



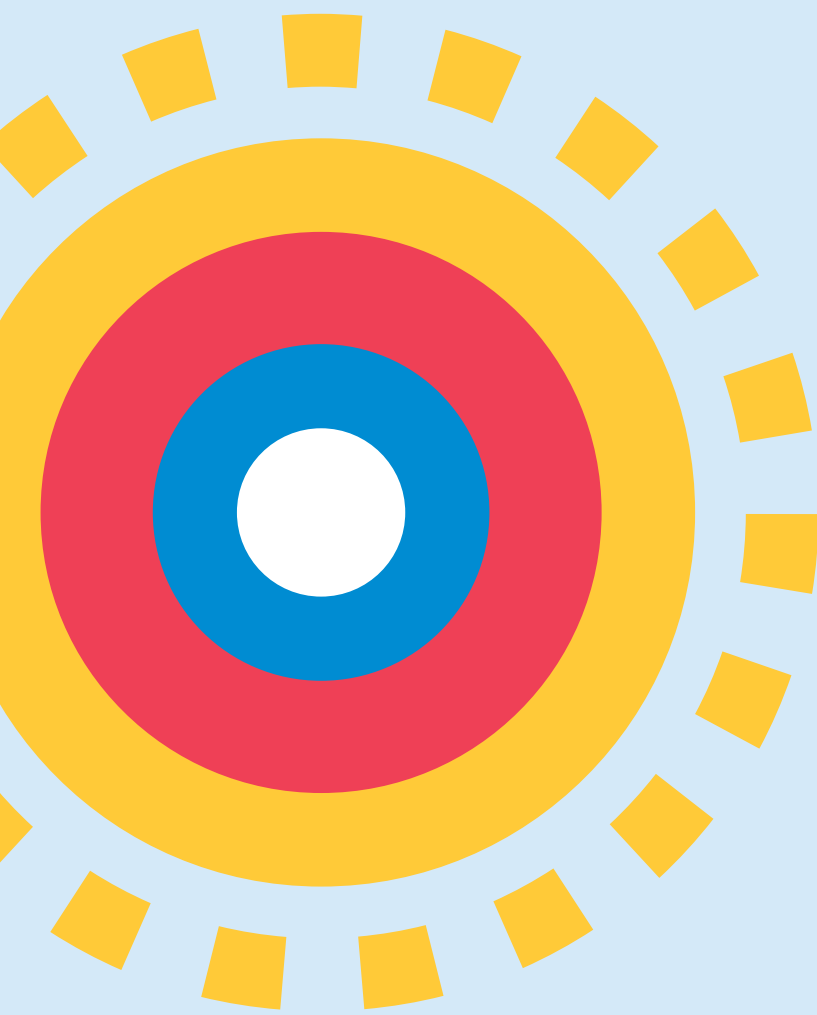
WASHINGTON  
**EARLY ACHIEVERS**  
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Revised July 2013



