in compliance with ABC ratios, credit cannot be received.

2. The room meets the ABC group size.

Age of Child	ABC Group Size
0- 12 months	8
12-24 months	10
2 -3 years	14
3-4 years	22

Ages of Children	Observed Group Size	Enrolled Group Size

Clarification: Apply group size based on the youngest child in age group. Group size is determined by the total number of children in a single classroom. The indicator will be assessed on both the observed **and** the enrolled number of children in the classroom, and will be scored based on the greater of the two.

Observer Notes: In rare instances, very large classrooms with dividers at least 4 feet tall may be considered separate classroom spaces. They must provide for the following: equally equipped with learning materials and furnishings on each side to be considered a distinct classroom, separately staffed per each group considered to be a classroom (teachers do not cross-supervise); children do not all gather on one side or the other/children are kept as one group in each side to be considered a classroom; and each space to be considered a separate classroom is equipped with their own bathroom, sinks, changing tables and other routine care furnishings.

3. On a daily basis, children remain in their enrolled classroom for the majority of the day.

Clarification: Small groups of children from different classrooms may come together without their assigned teacher for no more than 15% of the center’s daily hours of operation during times such as arrival/departure when enrollment is low.

Hours of operation	15% of hours
4 hours	35 mins.
6 hours	55 mins.
8 hours	1 hour 10 mins.
10 hours	1 hour 30 mins.
12 hours	1 hour 45 mins.

Interview Questions:

Director:

- Do you group children in the early morning/late afternoon? If so, how?

Teacher:

- If you were at maximum ratio in your room, and another child arrived that would place you out of ratio, how would you handle that situation?
- Is there any time when children are not in their assigned classroom? If so, please explain. Who is with the children?

Observer Notes: You are considering grouping and shifting. Observe the room enrollment and use the interview questions to determine how the program typically manages staff: child ratios. Check schedule, note hours of operation, calculate 15% of total operating hours. Next, calculate time when children are grouped together and interview teacher(s) if needed. **Credit cannot be received** if any child is shifted from classroom to classroom to maintain ratio compliance.

4. Children’s exposure to unfamiliar teachers is limited.

Clarification: The intent of this indicator is that the program is designed to limit the number of adults that children learn to trust. To promote attachment, the program assigns only a small number of consistent people (including no more than 2 floaters/substitutes) to care for each child regularly.

Interview Questions

Director:

- How does your program handle the absence of an assigned teacher?
- How do you handle teachers taking lunch or bathroom breaks?
- How many floaters are assigned to each classroom?

Teacher:

- When you are unable to come to work who fills in for you?
- Who covers for you when you take breaks?

Observer Notes: The names of teaching staff may be posted in or outside the classroom. A staffing plan, tracking sheet, or teacher assignment list can also be shown as evidence for this indicator. If a consistent grouping schedule is used, then credit can be received. If programs have multiple adults that flow in and out of the room, children are not experiencing a consistent caregiving environment.

Credit cannot be received if shifting of children occurs, the program has more than 2 floaters/substitutes used in the classroom, or program allows students to observe, to work in or interact with children on a rotating basis (less than a full semester).

5. Each child is assigned a primary teacher.

Clarification: A primary teacher has assigned responsibility to certain children and is responsible for those children’s care. The primary teacher carries out most routine caregiving interactions with the child (diaper changes, feeding, and communication with families at drop off and pick up, completion of developmental assessments, documentation of daily activities, etc.). Primary care does not mean exclusive care. It means, that all parties know who has primary responsibility for each child. Each child can be assigned up to 2 primary teachers (due to staffing changes during the day). The assigned primary teachers must cover the majority of the day (8-9 hours).

Examples: If there are two teachers in a room with ten infants, the two teachers can share responsibilities for the children according to their needs at any given moment. However, the intent and focus should be on the primary teacher carrying out their children’s routine care activities, exchanging information with parents and documenting activities and/or experiences. Even though a child’s teacher may change based on a teacher’s work schedule (e.g., lunch, assigned hours, days off during the week, etc.), every effort must be made to keep the same teachers in their assigned classroom with their enrolled children the majority of the time.

Interview Questions:

- How do you decide who cares for each child’s routine needs?
- How do you divide classroom responsibilities?

Observer Notes: Observe or interview for the assignment of primary teachers. If the teacher has additional duties, such as director, cook, bookkeeper, or bus driver, which interfere with their classroom responsibilities, they are not considered a primary teacher. If there is one teacher for the classroom who has a shift that covers the majority of the day (8-9 hours), then credit can be received, because s/he would be meeting the children’s needs. **Credit cannot be received** if shifting of children occurs.

