
MATERIALS AND PRACTICES

MAP Assessment

Instructions for Evaluators

Program assessments will be unscheduled. Each assessment is expected to last no more than 2 1/2 hours and will include a combination of classroom assessments and a director interview. All classrooms in all early care and education programs will not be assessed. Rather, one approximately 30-minute assessment will be conducted in one randomly-selected classroom from each age grouping of children: infants (0-12 months); toddlers (13-36 months), preschool (3-5 year olds); and school-age (kindergarten and older). Programs that do not include children within a particular age group will not have an assessment for that age group. Programs with multiple classrooms of children within only one age group will have only one classroom assessment, regardless of the number of classrooms in the program.

Upon arrival at the center, the evaluator will introduce him/herself to the program director and explain the procedures for the quality rating assessment. The evaluator will then determine the number of operating classrooms for each age grouping of children and will record: Name of the program, program number, name of the person collecting the information, and date of the program assessment. Directors will be asked to remain on-site throughout the period of assessment, and to be available, if needed, during the last 5-10 minutes of each classroom assessment when the evaluator asks the teacher questions about the curriculum. In addition, while the classroom observations are being conducted, the director will be asked to gather materials necessary for the interview on the program's professional practices (Appendix A). The interview with the director will be conducted immediately following classroom observations, and should last approximately 30 minutes. The amount of time for each program assessment may vary by evaluator, by age groupings of children served, by the availability of the classroom teachers, the size of the center, and by characteristics of the director.

Selection of classrooms: To determine which classroom to observe, when multiple classrooms with the same age groupings are available, evaluators will use the following system:

- Choose the infant room whose name begins with a letter closest to the letter A or a number closest to the number one.
- Choose the toddler room whose name begins with a letter closest to the letter Z or a number closest to the number 10.
- Choose the preschool room whose name begins with a letter closest to the letter A or a number closest to the number one.
- Choose the school-age room whose name begins with a letter closest to the letter Z or a number closest to the number 10.

There should be no exceptions in the procedures for selection of classrooms to observe unless the evaluator notes an unavoidable circumstance requiring a classroom modification. The order of classroom observations within the center should follow a consistent order beginning with the youngest grouping of children, but can also be varied depending on classroom circumstances.

Classroom Assessments

Upon arrival in each classroom, introduce yourself to the lead teacher. Ask the teacher to pretend that you are not there while you try to stay out of the way and conduct your assessment of classroom materials and classroom practices for about 20 minutes. Explain that after you complete your observation, you will want to ask the teacher some questions about some of the things you were not able to see regarding the curriculum and lesson plans. Before you begin the observation, find out if there is a storage area for additional classroom materials.

Classroom Characteristics: Record the classroom name, the number of children enrolled, the number of children present, the number of teachers present, and the first names of the teachers present. For the numbers of teachers and children present, record the number present upon your arrival, but check these numbers half-way through your observation and modify accordingly in order to convey the approximate staff-child ratio during the majority of your observation. Do not “estimate” numbers of teachers or children present based on what might typically occur in a particular classroom.

Minimal Requirements: All of Wisconsin’s early care and education programs should meet minimal requirements for children’s basic (1) health, (2) safety, (3) supervision, and (4) care for children with special needs. On-site evaluators will assess each classroom environment, using the wording of each item on the score form and in the manual, aided by their experience in observation, to make a decision on each minimal requirement. No boxes should be skipped or left blank. Items that are scored “yes” reflect classrooms that are meeting Wisconsin’s minimal requirements for basic standards of care. Items that are marked “no” reflect classrooms that are NOT meeting Wisconsin’s minimal requirements for basic standards of care. Failure to meet any of these minimal requirements indicates a serious flaw in the quality of the classroom environment, or a need for basic training to improve teachers’ abilities to support children in the classroom. Due to limited time, evaluators will not ask teachers for clarification on these items. If all four minimal requirements are fully met, the classroom will earn one point on the quality rating scale. If a classroom fails to meet any of the four minimal requirements, the classroom will receive a score of “zero” for the entire classroom assessment.

Quality Indicators: Evaluators will use their best judgment based on classroom observations, review of the daily schedule and lesson plans, and discussion with the teacher to rate eight quality indicators in terms of the appropriateness of the classroom materials and the quality of program practices.

1. Teacher-child relationship
2. Books, literacy and writing
3. Block and dramatic play
4. Fine motor, math, and science
5. Music, movement, and art
6. Large motor
7. Child assessment
8. Program assessment

Materials. For each quality indicator, the evaluator must simultaneously assess the number of age-appropriate materials accessible to the children, the quality of the space available in which to use those materials, and the adequacy of the amount of time that the materials are accessible to children. The evaluator must also determine whether there is a wide selection of developmentally-appropriate materials that range in complexity to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. The goal is to set a high, but realistic standard for each classroom.

- Are activity areas well-organized, easily accessible, and conveniently equipped with adequate space for independent use by all children?
- Are there enough materials to meet the criteria for each quality indicator and appropriate materials within each category for each age group of children?

Practices. The evaluator must observe the classroom, review the lesson plans, talk with the teacher and then balance these different sources of information in order to assess whether there is evidence of alignment between classroom materials and high quality daily activities.

