



San Francisco Department of

**Early Childhood**

# Quality Standards

for the

**Early Learning San Francisco Program**



## Quality Matters to Every Child

Every experience in children's earliest years has an impact on their success in school and the rest of their life. That is why it is so important for children to have high quality care and education during this time. Quality early care and education helps families and supports children's cognitive, physical, and social and emotional growth. It helps children be ready for kindergarten and beyond.

The San Francisco Department of Early Childhood (DEC) has a set ten standards for early childhood programs that can assure families that they can make a good choice when they are looking for a child development program for their children. The standards build a strong foundation for the Early Learning San Francisco (ELS) program, a system of early care and education, and help programs understand how to implement the Programmatic Assurance Requirements. Most importantly, they give children a strong start at a crucial time of their development.

Based on research on the development and education of young children, the standards were created with input from national and state experts and input from educators in San Francisco. The standards define what we believe all early childhood programs should do when caring for young children. To participate as a city-funded site, programs must meet all ten (10) standards.

### **A Guide to the Quality Standards**

*The Quality Standards describe the requirements and expectations of a city-funded program with important information to help programs understand each standard and the connection to every child's development. Review this guide to learn more about the San Francisco standards for high quality programs.*

### Ten Quality Standards:

- *Child Assessment & Observation*
- *Curriculum*
- *Developmental Screening*
- *Family Partnership*
- *Environment*
- *Interactions*
- *Ratio & Group Size*
- *Professional Development*
- *Qualifications*
- *Continuous Quality Improvement*



## Quality Standard: Child Assessment & Observation

### Description:

Child Observation is the method of watching, listening, asking questions, documenting, and analyzing the observed words and actions of children as they interact with their surroundings and other people<sup>1</sup>. Child Assessment is a process of gathering information about a child, reviewing the information, and then using the information to change the environment and to plan curriculum that responds to the child's interests, strengths, and needs.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



#### The goals are to:

- Encourage teachers and providers to notice what a child can do and has achieved.
- Ensure all children have the opportunity to demonstrate and build upon their knowledge, skills, and interests.



### Program Requirements:

1. Program uses a researched/approved tool at least twice a year for all enrolled children (beginning 60-90 days after enrolment and then six months after that). DEC strongly recommends programs use the **Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)** in alignment with Head Start/Early Head Start and CA state-funded programs.
2. Program ensures that both individual child assessment results and/or a summary of classroom assessment results are used as a guide for curriculum planning that supports children's learning and development.

### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Program uses reliable and useful assessment data to create and modify lesson plans that focus on the interests of children, promote growth in the developmental domains, and support all children's engagement in learning experiences and activities.
2. Educators identify trends and patterns in children's development and then develop activity plans. This may include using a tool such as a classroom summary sheet (e.g., Summary of Findings, [Form EED 3900](#)) or other documentation that references the assessment results.

#### Family Engagement<sup>2</sup>

1. Program describes the purposes of assessment and on-going observation with timelines in the Parent's Handbook or other documentation provided to parents.
2. Information collected and documented is shared with the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s), and program invites them to share their observations from home.
3. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) and teachers develop shared goals to support child's development and to understand what comes next developmentally.
4. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) and teachers develop shared goals to support child's development and to understand what comes next developmentally.

<sup>1</sup> Erick Brent Francisco 2020, *Child Observation*, <https://safetyculture.com/topics/child-observation/>

<sup>2</sup> Head Start Policy & Regulations 1302.34, *Parent and family engagement in education and child development services*,



## Quality Standard: Curriculum

### Description:

Curriculum provides guidance on 1) what and how to teach; 2) ways to create nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security; and 3) how to promote progress toward children's development<sup>3</sup>. Curriculum also provides ways to create nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



A research-based curriculum promotes children's progress across all domains, including:

- Language and Literacy Development
- Cognition
- Social and Emotional Development
- Perceptual
- Motor and Physical Development



### Program Requirements:

1. Program delivers curriculum that offers developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences that supports all children's development across all developmental domains.
2. Program may use a commercial or self-developed curriculum.

