



Quality Standards

**For the San Francisco
Early Learning For All Network**

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 five quality standards for early childhood programs that assure families they are making a good choice when they enroll their children in any Early Learning For All child development program. The standards also help programs understand how to qualify to join our network and, once they do, how to implement Programmatic Assurance Requirements and continuous quality improvement. 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 are based on early childhood development and education research as well as input from national and state experts, families, and early 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 work toward meeting all five (5) standards.

Quality Standards:

- Family Partnership
- Safe and Engaging Environments
- Engaged Teachers and Effective Interactions
- Learning Opportunities
- Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous quality improvement reflects a process that ensures programs are systematic and intentional about improving practices, and increasing positive outcomes for children and families¹. Child care programs in the Early Learning For All network are supported 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. The perspective of educators and families is reflected in the QIP. 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.



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.²

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.³
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:

Teaching & Learning

1. Program encourages families 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.

Family Engagement

1. Program values each family's unique expertise about their child(ren) and builds a goal-oriented relationship with a family based on their identified needs and interests.
2. Program offers opportunities for family members to volunteer in the classroom and provides opportunities for families to connect with each other.
3. Program connects families with community resources that offer support for their family well-being and strength.⁴



Quality Standard

Safe and Engaging Environments

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.⁵

Connection to Child's Learning & Development⁶



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*
3. Program maintains facility/home as outlined in facility checklist established in collaboration with LIIF, with elements of FCC Facility Checklist and NAEYC classroom observation tool.
4. Access to and use of outdoor spaces for all ages of children enrolled throughout the day.

Program Implementation:

Teaching & Learning

1. Learning spaces are arranged to keep children healthy and safe at all times.
2. Learning spaces are designed to accommodate children's basic physical needs for movement, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment.
3. Learning spaces are organized and materials chosen so all CA Learning Foundation domains are addressed.
4. Educators reorganize the environment, when necessary, to help children explore new concepts and topics, sustain their activities, and extend their learning.



Quality Standard

Engaged Educators and 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 spaces.

Connection to Child's Learning & Development



- Effective 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 ELFA 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 Emotional & Behavioral Support (Toddler) or Responsive Caregiving domain (Infant) will not be accepted as an ELFA 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 as a reflective tool in developing a quality improvement plan.
2. Program and educators understand the meaning of the score in each dimension and use CLASS as a tool to reflect and develop a plan for improving teaching quality and learning environment.
3. Program and educators ensure that all children benefit from strong interactions through reflective practice and supervision, support from teaching team members and other support staff, e.g. instructional coach, and/or mental health consultant.

Family Engagement

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



Quality Standard

Learning Opportunities

Description:

Learning opportunities are formal and informal activities designed to expand children's knowledge and promote progress toward their development with nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security.

Connection to Child's Learning & Development



Learning opportunities promote children's progress across all domains, including:

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



Program Requirements:

1. Programs deliver learning opportunities that offer developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences that supports all children's development across all California Learning Foundation developmental domains.
2. Learning opportunities are informed by:
 - Child observation and assessment - Program uses a researched or approved tool at least twice a year for all enrolled children (beginning 60-90 days after enrollment 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.
 - Developmental screening - Program informs parents and/or 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.
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Programs ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. Program maintains facility/home as outlined in facility checklist established in collaboration with LIIF, with elements of FCC Facility Checklist and NAEYC classroom observation tool.
3. Programs will be able to articulate how the activities and learning opportunities they provide are aligned with California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten and Infant and Toddler Learning Foundations and address all developmental domains.



Quality Standard

Learning Opportunities (continued)

Connection to Child's Learning & Development

- Developmental screening for 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.
- Developmental Screening is an essential first step toward identifying children with delays or disorders in the critical early years, before they start school.
- When educators notice what children can do and what they have achieved, we move toward our main goal of ensuring all children have the opportunity to demonstrate and build upon their knowledge, skills, and interests so that they can be ready for school and beyond.

Program Implementation:

Teaching & Learning

1. Program uses reliable and useful observation and 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. Programs have a plan for professional development that supports educators in understanding how to be responsive and intentional when planning learning opportunities.
3. Learning opportunities are approached through an anti-bias lens 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

1. Program offers opportunities for parent(s)/caregiver(s) and/or family members to be involved with their child's learning in the program.
2. Program describes the purposes of assessment and on-going observation with timelines in the Parent's Handbook or other documentation provided to parents.
3. Information collected and documented is shared with the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s), and program invites them to share their observations from home.
4. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) and teachers develop shared goals to support child's development and to understand what comes next developmentally.
5. Program follows-up with the family about any areas of concern, providing referrals or additional support services as needed.
6. Program stays connected and maintains communication with the families by offering activities they can do with their child.



Quality Standard

Continuous Professional Development

Description:

Professional development (PD) is any type of approved continuing education effort for educators and leaders. It is a way to improve knowledge and skills that 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:

1. Educators must complete at least 6 hours of training on **each of the following topics once in their professional career**. Educators may meet PD requirements by having attended unit-bearing coursework on content areas.
 - Child Development/ Learning Foundations (0-5)
 - Inclusion and Meeting the Needs of Young Children with Disabilities or other special needs.
 - Family Engagement and Support
 - Anti-Bias/ Equity training- Teacher may choose one of the following topics:
 - Implicit Bias; Anti-Bias, Anti-racist Curriculum
 - Supporting Dual Language Learners
 - Black Joy Series
2. Program collaborates with educators to develop professional development plans, provide training and workshop opportunities, and ensure that each staff member progresses toward their goals.
3. Program leaders and FCC owners develop professional development plans focusing on serving diverse communities (children, families, and staff), and reflective supervision.

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.



References

- ¹ Continuous Quality Improvement, <https://friendsnrc.org/evaluation/continuous-quality-improvement/>
- ² First 5 California, State of California, 2019; <https://qualitycountsca.net/child-care-providers/family-engagement/>
- ³ California Department of Education 2014, Family Engagement Framework, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/pf/documents/famengageframeenglish.pdf>
- ⁴ NAEYC 2022, Standard and Assessment Items
- ⁵ 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/>
- ⁶ Schwartz, 2021, Early Childhood Environments, <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/cresource/q1/p01/>

