

Indicators of High Quality Early Childhood Environments

Approaches to Learning:

- Large and small group instruction are offered, balanced, and based on child engagement
- Child choice is a large part of the day
- Activities are developmentally appropriate, hands on, and child directed
- Positive conversations between teacher-child and child-child are expanded upon

Social-Emotional Supports:

- Classroom rules, expectations and schedule are referred to when praising/reshaping behavior
- Self regulation strategies such as deep breathing and going for a walk are taught
- Social skills such as taking turns, sharing, cooperation, and respect are intentionally taught
- Adults are positive, engaged, and provide positive and descriptive feedback to children

Classroom Environment:

- Classroom schedule, rules and expectations are posted (with pictures)
- Environment is inviting and set up to promote independence for all children
- Materials in the classroom promote curiosity and allow for problem solving
- The classroom environment includes child sized furnishings and a variety of opportunities for play
- The space is sufficient for the number of children and allows for exploration and movement
- There is outdoor space that is safe and age appropriate

Curriculum, Screening, and Assessment:

- The program follows a developmentally appropriate curriculum based on the Early Learning Guidelines
- Staff in the program are trained on the curriculum and can explain the purpose of the units/lessons used
- There are opportunities within the curriculum for children to practice communication skills (listening, speaking, following directions, retelling, and writing)
- The program uses a screening tool such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire in order to identify each child's overall developmental level
- An assessment tool is developed for ongoing progress monitoring
- The program seeks out resources and supports when necessary (see pg. 2)

Inclusion:

- Staff are knowledgeable of children's backgrounds and are able to build relationships with every child
- The program is welcoming to all children and families
- Parents and children are invited to share about their culture and the home language is honored
- All children are supported within the classroom which may include individual supports and interventions

Staffing:

- Staff have experience in the field of early childhood and/or have an early childhood degree
- Staff provide a nurturing environment
- Staff are provided continuous professional development
- Staff-Child ratios follow state guidelines
- Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid
- Sanitary procedures such as hand washing and illness prevention are in place and reviewed

Family Involvement:

- Communication is ongoing and effective so that families can be active participants in their child's education
- Parents are aware of the school rules and expectations so that they can be reinforced at home
- There is a system in place for family feedback
- Parent education is provided (newsletters, handouts, websites, etc.)
- The program knows how to access community resources to support children and families
 - Norfolk Family Coalition <http://norfolkfamilycoalition.org/home/resources-3/>
 - Early Development Network-Norfolk (402) 371-7284
 - NENCAP Head Start/WIC (402) 371-8030

The resources used to create this tool are based on research and evidence about child development and practices that result in the best outcomes for young children:

Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines <https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-guidelines/>

Nebraska Step Up to Quality <https://www.education.ne.gov/stepuptoquality/>

Head Start Program Performance Standards

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

NE Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)

Nebraska Department of Education Rule 11

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R)