- Are classroom materials routinely rotated in a planful way so children have access to a variety of different materials, and an approach to learning that explicitly demonstrates the link between specific activities, routines and the domains of children's learning?
- Are lesson plans and the daily schedule complete and consistent with daily practices?
- Are teachers actively engaged with children and committed to scaffolding children's play and learning through providing a range of enriching experiences?
- When asked open-ended questions, for example, "Can you tell me a little bit about dramatic play?" is the teacher able to articulate classroom routines? Is emphasis placed on nurturing children's discovery, helping children develop problem-solving strategies, and providing opportunities for children to link new experiences with past learning?

Score the classroom based on your observations of children's and teachers' use of materials and activities. Look at the daily schedule to try to get a sense of how activities are distributed across the day and look at the weekly lesson plan to see how complex and varied the activities are across the week. If there is a storage area, look through and assess the additional materials available. It should be possible to determine this without carefully counting the items. Note that most quality indicators include a list of components. The evaluator must place a check mark by each component that is present and supports children's early learning. In order to receive a "yes" for a quality indicator, all components within that indicator must be fully met.

After the observation: Thank the teacher for allowing you to observe, and ask if it is a good time for you to ask a few questions about the classroom materials and activities. If there is only one teacher, it may be necessary to ask the director to step in to watch the children while you talk with the teacher. Before leaving the center, the evaluator should thank the director for his/her participation. It is important to fully complete the score forms within one hour of leaving the center, while your memory is fresh. Program directors will not be given a copy of the completed evaluation. Information collected from observations should be considered confidential and should not be discussed at any time.

Minimal Requirements

a. Health

Assess the classroom environment in terms of basic cleanliness. Determine if teachers and children try to cut down on the spread of germs. Assure that a system is in place for maintaining a healthy environment. Be alert to all hand washing, diaper changing, toileting, table washing, wiping of noses, clean-up of spills, or other health practices.

- Does the classroom itself and the materials in the classroom (floors, tables, toys) appear clean?
- Are facilities and supplies accessible for maintaining cleanliness (soap, toilet paper, toweling, tissues; sinks at an appropriate level and appropriate location)?
- Do teachers and children generally cut down on the spread of germs (e.g. washing their hands appropriately with soap and running water after diapering and toileting)?

b. Safety

Note if any equipment or materials are in poor repair or if any hazardous conditions are evident (e.g. wobbly furniture, heavy objects, sliding rugs, open stairways, accessible poisonous materials). Observe to make sure that teachers are attentive to safety issues.

- Can you confirm that there is no broken furniture with sharp edges, no loose electrical cords or other obvious hazards that may be easily accessible to children?
- Are all materials labeled “keep out of reach of children” kept, when not in immediate use, in a locked cupboard? Bleach spray can be kept out of reach but all medication, lotions, disinfectants, and cleaning materials need to be stored in locked cabinets.
- Is a system in place for teaching children best safety practices (e.g. how to be safe in traffic, how to respond in a fire emergency, what a safe touch is, why we have rules for how high a block structure can be built, how to ask for help)?

c. Supervision

Consider the design of the classroom, teachers’ ability to supervise all areas, teachers’ typical supervision practices, and children’s general behavior style. Allow for the fact that some programs may enroll children who take longer to learn classroom rules. Credit programs for providing enough supervision to protect all children at all times.

- Is the ratio of the number of children to the number of teachers always consistent with licensing requirements? Are teachers careful to never leave children unsupervised, even temporarily?
- Is an adult always aware when a child leaves the classroom (e.g. to go to their cubbies or down the hall to the bathroom)?

d. Children with special needs

Assess the classroom in terms of accessibility to facilities and supplies for children with special needs. If there are no children with identified special needs, score “yes” on this standard.

- Do children with special needs enjoy equal access to all goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations (e.g. wheelchair ramps, bathroom assistance, visual aides)?
- Are materials accessible to individuals with different learning styles (e.g. books on tape for children who have a visual impairment, closed caption video for children with hearing loss, schedules posted visually for children who have difficulties with transitions)?
- Are children with special needs included in age-appropriate activities with children with typical development in natural proportions? (Natural proportions means that the student with disabilities participates in activities and classes in numbers that reflect the natural proportions of individuals with disabilities within the community at large).
- Are adaptations made, as necessary, to successfully include each child's special needs for basic care, communication, learning, play, emotional, and social activities?
- Does observation, examination of the lesson plans, and discussion indicate that teachers collaborate with families of children with special needs and other professionals (doctors, therapists, educators) to structure activities and design competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promote safety, health, development, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in the child care setting?

Classroom Quality Indicators

For each quality indicator, assess the appropriateness of: (a) classroom materials, and (b) classroom practices. All criteria must be fully met in order for the classroom to be scored “yes” for each quality indicator.

1a. Teacher-Child Relationship

Assessing the “materials” criterion for this quality indicator requires listening to the amount of language, determining whether children’s basic social-emotional needs are being met, and assuring a positive (non-punitive) tone to classroom interactions.

Language. Communication (verbal and nonverbal) is fundamental for building relationships. Teachers should have frequent one-on-one conversations with children and should attempt to establish relationships with all children.

Social-emotional. At least one classroom teacher should be attentive to the children, actively engaged at children’s level, quick to smile, and able to show physical affection, not busy preparing for the next activity.