# EARLY ACHIEVERS, Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards

*A Companion to the Quality Standards for Early Achievers Participants*

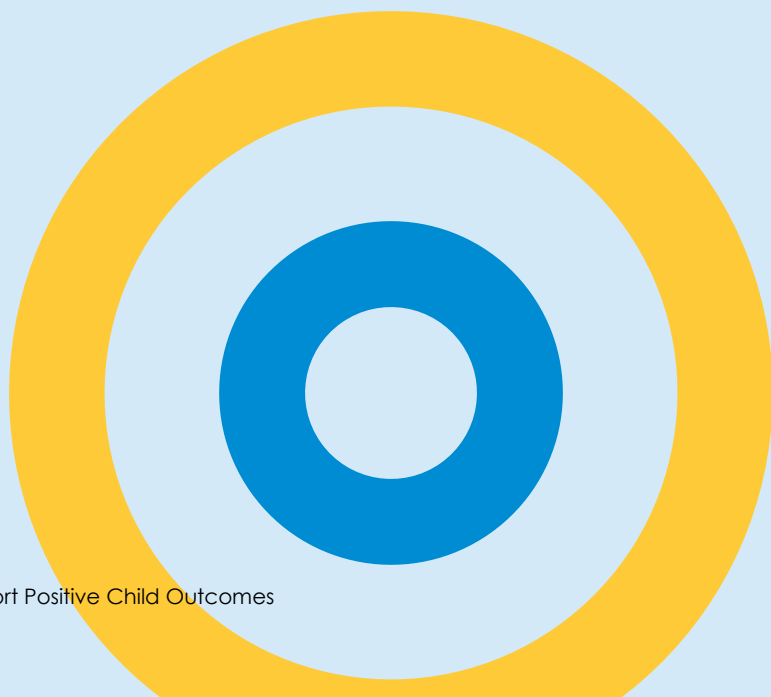
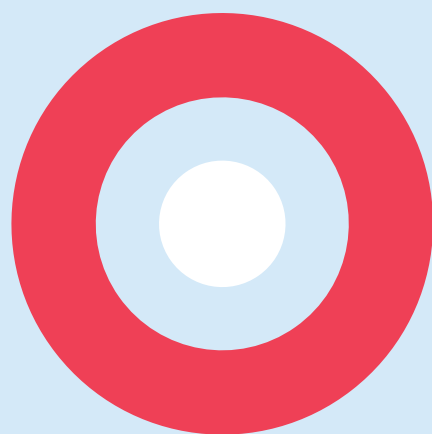


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*“QRIS has been such a great program. I have enjoyed having a coach to guide me along and help me improve my curriculum and interaction with the children.”*

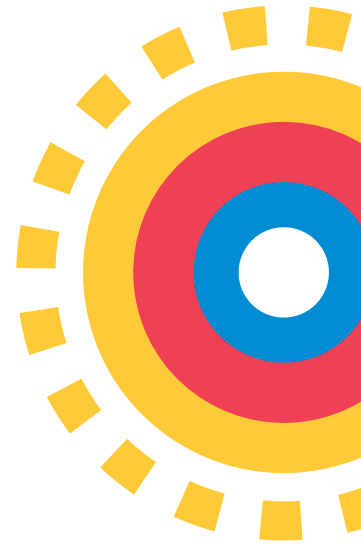
Clark County Participant

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## INTRODUCTION

Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), provides a common set of expectations and standards to define and measure the quality of early learning settings. The Early Achievers Quality Standards promote and support comprehensive facility quality and help ensure that quality practices are having direct impact on individual children's progress. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the University of Washington (UW) developed the standards based on what we learned during a QRIS field test. The standards emphasize:

- ▶ High-quality teacher/adult-child interactions and rich learning environments
- ▶ Ongoing child assessment and screening to learn about and support the needs and strengths of each child in collaboration with families
- ▶ Curriculum that is aligned with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines to help ensure that all children across age groups and settings have developmentally appropriate learning experiences
- ▶ Ongoing professional development and training for staff that is aligned with the Washington State Core Competencies