6. The daily routine includes hand washing with soap and water for teachers and children.

Clarification: Teachers and children wash hands (or have hands washed) with soap and water before preparing/eating a meal or snack, after diapering/toileting, returning from outside and after contacting bodily fluids or contaminated items (sand and water, play dough, animals) as part of the daily routine.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received when there is a full absence or neglect of handwashing within any given routine. If attempts are made, but some procedural steps are missed on occasion, credit can be received. Hand sanitizer cannot be used in place of proper hand washing.

7. Teachers use daily routines and/or transitions as opportunities to engage children.

Clarification: Daily routines include sleeping, eating, diapering and toileting. Transitions occur when there is a shift in one activity to the next. Must observe at least 1 instance of a pleasant interaction during a routine or transition. Teachers engage with children during routine care activities.

Examples:*Routine Care:*

- When a child is getting ready for sleep the teacher sings a soft song or reads him a story.
- Singing songs while hand washing.
- Use diapering as a time to play games, sing songs and to enjoy talking/playing.
- Infants are held/talked to while bottle feeding.
- Playing “Name That Body Part” while dressing or changing infants and toddlers.
- Teachers sit at the table and talk with children while they are eating.

Transitions:

- Singing while cleaning-up.
- Movement activity when preparing to go outside.
- As children come to the table for lunch/snack a teacher engages them with a finger-play until everyone is ready.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if any teacher does not engage with children during a routine, or children are observed waiting with no activity for longer than 3 minutes.

8. Teachers conduct smooth transitions.

Clarification: Teachers plan for transitions, which include moving from one activity to another, introduction of new materials, or adjustments to new classroom settings. Teachers should provide support during these transition times to help children feel secure and ensure they are able to gradually adjust to their settings. Observe 1 instance of a smooth transition or interview for strategies to receive credit.

Examples:

- Teacher lets children know ahead of time (either verbally or with picture cards) when transitions are coming.
- Teacher models use of new materials.
- Children are allowed to use transition objects, i.e. comfort items or “loveys.”

Negative Examples:

- Children are unruly due to unplanned transition.
- Children are exhibiting unwanted behaviors at the lunch table because they are waiting for a meal.
- Children are running around during the transition to outside.
- Children are distressed due to new classroom space.

Interview Questions:

- How do you prepare children for lunch, naptime, and outside play?
- Do you allow children to use comfort items or “loveys”?
- How do you introduce new materials?

Observer Notes: Interview questions are only used if a transition is not observed. **Credit cannot be received** if a chaotic transition is observed.

9. Accommodations are made during daily routines to meet children’s individualized needs.

Clarification: Daily routines include sleeping, feeding, diapering and toileting. Accommodations must be made to meet each child’s individual needs. The individual needs of each child will determine the routine.

Examples:

Sleeping:

- A child is allowed to rest if sleepy.
- A cozy corner is provided if child is sleepy.
- For infants, consider playing soft music including music from their home culture, lowering the lights, and quieting the environment.
- For older children who choose their own sleep positions, rubbing their back may help them relax and fall asleep.
- Children who are not sleepy during a rest time are allowed quiet activities.

Feeding:

- A supplementary snack is provided if child is hungry.
- When an infant shows early signs of hunger (e.g., beginning to stir when sleeping), begin preparing food or milk so it is ready when the child is ready to eat.
- Allow enough time for children to finish bottles or food.
- A toddler who is nodding off during lunch is allowed to sleep and food is saved for later.

Toileting/diapering:

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

Interview Questions:

- If a child is sleepy before nap time, how do you handle that?
- If a child is hungry before lunch, how do you handle that?

Observer Notes: Demands of the routine should not hinder the individual needs of each child. Any negative instances will result in no credit.

10. Family-style dining is practiced during a meal service to encourage independence and socialization.

Clarification: Family-style dining is when children are encouraged to participate in meal routines and serve themselves with supervision and support. The teacher sits and engages with children during meals and models social/meal time behaviors. Children are encouraged to interact and engage with each other and the teacher during meal services. Teachers interact with children during feedings. Teachers of toddlers and twos classrooms sit with children at the table for the duration of the meal.

Examples:

Infants: Children participate in the meal service by holding their bottle or feeding themselves as they are able. The teacher holds infants during bottle feeding and engages with them (verbally and/or non-verbally). Teachers encourage children to communicate about the meal, such as like/dislike, all done, or still want more.

Toddlers and Twos: Children participate in the meal by setting the table, helping pass out napkins, passing food to each other and/or throwing away trash. Child-sized utensils and serve ware is provided to promote independent use. Children feed themselves as they are able. The teacher eats with the children and models skills/behaviors (handling food and meal manners). Children sit together with the teacher at the table for the meal service to promote social skills.

Interview Questions:

- How do you handle the lunch routine?
- What do you do while the children eat?
- Who serves the food?