Tone. Expectations for classroom behavior should be clear. Classrooms should be set up to avoid conflict and promote age-appropriate interaction. Teachers should state limits clearly and consistently, give attention to positive behavior, and redirect children from unacceptable behavior. Discipline should be non-punitive, and there should be an absence of threatening, yelling, unnecessarily prohibiting activities, physically controlling behavior, or excessive time-outs.

1b. Teacher-Child Practices

Listen carefully and observe to see if teachers are playing an active role in supporting children’s language comprehension and productive language development, social and emotional competence, and abilities to express their feelings and solve their problems.

Language

- Are teachers listening attentively to children, responding to children’s communication, teaching language through careful modeling, expanding on children’s language, repeating children’s words, labeling, describing children’s actions, and intentionally varying their vocabulary?
- Are teachers introducing new concepts to extend children’s understanding, asking open-ended questions to encourage children to give more complex answers, and encouraging children to listen to one another?
- If you are in a bi-lingual classroom, is a bi-lingual teacher enhancing the language development of these children?

Social-emotional

- Do teachers promote social and emotional competence by providing opportunities for children to learn new skills (share, take turns, take the perspective of others)?
- Do teachers serve as models for effective relationship-building skills in their relationships with co-workers, parents, and children?

- Do teachers interact positively with children individually and as a group, show interest and take part in children's activities, and respond sensitively to children with encouragement, praise and comfort?

Tone

- Do teachers provide opportunities and effective feedback as children practice alternative strategies for expressing their feelings and controlling their impulses?
- Do teachers help children express their feelings in words, understand other children's perspectives, and try to think of solutions to their own conflicts? Do teachers teach conflict resolution to children through books and group discussion?

2a. Books, Literacy and Writing Materials

At least one clearly defined, well-organized book area should be easily accessible, always open, comfortable (carpet, rugs, soft pillows, chair), with enough space for children, and the designated number of books and other literacy materials for the age level of children present: Four book categories include: board/plastic/wooden/activity books; rhyme and repetition books (nursery rhymes, Dr. Seuss); multicultural/bilingual books (ethnic diversity, books in Spanish); and concept books (color, number, alphabet, math, science). Literacy and writing materials should be in good condition, developmentally-appropriate, varied, and ranging in difficulty. Infant classrooms are exempt from literacy games/activities and writing materials/activities.

Books: Infants have easy access every day to at least 5 books including one board book, one plastic/cloth or wooden book, one activity book, and one story book. Toddlers have access to at least 10 books, including one from each of four basic categories. Preschool and school-age children have access to at least 20 books, including at least 3 books from the rhyme/repetition, multicultural/bi-lingual, and concept book categories. A similar number of books is available in storage for each age group of children.

Literacy: Toddlers, preschool, and school-age children have daily access to at least three literacy games/activities (picture sequencing, memory matching, alphabet bingo, alphabet puzzles, flashcards, classifying/conceptual thinking).

Writing: Developmentally-appropriate writing materials should be accessible daily to toddlers, preschool, and school-age children in a defined, well-organized area (which may or may not be separated from the art area) including: (a) child writing tools (fat and skinny, lead and colored pencils, markers, different types, shapes, sizes of lined/unlined paper), (b) writing materials (templates, tracing cards, tracing paper, worksheets, alphabet/picture stamps/stamp pads, letter/word cards, name tracing, laminated sheets to write on, mazes, activity books, Pictionary) (c) boards of various types where children can write stories with letters, words, or pictures (magnetic, felt, wipe board, chalk board), and (d) props in the dramatic play, block or other area (clipboards, menu pads, envelopes, notepads, typewriter, time sheets, library cards). Toddlers need access to 5; preschool and school-age children need access to 15 writing materials in the classroom plus at least 5 additional materials in storage.

2b. Books, Literacy and Writing Practices

Observation, lesson plans, the daily schedule, and teacher discussion should indicate whether teachers intentionally guide children's appreciation of books as well as their literacy and writing competencies.

- Are all children exposed to at least 15 minutes of reading per day?
- Do teachers systematically rotate books and introduce varied literacy and writing materials in an effort to build children's developmental skills and understanding?
- Do teachers provide a variety of pre-literacy experiences during large group, small group, and free play (e.g. nursery rhymes, listening center with recorded stories, teaching a letter/sound each week)?
- Do teachers use storytelling materials (big books and chart paper for writing group stories, flannel board, finger puppets, and other story props) and encourage writing through group stories?
- Do teachers engage toddlers, preschool, and school-age children in educational interactions designed to support children's literacy skills (visits to the library, guest readers, making homemade class books, children's journals, backpack books that go back and forth to children's homes)?
- Do teachers regularly provide materials, activities, and expanded opportunities that allow children to express their feelings and record their ideas in writing?
- Do toddler, preschool, and school-age classrooms have one or more examples of teacher dictation where teachers help children connect oral and written language (e.g. written labels on the class mural)?

3a. Block and Dramatic Play Materials

Recognizing that children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment (Guiding Principle #7 of Wisconsin's Model Early Learning Standards), this indicator assesses two components of children's play: Blocks (defined as non-interlocking geometrically-shaped pieces of wood, plastic, foam, or cardboard) and dramatic play. Assess the block and dramatic play spaces in terms of size, organization, and the number and quality of different materials accessible to meet the creative, social, and emotional needs of children.