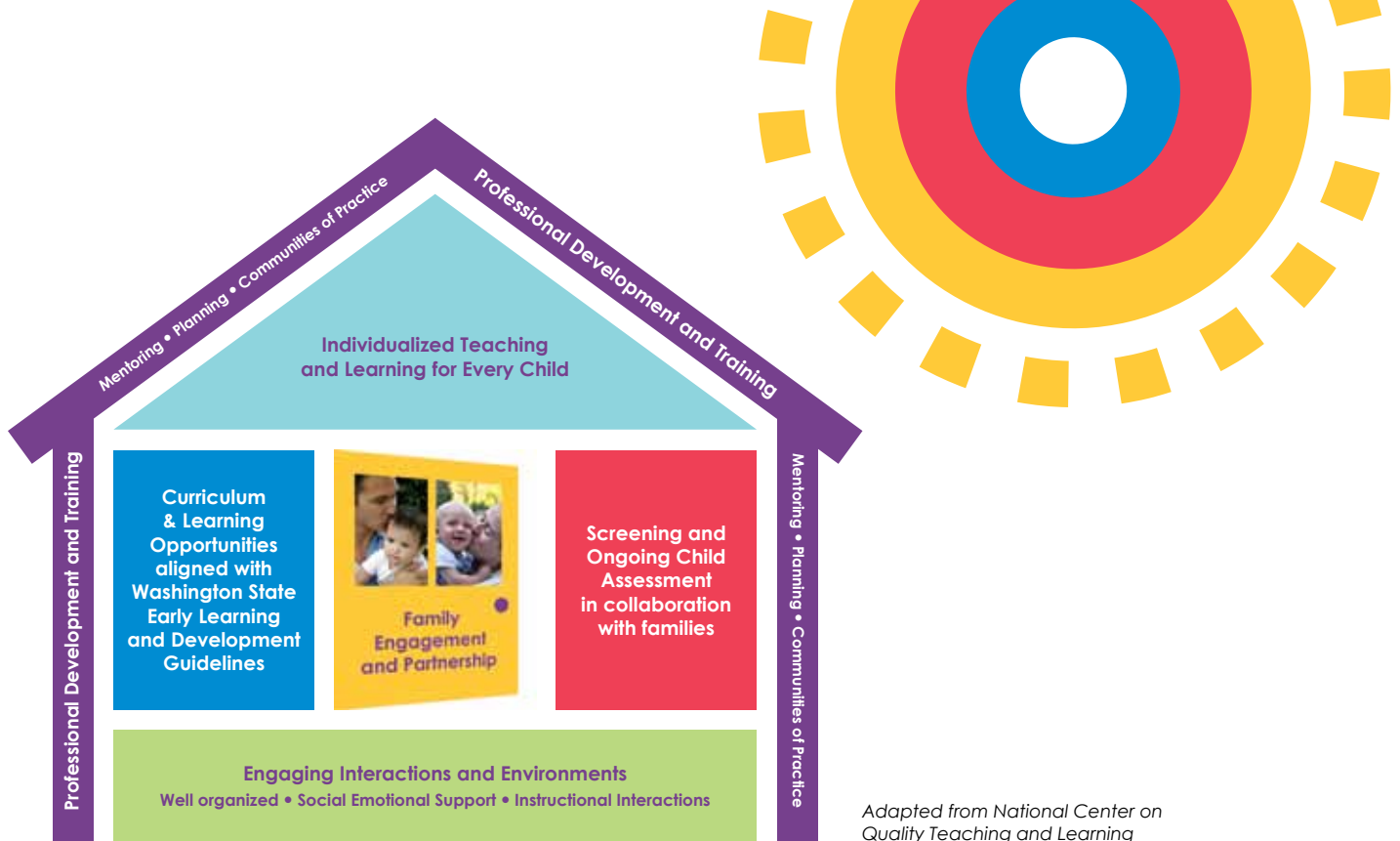
*"Curriculum has improved more than we ever imagined as well as our classrooms structure. It is amazing to see the kids play and interact in their classrooms and role play like "little adults" at times. QRIS truly is an amazing program that has done wonders at our daycare."*

Clark County Participant

- ▶ Use of practices that strengthen and engage families in early learning and support parents/caregivers as primary educators/ first teachers
- ▶ Individualized learning opportunities and instruction based on the unique needs and strengths of each child
- ▶ Use of data (child and program) to inform teaching and program practices with children
- ▶ Alignment with national and state standards and systems including the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), and Head Start performance standards

Quality care takes many forms, and may look different across settings to meet the unique needs of families and children served. For this reason, the Quality Standards are not a checklist or a “one-size-fits-all” approach, but a flexible framework to encourage innovation, creativity and comprehensive approaches to facility-wide quality improvement, regardless of curriculum or philosophy. While the Early Achievers framework provides a common definition of quality, individual components of the Quality Standards may be met in various ways.