Observer Notes: There are 3 components to this indicator and all must be present for credit to be received: children participate in the meal; teacher sits with children and models social behaviors; and children are engaged with each other during the meal (exception: Infants who are being bottle-fed). **Credit cannot be received** if children are fed without continued teacher interaction. In toddlers and twos classrooms, if the teacher does not sit with children for the duration of the meal, then **credit cannot be received**. If a meal service is not observed, interview for information about eating routines.

11. Follows a predictable daily routine/schedule so children can learn sequences of events and feel more secure.

Clarification: The classroom must have a schedule that is current, posted and generally followed. All 3 of these components must be met in order to receive credit. Schedules should be flexible to accommodate special events/weather, and based on individual needs and interests.

Examples:

- There is a planned, posted schedule of daily routines and general activities from which children learn to predict what will happen next.
- Schedules are flexible, adapted to accommodate individual and group needs and allow children to come and go.

Observer Notes: Example for generally followed: If the schedule states that children typically go outside during a certain time frame and the observation occurs during that time (weather is not an issue), look for indications that preparation would normally occur. If not, score the indicator “no”. The schedule can be posted inside or directly outside of the classroom.

12. Child-directed activities are provided for children based on their interest.

Clarification: Allow all children to make choices in materials, activities, and playmates. For some children with disabilities, teachers must introduce toys, begin activities, and play a more active role to show them what to do. Follow children’s signals to decide whether to continue, vary, or end an activity. Credit is given when teachers allow children to choose to participate in another activity while group activities are occurring, pick from multiple activities, or are allowed to play with materials in various ways.

Examples:

- A child brings the teacher a book. The teacher holds the child while she reads the book to him.
- Teacher begins a movement activity with a group of children. Some children choose to remain in the dramatic play area and are not forced to join the group activity.
- Children are allowed to select who and where they play for extended periods of time. This can be demonstrated on the schedule.

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

13. All children must have daily outdoor time, weather permitting.

Clarification: 0-12 months- must occur at least once a day; 12-36 months- must occur 2 to 3 separate occasions totaling 60-90 minutes. When there is a mixed age group, use the majority age to determine the time of outdoor play.

“Weather permitting” means no falling precipitation, thunder, lightning, or inclement weather. Inclement weather is defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (2010) as a wind chill factor at or below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or at or above a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Due to the health effects of ground-level ozone, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control provides the service of forecasting ozone concentrations to warn the public of unhealthy air and to encourage people to avoid exposure to unhealthy air. If outdoor play is decreased due to weather, indoor active play is increased so the total amount of active play time remains the same.

The daily schedule is reviewed and children are observed outdoors. There is a written plan for indoor active play in the case of inclement weather. This would be observed on a day that meets the weather criteria above.

Examples:

- The children go outside the day after it rains and the outdoor equipment has been wiped dry by staff before the children use it.
- The program has a rainy day schedule that reflects that active play is embedded throughout the day.
- The program adds materials indoors to promote gross motor skills when it is raining outside.

Interview Questions:

- What do you do when there is inclement weather?
- Do you have a written plan? May I see it?

Observer Notes: There are 3 components to this indicator: classroom goes outside unless there is a weather advisory; the correct amount of time for going outside is listed on the schedule; there is a written, plan for indoor active play that is embedded throughout the day due to inclement weather. If the observation occurs during the day when children are not able to play outdoors (and it is the scheduled time frame) notate what the schedule states and what teachers do. (This could be in the form of a “rainy day” schedule or inclement weather plan that is either posted or is readily accessible.) Focus on the amount of time that children are allowed to go outside and not that they might be restricted while outside.

Standard E: Early Learning

Program staff facilitates early learning by creating meaningful experiences that support all areas of development. These experiences should build on children’s interests and encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving.

1. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for discovery and learning by allowing children to actively explore the room in a least restrictive environment.

Clarification: Children have opportunities to see and hear new things, see familiar things from different views, and watch or join in with others. Children are encouraged to freely explore their surroundings. Adaptive equipment and materials are provided when a child needs support to be active and successful in program routines and activities.

Credit is given if children are placed on the floor to play, crawl, and move freely in the environment as they choose. Non-mobile children are moved to different areas of the room in order to have a variety of experiences.

Examples:

- All children are permitted to move freely in the room when awake and ready to play.
- When a child wakes up from a nap, he/she is removed from the crib and placed on the floor to play.