Blocks

- Do infants have at least 5 blocks, toddlers at least 20 blocks, and preschool and school-age children at least two sets of 20 blocks of varying shapes and sizes?
- Is there a clearly designated area of the toddler, preschool, and school-age classroom with enough blocks and accessories for children to build without interruption, a smooth surface to build on, and plenty of space with no obvious pathways going through the building area?
- Is there an assortment of block accessories (which may or may not be stored in the block area)? Infant accessories include at least one transportation toy and one animal or people figure (not a stuffed animal). Toddler accessories include at least 3 transportation toys and at least 3 animal/people figures. Preschool and school-age accessories include at least 10 transportation toys, 10 animal figures, and 10 people figures.

Dramatic play

- Are developmentally-appropriate play materials accessible to infants (one mirror, 5 stuffed animals); toddlers (5 stuffed animals, one puppet, one doll, one telephone, some kitchen/housekeeping materials (pots, pans, dishes, utensils, play food), and some ethnic diversity in play materials (food, clothing, or dolls); preschool and school-age children (each of the toddler materials as well as: play furniture (child-sized appliances, doll furniture, work-bench), dress-up clothes/accessories

(clothing, hats, purses), and at least 2 prop boxes (post office, doctor, fire station) in storage.

3b. Block and Dramatic Play Practices

- Can several children play comfortably with the block and dramatic play materials at the same time? Are the materials interesting and generally available for children's use? Do teachers selectively vary the block and dramatic play materials from a selection of additional materials in storage?
- Do teachers seem to be aware of the developmental value of blocks and dramatic play? Do they encourage children to use materials in different ways? Do they sometimes join children in play activities?
- Do dramatic play themes for preschool and school-age children vary at least monthly and are they changed in some way at least weekly?
- Are planned activities designed to enrich preschoolers' thematic play? Do teachers extend learning beyond the classroom through guests, fieldtrips, books, and other pretend play activities?

4a. Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning Materials

Fine motor. These learning materials are designed to strengthen children's problem-solving skills, develop creative construction skills, and enhance eye-hand coordination. They need to be accessible daily, complete, organized, and varying in levels of complexity. Categories include: (1) puzzles (including shape sorters), (2) interlocking blocks or fit-together toys (e.g. duplos, legos, star builders, snap-beads, magna tiles, crystal climbers, bristle blocks, Lincoln logs, links, stacking/nesting toys), and (3) manipulatives (e.g. bead maze, push/pull toys, lacing/sewing cards, dressing frames, pegboards, stringing beads, design boards, magnetic mazes, hammering sets, and tweezer/pincer grasp activities, or other toys that require manipulation and eye-hand coordination but are not used for building and creative construction).

- Non-mobile and mobile infants need easy access to 10 different fine motor items, including rattles/squeeze toys, teethingers, fit-together toys (e.g. a bowl in which the infant could put balls in and out), stacking/nesting toys, and pop-up/activity toys (such as busy boxes). Objects that fall outside of these categories (e.g. cooking pan) are not counted.
- Toddlers need at least 10 fine motor items including one item from each of the three fine motor categories outlined above. Preschool and school-age children need at least 10 puzzles as well as an assortment of materials (at least 3) from each of the other two fine motor categories. Materials are counted as "bins," so multiple similar items, not stored in a bin, would still count as a single item.

Math. Math materials allow toddler, preschool, and school-age children to practice: (1) counting or sorting collections of objects (e.g. a bin of 100 colored cubes or colored teddy bears), (2) learning about geometry, including size, shape, and pattern (tangrams, mosaic sets, parquetry, plastic, wooden, and foam shapes and puzzles), (3) measuring (tools for balance, tape measure, ruler, scale, unifix cubes, measuring cups, clock, timer), (4) reading math concepts (books of numbers, shapes), and (5) recognizing number games/activities (dice, counting numbers, dominoes, flash cards, unit cubes, number puzzles, calculator). Some math concepts should also be displayed in each preschool classroom (e.g. posters, clock, calendar, number rugs)?

- Toddlers need daily access to at least five math materials.

- Preschool and school-age children need daily access to at least 10 math materials in the classroom, with at least 3 items from each category above, plus at least 5 additional materials in storage.

Nature/science. Nature/science materials allow toddler, preschool, and school-age children to practice with: (1) collections of natural objects (pine cones, sea shells, rocks), (2) living things (plants, animals), (3) tools for conducting science (magnets, magnifying glasses, color paddles, binoculars), (4) nature/science books, and (5) nature/science games/activities (nature matching cards, dinosaur classification).

- Toddlers need access to at least five nature/science materials.
- Preschool and school-age children need access to at least 10 nature/science materials in the classroom, with at least 3 items from each category accessible daily, plus at least 5 additional materials in storage. In addition, sensory-motor activities are needed daily in all toddler and preschool classrooms.

4b. Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning Practices

Observation, examination of lesson plans, and discussion with the teacher indicate that fine motor, math, and science activities are essential components of the curriculum.

Fine motor

- Are fine motor learning materials selectively rotated into the classroom from additional materials in storage and used to structure children's experiences and enhance their development?
- Are teachers aware of the fine motor developmental needs of these children and able to skillfully stimulate appropriate activities for all children? Do teachers engage in educational interaction designed to challenge and enhance children's fine motor skills? This might include spreading different fine motor materials over a small table and inviting children to work with them individually or as part of other planned small group activities.