#### Early Learning SF approved curriculum includes\*:

- Creative Curriculum
- HighScope
- Montessori
- Resource for Infant Educators (RIE)
- Reggio Emilia
- PITC
- Project Based Learning
- Tools of the Mind

\*For other curricula not listed, please contact DEC SF Quality Connections staff for approval at [jennifer.delosreyes@sfgov.org](mailto:jennifer.delosreyes@sfgov.org). For programs using a self-developed curriculum, please submit written documents that describe how self-developed curriculum is aligned with the CA Foundation & Curriculum Frameworks and how the curriculum promotes learning across all domains.

### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Programs have a plan for professional development that supports teaching staff in implementing the curriculum responsively and intentionally.
2. Curriculum uses an anti-bias approach that promotes equity in the classroom and connection to community. It is inclusive of different family cultures, ethnicities, and structures including, but not limited to: Single Parent, Grandparent, Adoptive and Lesbian/Gay/ Bisexual/Transgender (LGBTIA+)-headed households.

#### Family Engagement

Program offers opportunities for parent(s)/caregiver(s) and/or family members to be involved with their child's learning in the program

<sup>3</sup> ECLKC, *Early Childhood Curriculum Resources*, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/early-childhood-curriculum-resources>



## Quality Standard: Developmental Screening

### Description:

Developmental screening helps to recognize children's milestones and possible developmental concerns or delays and can identify needs for early intervention. The earlier a concern or delay is recognized and intervention is begun, the better the child's chance of substantial progress.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development<sup>4</sup>



- Screening young children is an effective & efficient way for professionals to measure a child's development, help parents celebrate their child's milestones, know what to look for next, and determine what follow-up steps are needed.
- Screening is an essential first step toward identifying children with delays or disorders in the critical early years, before they start school.

### Program Requirements:

1. Program informs parents/caregivers about the purpose of using developmental screening, and works with them to complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and ASQ Socio-Emotional (ASQ-SE), as needed, that matches the child's age within 45 days of entry.
2. Program documents and provides results of the screenings to the parents/caregivers and helps create connections to services as needed.

### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Program follows-up with the family about any areas of concern, providing referrals or additional support services as needed.
2. Program conducts screening and follow-up in the child's home language if available.

#### Family Engagement

1. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) and teacher share results and discuss any differences in skills or behaviors seen at school and at home.
2. Program stays connected and maintains communication with the families by offering activities they can do with their child.



<sup>4</sup> Paul H. Brook Publishing Co., Inc., *Why Screening Matters*, <https://agesandstages.com/about-asq/why-screening-matters/>



## Quality Standard: Family Partnership

### Description:

When programs effectively engage families, they create a *mutual, respectful, and responsive partnership between families, early learning and care providers, as well as other related professionals, to promote children's development, learning, strong parent/child relationships and wellness. Family engagement happens when early childhood professionals and families actively participate in an on-going process of building and maintaining these meaningful relationships*<sup>5</sup>. Family-teacher partnership and engagement in early education is important for children in that it helps create consistency between the home and school environments.

### The Positive Outcomes Of Engaged Parents Are Powerful



- There is increased support for children's learning at home, empowered parents and improved family well-being.
- Children see benefits like improved cognitive development and academic performance, better social-emotional development, and improved health.

### Program Requirements:

1. Program creates a welcoming environment that incorporates the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background of families through the lens of equity, such as greeting all parents during pick-up/drop-off.
2. Educator conducts a parent-teacher conference for all enrolled children twice per 12-month period, with follow-up as needed, to enhance the understanding of—and partnership in—supporting the child's developmental progress.
3. Program communicates with families in person and through a variety of tools, such as email, text, blog, newsletter, bulletin board, and phone call.<sup>6</sup>
4. Program has opportunities for families to be engaged in their children's learning and development as their child(ren)'s first teacher.

### Program Implementation:

1. Program values each family's unique expertise about their child(ren) and build a goal-oriented relationship with a family based on their identified needs and interests.
2. Program encourages family to share their own culture, personal beliefs, and family values so the educator can incorporate the cultural contexts that shape the child's experiences and learning.
3. Program offers opportunities for family members to volunteer in the classroom and provides opportunities for families to connect with each other.
4. Program connects families with community resources that offer support for their family well-being and strength.