Observer Notes: If confining equipment is present in the classroom, ask the teacher how the equipment is used- “Tell me how and when you use this equipment.” Occasionally, restrictive equipment can be used to help children with disabilities to fully participate. When this is the case, credit can be received. Teachers themselves may also be considered confining when they restrict children’s access or movement into a variety of play areas. **Credit cannot be received** if any child is confined in a piece of equipment such as a swing, bouncy seat, crib (if awake), and/or exersaucer for any amount of time unless this is done to support a child with a disability. If a high chair or feeding table is used for any purpose other than feeding, credit cannot be received. The teacher can also be considered restrictive if she prevents access to materials or if children are kept in extended group times during which they are not engaged. If any of these are used, or you see evidence of use, credit cannot be received.

2. Teacher provides developmentally and culturally appropriate opportunities for children to complete or participate in self-care and community care tasks.

Clarification: Children are encouraged to complete self-care and community care tasks as they are able and interested. Teachers allow and support children to take responsibility for themselves when possible. Must observe at least 1 instance to receive credit.

Examples:

- Infants allowed to hold bottles and self-feed as able.
- Infants are given tummy time to enhance motor skills.
- Infants are encouraged to help with diapering by lifting their legs.
- Children taking on and off clothes.
- Children putting trash in trashcan.
- Child drinking from a cup or feeding oneself (first with fingers and then with utensils).
- Children feeding class pets.
- Child hand washing without prompting.
- Children watering plants.
- Children folding laundry.
- Children setting the table or folding napkins.
- Children helping with clean-up.

3. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate activities and materials that are concrete and meaningful to children.

Clarification: The activities and materials used throughout the day must be concrete and meaningful to the children to receive credit. Concrete: Materials that are hands-on. Meaningful: Materials that are interesting and relevant to the children in the class.

Examples:

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

Negative Examples:

- Preprinted worksheets or coloring sheets that are used as a teacher-directed activity.
- Television and videos.
- Materials designed for older or younger age groups.
- Extended group times where children lose interest.

Observer Notes: If there are some materials that are not age-appropriate, but there is still a sufficient number of age-appropriate materials, credit can be received. If a TV is in the room, but not on, assume it is used and do not give credit. If there is a TV that is covered or marked that it is not used, credit can be received. This often occurs in programs with shared space. **Credit cannot be received** when negative examples are observed.

4. Teacher scaffolds children’s learning during routines and activities.

Clarification: Teachers thoughtfully and intentionally promote development and extend learning during naturally occurring routines and activities. Scaffolding can be done as a planned experience with teacher interventions to promote skill development or a teachable moment when the teacher recognizes where a child is developmentally and provides the necessary support for a child to complete a task/activity that they would otherwise not be able to accomplish. One instance must be observed to receive credit.

Examples:

- Teacher encourages a child to hold their own bottle during lap feeding, as a child is able.
- Teacher adds toys or other objects that may extend children’s current play to make it slightly more complex.
- Teacher hides toys while infants are watching and encourages them to find them (under a blanket, in your hand, behind the chair).
- Teacher tells child to count the chairs to see how many cups they need for lunch.
- Teacher uses ordinal numbers (first, second...) for helping children learn order and sequence.
- Teacher uses intentional language like over/under; front/back; hot/cold; larger/smaller.
- Teacher supports children in acting out and retelling stories using classroom props.
- Teacher prompts children to consider different solutions.
- Teacher extends play by asking thought-provoking questions. i.e. “How might you...” “What will you need to...?”
- Teacher promotes fine motor skills while a child is coloring by saying, “I see you are having a hard time holding the crayon. What if you try holding it this way?”

Observer Notes: “Intentionally” means that the teacher is aware of where children are developmentally and are engaging thoughtfully to support further learning. This indicator differs from Standard V. D: Program Structure, Indicator 7 and is at a higher level, because it emphasizes *intentional promotion of skill development* during naturally occurring routines and activities. Indicator 7 in Program Structure is looking for positive interactions between teachers and children during routines and transitions.

5. Classroom has a written plan of activities that supports the developmental progress of children.

Clarification: Must observe a current, dated, written plan that demonstrates age-appropriate activities aligned to developmental domains.

Examples:

- Posted lesson plans indicate opportunities for children to participate in various activities tied to development.
- The lesson plan is divided or organized by the developmental domains.
- The teacher lists goals for children that are supported by activities on the lesson plan.

Observer Notes: There are 3 components to this indicator: the classroom has a written plan of activities; it is current (dated); the activities support children’s development in the domains. All components must be present to receive credit. Observe current lesson plan of activities for each classroom. Check to make sure the plan reflects the correct date and that it addresses developmental domains. The SC Early Learning Standards domains are: Approaches to Learning, Emotional and Social Development, Health and Physical Development, Language Development and Communication, Mathematical Thinking and Expression, and Cognitive Development. Developmental domains must be represented on the plan in some way. A written schedule does not meet the requirements for this indicator, because it does not have the specificity needed to demonstrate how children’s development will be supported in the domains.