Math (toddler, preschool, and school-age children only)

- Is math included in the daily curriculum (e.g. teacher places a number next to snack crackers indicating the number of crackers each child is permitted to take; children are routinely counted before going outside, etc.)?
- Does teacher-guided math occur in large group or small group activities at least weekly?
- Is there evidence in the classroom that a more extensive math activity (e.g. graphing, measurement charts, sorted items, timelines) took place recently?

Nature/science (toddler, preschool, and school-age children only)

- Is science included in the daily curriculum (e.g. watering plants, feeding animals, recording behavior).
- Do teacher-guided nature and science activities occur in large group or small groups at least weekly (using tools to conduct simple "experiments," forming explanations based on trial and error, communicating and interpreting results, observation, gathering information, and making predictions) on various topics such as animals, weather, rocks, oceans, dinosaurs, gardens, cooking, rain forest, chemistry, the senses, human body, and fun science topics?

- Is there evidence in the classroom that a nature/science activity (e.g. seedling plants growing) took place recently? Note that assessing the weather as part of the daily calendar time would meet part of this criterion, but more extensive weekly and bi-weekly activities would also be required to get credit on this quality indicator.

5a. Music, Movement, and Art Materials

The arts are an essential component of children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. When exposed to a rich environment of music, movement, and art materials, children can practice a wide variety of skills and learn to freely express their thoughts and emotions. Infant rooms are exempted from art activities.

Music and movement. This item assesses the number of different types of music and movement materials accessible to children.

- Are children regularly exposed to a variety of different types of music during free play and group time? There should be at least 10 tapes/CDs within at least 3 different genre (jazz, classical, bluegrass, barbershop, cultural, ragtime, marching band, show tunes, country, reggae, etc.) and a teacher-operated (working) tape/CD player for daily listening in each classroom for children of all ages?
- Are there enough musical instruments (drums, rhythm sticks, xylophone, bells, shakers, triangles, tambourine – or toys that make music for infants), available either in the classroom or in storage, as well as assorted dance props (scarves, ribbons) for all children to be able to make music and engage in creative movement activities at least 3 times per week?

Art. This item requires counting the number of different types of artistic materials accessible for children to use on a daily or weekly basis from each of five art categories: drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils, chalk, craypas, glitter pens), painting (easel, do-a-dot, water color, tempera paint, assorted brushes, sponges), collage (yarn, felt, sticky tape, stickers, buttons, assorted paper, glitter, feathers, eyes, foam, sequins), construction (pipe cleaners, clay, play dough, wood, popsicle sticks), and art tools (scissors, stencils, stamps, stamp pad, punchers, glue).

- Toddler classrooms need daily access to art and must have at least 10 art materials in storage, including at least one item per category.
- Preschool and school-age children need at least 15 art materials to be freely accessible throughout the day, with a similar number of materials in storage, including at least 3 art materials per category. A set of 8 markers count as one item; papers of different shapes, sizes, and textures could count as multiple items.

5b. Music, Movement, and Art Practices

A rich variety of music, movement, and art experiences offered daily, weekly, and monthly encourages children's cognitive development and freedom of expression.

- Do children have opportunities several times each day to listen to different types of music? Do teachers sing during transitions and routines? Do teachers provide frequent opportunities for movement and dance experiences?
- Do planned activities for toddler, preschool, and school-age children occur at least twice a month that encourage creativity, develop skills and music concepts (rhythm, pitch, fast and slow), and extend children's understanding and appreciation of music (going to/giving performances, making musical instruments, having musical guests)?

- When looking at the usage of art materials and the quality of art displayed on the walls, does it appear that children typically experience free expression of art? Is freedom of expression occur every day as evidenced by primarily individualized art work on display at child's eye level, and daily open access to art materials?
- Are there planned teacher-guided art activities, at least twice a month, that encourage creativity, develop skills, and extend children's understanding of art (artistic guests, 3-D creations, field trips, performances, art appreciation)?

6a. Large Motor Materials

This quality indicator assesses the adequacy of children's access to age-appropriate large motor materials and experiences (including the safety, quality, and accessibility). Examine the large motor space, materials, and equipment in the classroom and in the outdoor play yard. Assess the indoor large motor play area only if it is the primary area used each day by a particular group of children. Large motor materials in storage are not counted.

- Infants need daily access to 5 different pieces of stationary large motor equipment; toddlers, preschool, and school-age children need daily access to enough large motor materials for all of the children present.
- Materials for toddler, preschool, and school-age children include: stationary (slides, climbers, tunnels, swings, stairs, and balance beam), portable (balls, bean bags, jump ropes, parachute), and ride-on toys (bikes/tricycles, wagons, scooters, rockers). All children need a daily balance of large motor indoor and outdoor play.
- The layout for large motor play equipment must be well-organized from a safety stand point, and materials must be in good condition, with enough space for children to play.

6b. Large Motor Practices

- Do children experience a daily balance of large motor indoor/outdoor play?
- Do large motor materials, equipment, and activities provide significant variation and stimulate a variety of large motor skills (e.g. balance, climbing, strength, endurance, and agility)?