<sup>5</sup> First 5 California, State of California, 2019; <https://qualitycountsca.net/child-care-providers/family-engagement/>

<sup>6</sup> California Department of Education 2014, *Family Engagement Framework*,



## Quality Standard: Environment

### Description:

Safe, responsive, and nurturing environments are an important part of supporting learning and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In addition to the indoor learning environment, children need regular access to outdoor space where they can move and engage with the natural world<sup>7</sup>.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development<sup>8</sup>



Safe, responsive, and nurturing environments are an important part of supporting the learning and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Such environments also help support positive behaviors and serve as a core component of interventions for infants and young children with identified disabilities.



### Program Requirements:

1. Program maintains a rich and healthy environment for children to learn.
2. Program completes and submits a self-assessment of the physical environment with an external coach upon entry using:
  - *ECERS-R/ITERS-R/FCCERS-R*
  - *ECERS-3/FCCERS-3*
  - *NAEYC Classroom Check List*
  - *Other research-based assessment tool upon approval by SF DEC*

### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

Program uses self-assessment results to inform a Quality Improvement Plan that supports the program in delivering a safe, healthy, and responsive learning environment for enrolled children and families.

#### Family Engagement

Program uses self-assessment results to inform a Quality Improvement Plan that supports the program in delivering a safe, healthy, and responsive learning environment for enrolled children and families.



<sup>7</sup> Workman, S; Ullrich R, 2017, Quality 101:Identifying the Core Components of a High-Quality Early Childhood Program, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/02/13/414939/quality-101-identifying-the-core-components-of-a-high-quality-early-childhood-program/>

<sup>8</sup> Schwartz, 2021, Early Childhood Environments, <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/cresource/q1/p01/>



## Quality Standard: Teacher-Child Interactions

### Description:

Interactions between children and adults are the primary way of supporting children's development and learning. Effective, engaging interactions and environments form the foundation for all learning in early childhood classrooms.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



- Effective teacher-child interactions lead to better outcomes in cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional development.
- Well-established relationships and expectations in a program give children multiple opportunities to learn and explore in a predictable, engaging, and stimulating environment.



### Program Requirements:

All ELS programs will be assessed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an observational assessment tool that measures the level of effectiveness of teacher-child interactions upon entry using an external, reliable assessor.

1. Programs with **LOW** scores in Emotional Support and Organization Support domains (PreK) or Responsive Caregiving domain (Infant) will not be accepted as an ELS Qualified Site.
2. All sites who have **LOW** scores in Engaged Support for Learning or Instructional Support domains will develop an action plan to enhance the quality of interactions and be reassessed to demonstrate change.

\*a) High: score of 6-7; b) Mid: score of 3-5; C) Low: Score of 1-2

### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Program provides professional development opportunities to educators, which focus on strengthening interactions and uses CLASS results in developing a quality improvement plan.
2. Program and educators understand the meaning of the score in each dimension and use CLASS results to develop a plan for improving teaching quality and learning environment.

#### Family Engagement

Program reinforces the value of parents(s)/caregiver(s)-child interactions that promote positive family relationships, and extend children's learning and development.





## Quality Standard: Ratio & Group Size

### Description:

In early care and education settings, smaller class size, and lower staff-child ratios create conditions needed for increased levels of high-quality social and instructional interactions. The number of teaching staff (adults) who are present to teach and care for children compared to the number of who are playing, eating, and sleeping together in a group is known as the child-to-adult ratio. In child care center, a group of children is usually considered the children who are in the same classroom. In a family child care home, the group is all the children who are receiving care at any one time. Then maximum number of children in a group is call the group size. Ratios and group size are two factors that are critical to child's health, safety, and development.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



Low child-to-adult ratios and small group size help ensure that all enrolled children get enough one-on-one attention from an adult who is available to take care of each child's unique needs such as social and emotional development, physical well-being, and overall learning.

### Program Requirements:

1. Age category ratio maximum class size for child care center.

Age Category	Ratio	Maximum Class Size*
Infant (Birth -15 months)	1:4	8
Toddler (12-36 months)	1:6	12
Preschool (30 months-5 years)	1:10	20

\*CSPP programs must follow Title V guidelines, which allow for a 1:8 ratio with class size of 24 children.

2. Family Child Care (FCC) programs often care for mixed-age groups, which makes child-to-adult ratios and groups sizes vary. FCC programs in Early Learning SF (ELS) should follow California Community Care Licensing guidelines for ratios and group size.