6. Ongoing observation and documentation of child learning and development is conducted throughout the year.

Clarification: Must observe evidence of documentation of children’s progress. Child documentation includes activities (observations, portfolio development, and appraisal of performance using multiple indicators) that measure and track a child’s learning and development. Teacher must document signs of behavioral or developmental concerns.

Examples:

- Individual portfolios with teacher observation notes and samples of children’s work.
- High/Scope COR
- Creative Curriculum GOLD

7. Planned activities are linked to specific learning goals and objectives based on individual child assessment.

Clarification: There are three components to this indicator: the program conducts child-assessments; uses assessment results to develop learning goals; teachers create learning experiences based on children’s goals. All components must be present to receive credit. Must also receive credit for indicators 5 and 6 to receive credit for this indicator.

Examples:

- Child assessments/observation: Creative Curriculum Gold and anecdotal notes.
- Developing learning goals based on assessment and observation: i.e. Child identified to need strengthening in fine motor skills. Learning goals can be kept as a part of a child’s portfolio or charted as “I can…” and “I’m working on…”
- Creating and planning experiences based on goals: i.e. Child is given additional supports such as paper-tearing, manipulating playdough, and grasping activities.

Interview question:

- How do you decide what activities you will incorporate on your lesson plan?

Observer Notes: This indicator is based on the program conducting child assessments and creating lesson plans that support individual children’s development.

8. Teacher provides experiences that promote children’s early literacy development.

Clarification: Reading must be observed or listed as an activity on the schedule or lesson plan. Must observe evidence of at least 1 instance of an experience that promotes the development of reading or writing skills to receive credit. If the classroom serves children who are dual language learners the experiences must support the child’s home language.

Examples:

Reading

- Teacher and children make books using pictures of family members and other familiar objects found in magazines, catalogs, and environmental print (such as pictures from catalog cut-outs and labels from favorite foods).
- Teacher and children make books of trips, events they have shared, and children’s art.
- Teacher models respect for books and helps children care for books.
- Teacher makes scrapbooks or memory books and revisits them with the children.
- Teacher reads to children on her lap.
- Teacher says the word for the picture the child is pointing to.
- Teacher points out words in books and in the environment (street signs, toy boxes, words on pictures in room).
- Teacher points out a few familiar letters such as the first letter in a child’s name and calls attention to them occasionally. If a child asks for a letter name, the teacher provides it.

Writing

- Teacher provides paper and crayons for scribbling.
- Teacher writes what the child says they drew on the paper.
- Teacher writes down what children say and shares those dictated writings with them.
- Teacher encourages children to retell experiences and events that are important to them through pictures and dictation.
- Teacher models the use of writing and drawing in everyday activities.

Dual Language Learners:

- Introduce a new book in the children’s family language first before reading it in English. If you do not speak the language, ask a family member or community member to read aloud.
- Teacher provides books that are in English and a child’s home language.

Observer Notes: There are two components to this indicator. 1. Reading must be observed or listed on a schedule or lesson plan. 2. At least one instance of an experience that promotes literacy (reading or writing) must be observed. If reading is observed, this counts as one instance. If reading does not occur, another example that promotes early literacy must be observed.

9. Teacher provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to develop problem-solving skills.

Clarification: The child is given the opportunity to use self, objects, or others to reach a goal, with the support of the teacher. The teacher should encourage and prompt children to find solutions to problems for themselves without the teacher completing the task for them. Teacher allows a child’s discovery and problem solving process to occur by allowing the child to solve problems. Must observe 1 instance to receive credit.

Examples:

- Teacher places a toy out of reach and encourages a child to crawl to the toy.
- Teacher asks a child who is in a tunnel, “How are you going to get out?”
- Teacher prompts the child to try a puzzle piece another way. Teacher states, “I wonder what would happen if…”
- When a child asks for help, the teacher prompts the child to come up with solutions.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if the teacher interferes with a child’s discovery and problem-solving process by solving the problem for a child.

10. Teacher uses everyday conversations as opportunities for children to learn about nature, science or math.

Clarification: Must observe at least 1 instance of talking about nature, science, or math.

Examples:

Nature:

- Teacher points to leaves on a tree and says to an infant, “The wind makes the leaves move.”
- Teacher uses books with real pictures of animals and practices making animal sounds with children.
- Teacher talks about animals. “The goat is furry and makes a sound like this, ‘M-a-a-a-a.’”
- A toddler points to a pretty flower. The teacher says, “That flower is red. It is a mum.”

Science:

- Teacher talks about body parts during diapering or “hot” and “cold” while eating.
- Teacher introduces children to the concept of weight and volume by using words like “heavy/light,” or “empty/full.”
- A child asks, “Where did the ice go?” The teacher responds by talking about temperature and melting.
- Teacher talks about foods and how they help the body. “Milk makes your bones and teeth strong.”