The *Companion to the Quality Standards for Early Achievers Participants* is a supplement to the Early Achievers Quality Standards. This guide provides background information about individual components of the standards, clarification of terms used in the standards, and links to additional related resources.



## THE WASHINGTON EARLY ACHIEVERS HOUSE: A Framework for School Readiness

The Washington Early Achievers “House” provides a structure that incorporates the Early Achievers Quality Standards and provides a framework for effective everyday practices for supporting children’s school readiness.

We use a house structure to represent six integral elements of quality caregiving:

1. Family engagement and partnerships
2. Everyday interactions with children
3. Choosing and implementing a strong curriculum
4. Using regular assessment of children’s skills, strengths, and needs
5. Individualized teaching for every child
6. Providing professional development and training

In the house framework, these elements correspond, respectively, to parts of a house—the open door, the foundation, two pillars, a roof, and strong siding—and when connected with one another, they form a single structure that fosters children’s learning and development and helps children become ready for school.

## **Building a solid foundation**

Effective, engaging interactions and environments are the foundation for early learning in all settings. These high-quality practices include a well-organized, clean, safe and managed learning environment; social and emotional support; and instructional interactions and materials that stimulate children’s thinking and skills.

## **The Open Door: family engagement and partnership**

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.

## **The First Pillar: curriculum and learning opportunities aligned with Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines**

A high-quality, research-based curriculum provides learning goals and activities in key areas of children’s development that reflect the program’s school readiness goals. Curriculum plays a vital role in achieving the Early Achiever’s goal of enhancing the social competence and school readiness of children. A curriculum provides guidance as to what to teach (**content**) and how to teach (**learning experiences and teaching strategies**). The content is drawn from current child development science, the interests and ideas of the children, and the values of the community. The Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines is an important resource for identifying the content of a program’s early childhood curriculum.

## **The Second Pillar: screening and ongoing child assessment in collaboration with families**

It is helpful to think of the ongoing assessment process as a compass for child learning. If our goal is to help children achieve school readiness and individual learning goals, then we need to keep track of how the children are doing. We do this by:

- ▶ Determining where children are when they start a program
- ▶ Changing our teaching if progress is slow or stalled
- ▶ Checking regularly to see how they are learning
- ▶ Celebrating learning accomplishments

Assessment information helps us to monitor progress—both for individual children and for the program as a whole. The important thing to keep in mind is that



assessment information needs to be valid, reliable and useful (i.e., the results should inform curriculum and instruction).

## The Roof: highly individualized teaching and learning

Young children vary widely in their skills, knowledge, backgrounds and abilities and some, even at an early age, have been identified with disabilities that require specialized attention. Teaching has to effectively reach all children regardless of their abilities and disabilities. The roof of the house reflects this aim and recognizes the need for all teachers to be skilled in understanding, planning for, and delivering effective teaching for all children. This takes the form of teaching and learning that is truly individualized and happens from the ground up when:

- ▶ Teachers and caregivers are sensitive and skilled in interactions
- ▶ Teachers and caregivers choose and use curricula and activities that engage all children regardless of their strengths and needs
- ▶ Teachers and caregivers use ongoing formative assessment of each child's skills to plan instruction

Teachers can both take advantage of teachable moments and interactions in an individualized way, and plan and execute instruction that is tailored to children with special needs.

## The Strong Siding: professional development and training

For teachers and caregivers to be most successful in reaching school readiness goals, they need ongoing professional development and training. **The National Association for the Education of Young Children** defines professional development as learning experiences designed to improve the knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes and values of the early childhood workforce. Key features of successful professional development include:

- ▶ Evidence-based experiences
- ▶ Basis in specific outcomes that define what the professional should know and be able to do for young children and families
- ▶ Structure that promotes linkages between research and practice
- ▶ Responsiveness to each learner's background, experiences, and the current context of his or her role
- ▶ Continuous assessment tied to these outcomes

In addition to high quality professional development and training, teachers and caregivers need time to plan, mentor and to engage with a community of practice to reflect and improve practice.