7a. Child Assessment Materials

In order to score programs on the child assessment quality indicator it is necessary to see samples of child assessment tools used, checklists, observational records taken by staff, portfolios, as well as documentation of assessment results used in individualized curriculum planning. Ask the teacher to provide you with a sample of a recent child portfolio and progress notes. These items should be reliable and valid and the date should be within the past 6 months. Based on the children's portfolios and the results of child assessments, the teacher should be able to articulate the ways in which the assessment results are being used to plan long-range curriculum planning and program evaluation for individual children or for the whole group of children.

7b. Child-Teacher-Family Practices

Children have the opportunity to be strengthened by programs in which teachers and families communicate positively and effectively with each other. In these programs, teachers and parents can work together to strengthen children's development. In addition to looking at the classroom environment in order to determine how welcoming it is, assess whether teachers appear skilled at engaging in informal conversations

with families, sensitive to family diversity, able to provide family support, and willing to talk with families about difficult issues. Can they give examples of how they develop relationships with families? Does the teacher believe that teacher-parent interactions are very important? Does the program provide trainings for teachers on how to interact with families?

- Does there appear to be ongoing daily communication with families that provides information about children's play and learning and encourages family involvement and support? For example, is there a teacher bio-board? Do parents sign in and record information about the child? Do daily notes go home? Is there an interesting family resource board that parents read? Do you see any evidence (including from parent-teacher interaction, if available) that teachers maintain positive daily communication with families?
- Do teachers attempt to bring families into the classroom to observe, participate, share their talents, go on field trips, or participate in any other way? Are parents encouraged to contribute to the classroom curriculum in any way?
- Are parents kept informed about the curriculum and other classroom activities on a regular basis, for example, through a newsletter? Are teachers supportive of parents and able to provide resources to families as needed (e.g. on biting)?
- Do most parents attend family-teacher conferences twice each year?

8a. Program Assessment Materials

Determine whether classroom or program assessments are conducted annually. The type of assessment used may include ECERS, NAEYC, or any other independently-designed assessment that involves systematic observation of classroom or program quality. It does not matter if the assessments are conducted from within or outside of the program.

- Ask to see evidence of completed assessments. If the materials and the methods for collecting the assessment appear consistent and reliable, credit this item.

8b. Program Assessment Practices

Find out how results of program assessments are shared with teachers, used to estimate progress toward established standards, and used for program improvement.

Professional Practices

The evaluator will conduct a brief examination of written policies, procedures, and checklists related to staff practices, business practices, and family practices in order to assess whether there is evidence of an objective system in place with clearly defined processes of accountability and transparency, involving multiple individuals, applied equitably, and reviewed annually. The evaluator will base scoring decisions as to whether the program demonstrates strong and systematic efforts to meet high quality program standards on direct observations, written materials, and an approximately 30-minute interview with the program director following classroom assessments. A list of materials to be gathered prior to the interview should be given to the program director upon arrival at the center (see Appendix A).

1. Staff Practices

High quality early care and education programs recruit and maintain a staff of qualified teachers by providing core staff benefits, instituting beneficial staff management practices, conducting meaningful staff evaluations, and encouraging staff development and retention through strong education and training policies. Teachers in these programs share a well-defined program philosophy that encourages staff professional commitment. Review the employee handbook (with sections marked for provision of health insurance), documentation on orientation, evaluation, a copy of a salary scale, if available, and other professional practice procedures for teaching staff in order to assess program performance in these areas. When assessing each program, the term “teacher” refers to all teachers and assistant teachers who are employed by the program either full-time or part-time.

- a. **Staff Benefits:** Programs may offer their teachers a variety of different benefits, and determination of the level of program contribution to each teacher may be difficult to gauge due to variation as to who is covered, when coverage begins, and the dollar amount or percentage of coverage. In addition, benefits may be offered but teachers may not take advantage of them. Assessment of staff benefits for the quality rating system will be limited to two measures and will be based on written confirmation that the policy is in place as well as some verification that the policy is practiced.
 - Health insurance. The program pays at least 50% of an individual premium for a single health insurance policy for all teachers and assistant teachers (full- and part-time) who wish to take advantage of this opportunity. If program records indicate that such a benefit is available, even though no teachers take advantage of it, the program should still receive credit on this item. Because programs sometimes contribute funds for staff health insurance without having a specific policy, conversion of dollar amounts will be necessary in order to approximate percentages.
 - Published salary scale. A written scale clearly differentiates wages according to teachers’ education, training, and years of experience as well as their teaching role in the program. In addition to having a written policy, there needs to be some attempt to assure that the policy is being implemented with current and newly-hired staff.
- b. **Staff Management:** Programs may put a variety of different practices in place that encourage their more qualified, tenured teachers to share their ideas and support new teachers personally and professionally, formally and informally. Teachers who have

meaningful involvement in decision-making and generally feel respect and appreciation for the work that they do may work together to articulate the program philosophy, identify program goals, or develop committees to accomplish set goals. Assessment of staff management for the quality rating system will be limited to two measures including evaluation of mentorship and shared leadership practices.