Math:

- Teacher counts as she empties items from a bucket or as she gives items out. “I wonder how many cups I need for snack. Let me see...there are 10 friends here today. I need 10 cups.”
- Teacher uses size and amount words to label objects, people, and collections (big/small, many/few, etc.).
- Teacher uses words to introduce to comparisons. (more/less, taller/shorter)
- Teacher talks about shapes through everyday interactions. “I see that you have red circles on your shirt,” or “The block you’re holding is a square, and the block I’m holding is a square, too.”
- Teacher emphasizes number during a counting song by using her fingers.

11. Teacher provides opportunities for children to enhance fine and gross motor development.

Clarification: Observe that all children have regular opportunities for both fine and gross motor play. Fine motor materials/activities could be inside or outside (both are not required for credit). Gross motor activities must be present both inside and outside for all children.

Examples:

Fine Motor:

- Children use chalk on a blackboard indoors or on the sidewalk outdoors.
- Children use crayons, finger paints, or objects like rubber stamps and small wheeled vehicles.
- Teachers use wide brushes or markers and adapt handles for children with limited hand control.
- Teachers put small, safe objects on a tray or protected spot on the floor for children to grab and handle.

Gross Motor:

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

Observer Notes: Interview teacher if not observed. Review schedule for planned indoor and outdoor activities. Observe and document activities provided. If there are no gross motor materials inside, but physical activities are observed or movement activities are listed on the schedule, credit may be received. Consider non-mobile infants’ access to materials and opportunities.

Standard F: Environment

Program staff design the environment using the space, materials, and furnishing as resources for creating a safe, interesting, developmentally appropriate place for all children to play, learn, and grow.

Types of Materials	Recommended # of items	# of accessible items- based on monitor review
Cozy/Book	4	
Manipulatives	4	
Music	4	
Dramatic Play	4	
Blocks	4	
Art	4 (n/a- for infants)	
Sensory/Science	4	
Indoor Activity	4	

1. Room has sufficient, age-appropriate materials so that all children can be actively involved.

Clarification: Credit is given for age-appropriate, fully intact, and properly functioning materials that are accessible to children. “Accessible” means that children are able to reach and use the materials. To receive credit, a minimum of 2 accessible materials per child enrolled must be present.

Observer Notes: When counting materials, do not count individual items, but rather the type of material, such as soft dolls. When reviewing a climbing structure, assess the number of opportunities available for children to have different experiences. Count the materials that are accessible for any amount of time during the observation. Credit cannot be given if children have to compete for materials.

2. Children are provided some variety of materials from which to choose.

Clarification: To receive credit, sufficient number of materials in Indicator 1 has been met. “Some variety of materials” means the classroom contains the recommended number of accessible items from at least 4 of the 8 types of materials.

3. Children are provided a wide variety of materials from which to choose.

Clarification: “Wide variety of materials” means the classroom contains the recommended number of accessible items from all types of materials. In order to receive credit for this indicator, both Indicator 1 and 2 must have been scored “yes”.

4. Play materials are well-organized for children to access them and make deliberate choices.

Clarification: Similar materials are organized in a way that allows for flexibility in use, but purposeful arrangement is apparent. Storage such as low shelves, shallow buckets and baskets are used to help keep materials organized for children to easily find and access. Children with disabilities and non-mobile infants have access to the same wide variety of materials.

Observer Notes: There are two components to this indicator: the space is organized so that materials have a specific place; the space is designed so that materials are accessible. Both must be present to receive credit. Consider the environmental issues only and not what the teacher does to limit access. Make sure children with disabilities and non-mobile infants have the same access.

5. The room is divided into spaces for routines and both active and quiet play that are appropriate for ages of the children enrolled.

Clarification: Rooms should be organized and arranged to support a variety of routine and play activities. The areas should be purposefully separated both for sanitation and to ensure quiet, restful moments. The arrangement addresses children’s needs for feeding, diapering/toileting, active play and quiet play. Must have all 4 to receive credit.

Examples:

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

Observer Notes: Diapering area and supplies should be organized for easy access; feeding area is separated from play and diapering areas; quiet areas provide warmth, softness and protection from children engaged in active play. A space for active play does not need to have gross motor materials to receive credit. There just must be a designated area that can be used for active/movement activities.

6. Materials reflect the diversity of the children’s community.

Clarification: At least 3 different types of accessible materials representing 2 types of diversity must be observed. Communities can be diverse by race, age, culture, abilities, family structure and gender.

Examples:

- Dolls or puppets with differing skin tones.
- Food, dress-up clothes or musical instruments from different cultures.
- Puzzles and pictures on display representing people of various abilities.
- Books that demonstrate multiple family structures.
- People figures that represent men and women in non-stereotypical roles.