## **Bringing the Early Achievers House home to your community**

The house represents six integral elements to move all children toward school readiness. They connect and support the parts of the house—the components of effective everyday practice that will help children become ready for school. The house provides teachers/caregivers and directors with a framework for effective practice and can function to galvanize program improvements that optimize results for all children. Every house must reflect the values and design of the community in which it is built, while maintaining the essential elements of quality.

# WASHINGTON'S QUALITY STANDARDS: An Overview

Participation in Early Achievers is **voluntary**. The Quality Standards are designed so that all participating facilities share the same basic foundational quality at Levels 1 and 2, and have flexibility in how they earn points to achieve rating Levels 3 to 5:

**Levels 1-2:** All facilities meet the same foundational quality based on licensing/certification and Early Achievers readiness activities including training, self-assessment and participation in DEL's statewide professional development registry

**Levels 3-5:** Facilities achieve points based on meeting the Quality Standards; facilities have flexibility in how they earn points based on program strengths, practice and philosophy. In addition to earning cumulative points, there are *minimum thresholds*, or base scores that facilities must achieve on the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assessments.

Facility information or *data* is gathered through an on-site evaluation conducted by a team of data collectors from the University of Washington. Facility data is collected through the following methods:

## Observations:

- ▶ Family home child care and child care center classrooms
- ▶ Assessments include ERS and CLASS

## Interviews

- ▶ Director/family child care provider, staff, families

## Review of facility records and documentation

- ▶ Facilities provide documentation to show how they meet components of the Quality Standards.

## Facilities earn points in these areas:

- Child Outcomes (10 points)
- Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions (70 points)
- Professional Development & Training (10 points)
- Family Engagement & Partnerships (10 points)

## All participating facilities must meet:

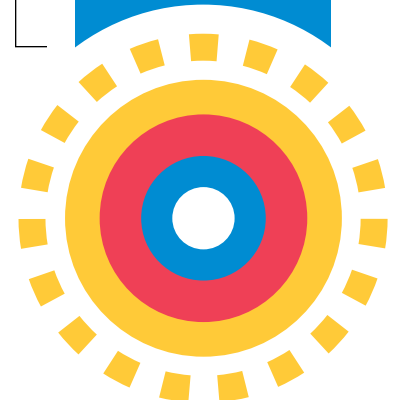
**LEVEL FIVE**  
91-100 points

**LEVEL FOUR**  
70-90 points

**LEVEL THREE**  
30-69 points

**LEVEL TWO**  
Professional Growth and Facility Management

**LEVEL ONE**  
Licensing or Certification



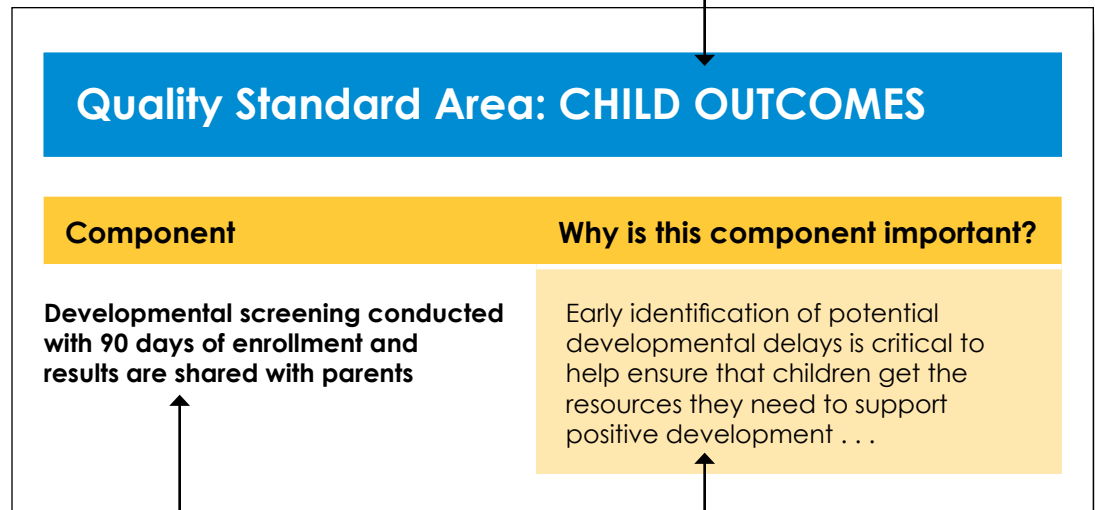
# QUALITY STANDARDS: Supplemental Information