- Mentors or coaches. Teachers who have at least 3 years of experience in the program (not the program director) are assigned to work individually with new teachers. Mentors, coaches, or mentoring teams provide positive peer feedback and strengthen staff commitment. Programs with a high rate of staff turnover may not have teacher-leaders in place who are able to fulfill the mentoring role. Programs who have qualified teachers may not always have instituted mentoring practices.
- Shared leadership. This program's system of participatory management is effective because all teachers share a sense of responsibility for operation and success of the program. Efforts are made to strengthen relationships among teachers, to encourage team decision-making and to support each teacher's needs. Teachers may adopt a variety of different non-teaching roles including taking responsibility for training others, organizing the program's library, recognizing teachers' birthdays or special accomplishments, or engaging in clear systems of shared leadership.

c. Staff Evaluation: Programs should have a systematic plan in place for staff hiring, staff orientation, monitoring and evaluation of staff performance and professional development. To determine if an appropriate system is in place, assess the thoroughness of a sample staff performance review, if available, other written documentation, and the program director's answers to your open-ended question: "Can you tell me about staff evaluation in your program?" Assessment of staff evaluation for the quality rating system includes documentation of high quality annual performance reviews and annual discussion of each teacher's professional development plan.

- Annual observation-based performance reviews. Performance reviews for all teachers and assistant teachers (full-time and part-time) are based on formal observations by a supervisor (program director, coordinator, or some other qualified supervisor) and are conducted at least annually.
- Professional development plans. Annual performance reviews provide an opportunity for oral and written feedback, including detailed discussion of each teacher's strengths as well as areas needing improvement, and a review of each teacher's individual professional development plan.

d. Staff Development and Retention: Programs promote staff development and retention by putting specific policies in place that encourage and reward teacher's efforts to strengthen their training and educational qualifications. The following measures are used to assess program's efforts to strengthen staff development and retention for the quality rating system.

- Policy rewards credit-based education. A written policy ensures that teachers who complete credit-based education receive increased wages. If at least one teacher is currently on a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship, then the program would automatically get credit for this item.

Number of teachers currently on T.E.A.C.H. scholarships: _____

- Budget item supports staff training. Program includes a line item in the budget dedicated to staff education and training. The amount of financial support will depend on the size of the program but should reflect a consistent effort to provide meaningful support annually for some teachers to get additional training.

2. Business Practices

High quality early care and education programs include policies and procedures that detail an organized system of fiscal management, program management, and internal communication, with efforts at quality improvement led by a competent and committed leader. Ask the director to show you a copy of the program's policies and procedures for fiscal management (sample of an annual budget, quarterly spreadsheets), program management (maintenance and risk procedures), samples of internal staff communication (memos, message book), and a sample of minutes from a staff meeting. Check to see if these materials are easily accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date. The program director is the person identified by state licensing as director of the program. It is this individual's educational qualifications that are used in calculating director points and this same individual's leadership characteristics that are used to assess the quality of business practices for the quality rating system.

- e. Fiscal Management:** Programs with sound fiscal management have transparent policies and procedures in place that ensure consistent daily, quarterly, and annual management of operating funds and demonstrate fiscal responsibility for long-term program development and improvement.
- Monthly/quarterly tracking. There is an adequate system in place for monthly/quarterly tracking of all income and expenditures.
 - Annual budget. There is an annual budget available that is used routinely in administrative planning throughout the year.
- f. Program Management:** State licensing requirements assure that basic procedures are in place for facility and risk management. High quality programs exceed basic requirements, have procedures in place for reacting to new risks as they develop, and incorporate new procedures into long-range plans for program improvement.
- Facilities and Risk Management. There is a system in place for identifying program needs for facility improvement and risk management (i.e. emergency procedures, record of emergency drills, annual training plan, system for ongoing maintenance of facilities and risk management).
 - Space to meet staff needs. The space available for meeting the personal needs of teachers is adequate. The space need not be elaborate, but each program should have an adult restroom, storage for teachers' personal belongings, and adult-sized furniture in an area outside of the classroom that can be used as a staff lounge.
- g. Internal Communication:** Strong systems of internal staff communication are vital to ensure that all teachers, administrators, and families are fully informed of every policy and procedure affecting the operation of the center. Communications are most effective when they are two-way. Measures of daily staff communication and the quality of ongoing staff meetings are used to assess program's efforts at internal communication for the quality rating system.
- Staff communication. All relevant information is communicated effectively within the center. Multiple pieces of observable evidence including written materials and director responses confirm strong staff communication practices. Assessment of various combinations of communication methods (e.g. up-to-date staff bulletin board, message board, in-house newsletter, internal memos, email or voicemail practices, successful policies for conflict resolution), should confirm that communication procedures among staff are strong in this program.

- Staff meetings. All teachers attend at least monthly meetings (as a center or within teams). All teachers and assistant teachers are able to provide input into the agenda, and written meeting minutes with action steps are available for teachers who wish to see them. Minutes need not be extensive, or typed, but they need to provide a written record of the group discussion.

h. Director Leadership: Programs with competent and committed leadership tend to have program directors who are frequently on-site, who invest significant amounts of time in administering the program, and who show commitment to early care and education outside of the center by participating in professional organizations.

- Director on-site. The program director is on-site at least 30 hours per week (pro-rated for part-day programs). In addition, the director spends at least 50% of his/her on-site time conducting administrative responsibilities for the program. Although program size can be a significant factor in assessing director accessibility, with larger programs including other administrative staff and smaller programs employing teacher-directors, the focus should be on confirming that the director is highly accessible to staff and spends a good portion of time administering the program.
- Wisconsin Child Care Administrator's Association Member. Directors demonstrate leadership by belonging to and participating in professional organizations. Although there are a variety of different professional organizations that directors could belong to, communication across the state can be strengthened if all directors belong to at least one designated organization. For purposes of the statewide quality rating system, membership in the Child Care Administrator's Association is required.