Observer Notes: When counting materials within a type of diversity there must be a contrast present.

7. A literacy-rich environment is present in the classroom.

Clarification: The classroom environment promotes literacy by providing regular access to books, early writing materials, and/or print that surrounds children in their everyday life. Books must be present and accessible to children throughout the day to receive credit. Two additional examples must also be present to receive credit.

Examples:

Books: Variety of texts and magazines.

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

Meaningful Print:

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

Observer Notes: Books that are in closed containers, out of reach or under cribs are not considered accessible, therefore no credit is earned. Books that are damaged cannot be counted. Only assess print that is on the lower half of the room. A child’s written name on multiple items counts as one example.

8. The classroom has a variety of child-related displays that are easily visible to children.

Clarification: The classroom display is age-appropriate and reflects the current activities, events, and/or children enrolled. Displays are easily visible and current. Easily visible means that children are able to see the details of the display which make it meaningful. Current is within the past month. To receive credit the classroom must have at least 4 examples of child-related display, of which one item must reflect the children in the classroom and one item must be three-dimensional.

Examples:

- Clear pictures of children and everyday objects.
- Children’s artwork.
- Paintings, wall hangings, tapestry, and weavings.
- Photographs of family members and pets.
- Visual schedule.
- Three-dimensional display (visible to all children): Sculpture, mosaics, mobiles, windsocks, spinners, and chimes.

Observer Notes: Scan the room and document examples of child-related display that is on the children’s level. If the display is detailed, such as a photo, it should be within the child’s eye level to be counted. Larger items may be placed higher, as long as they are able to be seen. Note items that are commercially made and samples of child created art products that are seasonal or dated. Photos and collages should be considered relevant as long as they are representative of the children who are currently enrolled. Display that is not relevant to children or is not easily visible is not counted. **Credit is not received** if display is not easily visible, there are less than four examples of display, no examples of display that reflect the children, or lack of a 3-D item.

9. Furnishings and equipment are child-sized and appropriate for the children currently enrolled.

Clarification: Most of the furnishings and equipment seem to fit the size of children and the children appear to be comfortable. Most is defined as 75%. The program provides adaptive equipment when a child needs support to be active and successful in routines and activities.

Observer Notes: Check to see if children who are independently mobile are able to sit comfortably and use the furnishings. Bucket-seat tables, where children’s legs are not supported, are not comfortable and credit would not be received. Adult-sized chairs and tables would not meet this requirement.

10. Space and furnishings are arranged so that teachers can directly supervise and respond to children during routine care and play activities.

Clarification: Arrangement of the classroom makes supervision easy. If there are structural barriers to supervision, teachers must be able to position themselves so they can directly see the children at all times.

Examples:

- The placement of the diaper changing station should be so that teachers are able to see and hear all of the children.
- Shelf heights should not obstruct the visibility of children.
- Teachers locate themselves in different places in the room to ensure complete supervision in an L-shaped classroom.

11. A protected cozy area is available to children throughout the day.

Clarification: Cozy areas should protect children from others engaged in active play. The space and materials should provide comfort and softness. It is a place where children go to retreat from the group activities and is often referred to as a space to be alone. Active play areas are kept separate from cozy area. Active play occurs in active areas; teachers move active children to active play spaces to ensure cozy area is protected.

Examples:

- A corner space with soft furnishings and materials.
- An area protected by shelves with a mat, soft pillows, a basket of puppets and books.

Observer Notes: Credit cannot be received if children are allowed to have active play in the space. If active play begins and the teacher moves the children from the cozy area, credit can be received. The reading space can be counted if the space is protected and contains comfort and softness components.

12. The classroom space is uncluttered and noise is kept to a moderate level to avoid over-stimulation and distraction.

Clarification: There are two components: uncluttered space; moderate noise. Both must be met to receive credit. **Credit cannot be received** if the noise interferes with the interactions and activities of the children and teachers.

Observer Notes: Consider music (without a specific purpose) that is louder than a normal speaking voice and playing continuously in the background a distraction. Noise from neighboring or adjoining classrooms, especially those with partial walls should be considered as a potential distraction. **Credit cannot be received** for a space that is cluttered with non-relevant or jumbled toys and materials.

13. Designated outdoor spaces for infants, toddlers and twos promote exploration in a least restrictive environment.

Clarification: Infants, toddlers and twos have outdoor play areas designated for their exclusive use. Exclusive use is defined as a separate play area or separate play time from older children. Play mats or blankets can be taken outside and placed on the ground so that non-mobile infants have freedom. The outdoor space is designed to encourage movement without confinement or restriction.