## HOW THIS SECTION IS ORGANIZED

This section is intended to be used side by side with the Early Achievers Quality Standards. The information is organized by Quality Standard area and component as follows:

### Sample:

The Quality Standard area is the broad category of quality.



Each Quality Standard area is made up of components, which describe specific expectations of quality within the Quality Standard area. In this example, all components in this section are related to Child Outcomes.

This section provides background and context about the meaning of the component. If there is related information in the Additional Notes and Resources section, it will be mentioned here.

## Quality Standard Area: CHILD OUTCOMES / 10 points

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Developmental screening is conducted within 90 days of enrollment and results are shared with parents</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Early identification of potential developmental delays is critical to help ensure that children get the resources they need to support positive development. Facilities that are knowledgeable about developmental milestones and use screening tools with children can share information with families to facilitate early identification of developmental delays and help connect families with services and/or formal evaluation.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities use developmental screenings by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are screenings conducted for <b>all</b> children within 90 days of enrollment to spot developmental concerns and determine if a child needs a more formal evaluation?</li><li>• Is the screening tool reliable and valid?</li><li>• Are screening results provided to each family?</li><li>• Does the facility share information with families about how to find developmental services when needed?</li></ul> <hr/> <p>■ <i>Information about developmental screening resources and Early Intervention/Child Find located in Additional Notes &amp; Resources</i></p>
<p><b>Daily individual child experience of quality</b></p> <p>(2 points)</p>	<p>All children in a program should receive high-quality care. In addition to looking at a facility's overall program quality, the unique experiences of individual children also are considered when assessing facility quality.</p> <p>This component considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the environment provide ample language to support children's development?</li><li>• Are all children engaged throughout the day?</li></ul>
<p><b>Ongoing assessment of children's strengths and needs to monitor progress (e.g., child portfolio/work sampling assessments) and inform instruction</b></p> <p>(2 points)</p>	<p>When facilities gather information to learn about each child's progress and needs on a regular basis, they are better able to plan and provide individualized instruction that best supports each child's growth and development.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities gather and use information about children by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are both formal and informal assessments used?</li><li>• Is information about each child's strengths and needs collected and assessed on an ongoing basis at least three times per year?</li><li>• Are assessments conducted with all children within 90 days of enrollment?</li><li>• If child assessment information is collected, how is it used to inform curriculum and activity planning and to monitor child progress?</li></ul>