## Quality Standard: Professional Development

### Description:

Professional development (PD) is any type of approved continuing education effort for teachers. It is a way to improve teacher's knowledge and skill and in turn, boost children's outcomes. PD can take place in settings such as conferences, courses, professional learning communities, seminars, retreats, and workshops.

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



- On-going professional development advances the knowledge, skills, and practices of educators in their efforts to educate children.
- Effective professional development focuses knowledge and skills in specific areas that support educators to structure meaningful learning in environments for young children.

### Program Requirements:

Teachers must complete at least 6 hours of training on **each of the following topics once in their professional career.**

1. Child Development/ Learning Foundations (0-5)
2. Inclusion and Meeting the Needs of Young Children with Disabilities or other special needs.
3. Family Engagement and Support
4. Anti-Bias/ Equity training- Teacher may choose one of the following topics:
  - Implicit Bias; Anti-Bias, Antiracist Curriculum
  - Supporting Dual Language Learners
  - Black Joy Series

Teacher may meet PD requirements by having attended unit-bearing coursework on content areas.

### Program Expectations:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Program ensures educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career.
2. Educators are supported to apply new learning in the classroom.
3. Effective professional development engages teams of educators to focus on the needs of children.





## Quality Standard: Qualifications

### Description:

Teacher qualifications are the minimum academic qualifications required. These may include educational achievements and professional degrees related to working with children in the Early Childhood Education environment.

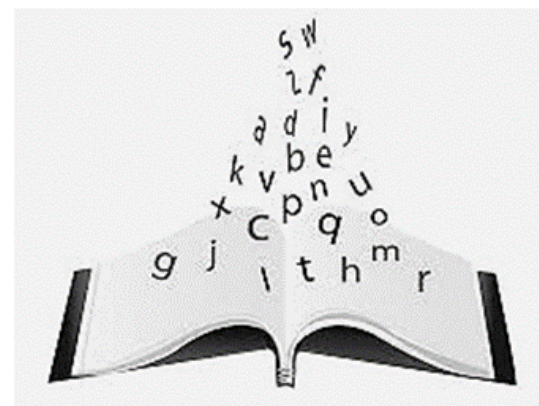
### Connection to Child's Learning & Development

- During these critical early learning years, qualified early childhood professionals influence how children learn, develop, and build the skills necessary to get along with others and succeed in school and life.
- The professional's educational preparation is one of the many influences on educator's practice, which affects child and family outcomes.



### Program Requirements:

1. **FCC:** 12 ECE units, including nine units of core classes (CDEV 53; CDEV 66; CDEV 67) & three ECE elective units for educator providing instruction and supervision to the children.
2. **FCC/PFA & Center Lead Teacher:** 24 units of ECE/CD, plus 16 units of General Education OR Teacher Permit.
3. **Center Director:** Associate's degree with 24 units ECE/CA+/with six units management/administration & two units supervision or Site Supervisor Permit.



### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

1. Program supports educators to advance their careers in early education through academic attainment. Supports may include tuition reimbursement, academic advising, release time, and other incentives for educational pursuits.
2. Program offers on-going support to educators and helps them successfully transfer their ECE knowledge to learning setting.



## Quality Standard: Continuous Quality Improvement

### Description:

Child care programs in the ELS network are supported and encouraged to engage in a continuous cycle of quality improvement focused on improved outcomes for children and families. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is used to outline and track a quality continuum where the program maps out their steps to improve their planning and tracks progress incrementally. Along with technical assistance and professional development, the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood (DEC) provides many supports and resources for programs to grow through [SF DEC Quality Connections Improvement System](#).

### Connection to Child's Learning & Development



Continuous quality improvement reflects a process that ensures programs are systematic and intentional about improving practices, and increasing positive outcomes for children and families<sup>9</sup>.

### Program Requirements:

Program develops and implements an annual Quality Improvement Plan with goals and objectives that identifies areas the program wants to strengthen.



### Program Implementation:

#### Teaching & Learning

Program uses the QIP as a living and working document to implement new strategies and to increase resources that support their change efforts.

#### Family Engagement

1. Program uses family input and ideas to inform their quality improvement plan.
2. Educators encourage active family participation as they implement activities in their plan.

<sup>9</sup> Continuous Quality Improvement, <https://friendsnrc.org/evaluation/continuous-quality-improvement/>