Observer Notes: Buggies can only be used for transporting children between indoors and outdoors. Bucket swings in the outdoor play and learning environment are considered to be confining equipment much like exersaucers and bouncers, because children must be placed in the equipment by an adult. This type of equipment causes children to be restrained and not free to change positions or move about as they wish. **Credit cannot be received** if equipment that causes confinement is observed. Restrictive equipment, such as strollers, may be used to help children with disabilities to fully participate. When this is the case, credit can be received.

14. Outdoor equipment and materials are age-appropriate, accessible, and sufficient for all children to be actively engaged.

Clarification: Credit is given for age-appropriate, fully intact, and properly functioning materials and accessible equipment that is counted. “Accessible” means that all children are able to reach and use the materials. Accommodations are made for children who have motor delays or other disabilities to have access. To receive credit, a minimum of 1 accessible material per child enrolled must be present.

Interview Question:

- What materials do you take outside? May I see them?

Observer Notes: When reviewing play-gyms, assess the number of opportunities available for children to have different experiences. For example, a play-gym with a slide, climber, and 2 swings would count for 4 children. When looking at swing sets, count the number of swings. Playhouses can be assessed to count for 2 children. If additional play materials are available in the house, these can be added to the number. **Credit cannot be received** if outdoor equipment that is not age-appropriate is used. **Credit cannot be received** if materials are not accessible and/or children have to compete for materials.

15. A variety of age-appropriate outdoor portable play materials/equipment is available.

Clarification: Portable play materials/equipment are those that are able to be moved and manipulated by children. To determine variety, look at the types of skills needed to use the materials. At least 4 different skills must be supported. To receive credit, sufficient number of outdoor materials in Indicator 14 must be met.

Examples:

- Throwing/rolling: Balls of various sizes and materials
- Pushing: Push toys, large trucks, lawn-mowers, grocery carts, and doll strollers
- Scooping/pouring/digging: Buckets, shovels, measuring cups
- Scooting: Toys without pedals
- Pedaling: Trikes and cars
- Building: Outdoor wooden blocks and waffle blocks
- Balancing: Small mounds, balance beams, stepping stones
- Crawling: Tunnels
- Multiple skills: Parachutes, musical instruments and bubbles

Observer Notes: If children are not observed outdoors, interview teachers to determine what additional materials are used outside. To determine variety, look at the types of skills needed to use the materials. At least 4 different skills must be supported in order to receive credit. When counting materials, do not count individual items, but rather the type of material. This is consistent with the way the indoor environment is scored in Indicator 1. For example, sand toys would count as one type, not individual items (shovel, rake, bucket, cup). Stationary play equipment and structures are not considered when assessing variety.

16. Outdoor space is planned as a play and learning environment.

Clarification: The more activity settings the outdoor environment contains, the greater the range of choice for children. A planned outdoor play and learning environment would be evidenced by defined settings where a predictable pattern of activity occurs. To receive credit, at least 5 play and learning settings children can engage with when outdoors must be observed.

Examples:

Acoustic/music play, deck, dry stream bed, gardens (fruit and vegetable, sensory, wildlife), gathering space, grass maze, grove (small trees or large shrubs), indoor-outdoor transition, loose parts (natural and/or recycled,) manufactured loose parts, manufactured play equipment, multipurpose lawn, mound, performance space, play kitchen, playhouse, primary pathway, sand play, sensory pathway, teepee, water play (hands-in), picnic or outdoor tables.

Negative Example: The sand in the outdoor environment was placed as a fall zone cushioning material. While children may play in the sand, it is not a defined setting for sand play and credit would not be given.

Observer Notes: Activity settings must be defined within the outdoor environment.

17. The outdoor environment is naturalized.

Clarification: The outdoor environment affords children proximity to and interaction with nature. To receive credit, at least 6 different natural components and/or natural, loose materials for children to engage with and enhance their play must be observed.

Examples:

Natural components: balance logs, boulder, bridge, birdbath, bird and bug houses, container plants, flowering plants, naturalized fence, plant protection rail, porch swing, pull-up rail, raised bed, seat, vine-covered shading device (arbor or pergola), stepping stones, tree stumps, tire planter, tree, tree cookies, shrub (sensory, butterfly habitat), turnover stone, tunnel, vine, wildflower patch.

Natural, loose parts (with evidence of use in play): bark, fallen leaves, flowers and flower parts, large seashells (2 inch diameter), loose ground cover, pine cones, pine needles, sand, tree cookies, wooden blocks.

Observer Notes: The outdoor environment is naturalized as evidenced by the presence of 6 different natural components and/or natural, loose materials. The goal is to connect children with nature and diversify their outdoor experience. To be counted, the natural, loose materials must be available, even if not selected, during the observation. Sticks, small stones and rocks are not age-appropriate.