3. Family Practices

High quality early care and education programs have a plan in place for making families feel welcome, monitoring ongoing family participation and satisfaction, strengthening family-teacher communication, and assuring that available resources and services are meeting the needs of all families. Examine a sampling of policies and procedures related to families in the center. Look for a welcoming environment as well as comprehensive family-friendly materials accessible on site that include a parent handbook, a fiscal agreement or written policies on parent responsibilities for payments and collection of delinquent tuition and fees.

i. Welcoming Environment: Recognizing that families are the customers, assess the program from the perspective of new and continuing families. As you enter the center, look around for obvious efforts to communicate with families. Are strong orientation procedures in place for new families? Are there comfortable spaces, observation windows, a bulletin board with resources for families, a family newsletter, photographs of family members who have contributed in some way to the center, appreciation bulletin boards, or other messages that convey a sense of welcome to families in the program?

- Orientation of new families. An appropriate system is in place for orientation of new families including a center tour and check-in after enrollment. New families should be kept up-to-date and should receive accurate information on program operations.
- Family resource area. There a designated comfortable program space, sometimes referred to as a "family resource area" in the program that encourages families to spend time informally conversing with other families or looking at books or other resource materials. This area is equipped with adult furniture (even if it is not comfortable) and some pamphlets/brochures as well as other family-friendly resources for families (e.g. family resources bulletin board, suggestion box, program newsletter, books on child development).

- j. Family-Teacher Communication:** Programs with strong systems of family-teacher communication establish practices that encourage teachers to establish ongoing daily and weekly systems of friendly, informative conversations with families as well as more structured opportunities to talk directly with families about how best to work cooperatively to optimize their children's activities both in the program and at home.
- Daily/weekly communication practices. The program encourages strong daily and weekly communication between teachers and families, supports teacher training to improve their communication skills, and provides time and resources for teachers to develop rapport with families.
 - Family-teacher conferences. The program makes a strong effort to ensure that teachers in all classrooms conduct family-teacher conferences twice each year with all or almost all families. Scheduled conferences may take place at the program or could take the form of a home visit.
- k. Family Participation:** Programs that truly welcome family participation in the program find ways to bring families into the center, recruits families as volunteers, makes use of family members' talents, and requests input on program operations from families at a variety of different levels. After talking with the director, indicate if there is a system in place for maintaining ongoing participation of families and encouraging family input at different levels of program operation.
- Family social/educational events. Ongoing family participation is meaningfully encouraged by offering at least two family meetings or social events each year. These "meetings" may take many forms including semi-structured family fun nights, breakfast meetings, holiday parties, or educational events, or they may include a variety of less formal invitations designed to bring families to the center to share their talents or cooperate toward a program goal. The goal is to determine whether effective practices are routinely used to encourage family participation at the center.
 - Family input into decision-making. Different programs seek direct input from families in a variety of different ways. For purposes of the quality rating system, programs can receive credit for either (a) having family members serve on a parent advisory board or other consultative body that provides oversight and planning to the program, OR (b) conducting an annual family survey and using the results of the survey to guide future program practices.
- l. Links with Community Services:** Programs can meet the needs of all families served by establishing links with community services and by developing collaborative relationships with other service providers in the community in order to increase family awareness, provide enriching opportunities, or increase the likelihood that families' needs are being met. Families' needs may vary depending on the socio-economic status of the clients served, but efforts should be made by all programs to inform families of community opportunities and connect families with needed services. In addition, in order to assure that families' and children's health needs are addressed, each program will need to be able to document a link with a Child Care Health Consultant.
- Links with community services. Program has knowledge of community opportunities and has established links with community service providers. Program provides services to meet the needs of families in the center, whatever those needs might be (e.g. lending library, parenting classes, computer lab, food/clothing donations, transportation, notices of community events, library story hour).

- Health Consultant. The program has established a link with a child care health consultant either within or outside of the program. This person has been available to provide health training, health materials, and other services to improve health practices within the program. Quarterly visits are scheduled with the child care health consultant. For a description of consultant activities, see ...

APPENDIX A

ITEMS TO BE GATHERED FOR ASSESSMENT

Classroom Assessments

Child and program assessments

- Samples of child assessment tools used, observational records taken by staff, documentation of assessment results used in curriculum planning
- Sample of an annual assessment used on the program such as ECERS, NAEYC tools, etc.

Professional Practices

A. Internal Communication

- Samples of staff communication (internal memos, message book, etc.)
- Sample orientation for new staff
- Sample staff meeting agenda

B. Staff Evaluation

- Sample staff performance review

C. Professional Development

- Number of teachers on TEACH scholarships

D. Staff benefits

- Sample salary scale
- Employee Handbook listing benefits

E. Facilities and risk management

- Teacher CPR documentation

F. Fiscal Management

- Sample of an annual budget
- Monthly or quarterly tracking of income and expenditures

G. Family Involvement

- Parent Handbook, newsletter sample, annual survey done by families
- Sample resources for families