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Share individualized child data with parents</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Informing and involving families in their child's progress and growth is important to support the child's development at the facility and at home.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities involve families by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is information about children's progress and growth shared with families?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence of family engagement, data sharing, and transition supports for individual children (as measured by Focal Child)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Engaging and involving families in their child's progress, growth and transitions is important to support the child's development and enhance school readiness.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities engage families to support children by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does facility involve families in decision-making regarding children's transitions between classrooms, to different child care programs and to kindergarten?</li> </ul> <p>"Focal Child" means that in addition to looking at a facility's <i>overall</i> program quality, the unique experiences of a sample of individual children also are considered when assessing facility quality.</p>
<p><b>Use of WaKIDS assessment tool or demonstration/ documentation of alignment to WaKIDS assessment process</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>This component looks at how facilities gather and use information about children to support school readiness by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the facility use the WaKIDS assessment tool or an assessment tool/process that aligns with WaKIDS?</li> <li>• Is the assessment tool used in all classrooms with all children?</li> <li>• Is staff trained &amp; reliable on the assessment tool?</li> <li>• Is assessment information shared with parents and kindergarten teachers?</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>■ <i>Information about WaKIDS located in Additional Notes &amp; Resources.</i></p>
<p><b>Individualized instruction for all children</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Individual child information is a valuable planning tool to support children's development and school readiness. This component considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are <i>each</i> child's background, interests, and approach to learning and developmental needs considered when planning activities and during provider-child interactions?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Periodic review and use of child assessment data for continuous program improvement(e.g., analyze group patterns and behaviors)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Looking at trends or patterns in child assessment information <i>across</i> children is a valuable planning tool to support groups of children. This component considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the needs of <i>all</i> children in a group considered when making plans to improve programming?</li> <li>• Are specific action plans in place to address targeted enhancements based on data?</li> </ul> <p>This component refers to <i>aggregate data</i>, which means assessment information about a group of children (e.g., classroom) that is combined to get a high-level look at the group's strengths and needs.</p>

# Quality Standard Area: FACILITY CURRICULUM & LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & INTERACTIONS / 70 points

## Classroom/Family Home Child Care (FCC) Environment / 55 points

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)</b></p>	<p>CLASS measures the quality of interactions between providers and children. CLASS is divided into areas, or <i>domains</i>: Emotional and Behavioral Support; Classroom Organization; and Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning. CLASS is scored on a 1-7 continuum, with 6-7 considered high, 3-5 medium, and 1-2 low.</p>
<p><b>CLASS: Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning</b> (up to 20 points)</p>	<p><b>CLASS: Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning domain</b> looks at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and activities that encourage development of children's reasoning and logic skills, frequent conversations with open-ended questions and advanced language, use of children's past knowledge and understanding to build upon and increase learning, and active and engaged children</li> </ul> <p>Facility-level score determines points awarded for this component: (for centers, this is an average of assessed classroom scores)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3.4 (10 points)</li> <li>• 3.5-4.4 (15 points)</li> <li>• 4.5 &amp; higher (20 points)</li> </ul> <p>For CLASS: Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning, 2 is considered the <i>minimum threshold</i>, or base score that all facilities must meet in order to be considered a Level 3-5.</p>
<p><b>CLASS: Emotional Support &amp; Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support</b> (up to 20 points)</p>	<p><b>CLASS: Emotional Support &amp; Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support domains</b> look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm and respectful relationships, responsive providers, awareness of children's needs, proactive behavior management, and organized routines that maximize learning time and children's involvement</li> </ul> <p>Facility-level score determines points awarded for this component: (for centers, this is an average of assessed classroom scores)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.5-4.9 (10 points)</li> <li>• 5.0-5.9 (15 points)</li> <li>• 6.0 &amp; higher (20 points)</li> </ul> <p>For CLASS: Emotional Support &amp; Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support, 3.5 is considered the <i>minimum threshold</i>, or base score that all facilities must meet in order to be considered a Level 3-5.</p>

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Environment Rating Scales (ERS)</b> (up to 15 points)</p>	<p>ERS measures classroom/family child care quality of the environment, including how the available materials, activities, routines, schedules, and interactions support learning.</p> <p>ERS is scored on a 1-7 continuum, with 7 considered excellent and 1 considered inadequate.</p> <p>Facility-level score determines points awarded for this component: (for centers, this means an average of assessed classroom scores)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.5 (5 points)</li> <li>• 5 (10 points)</li> <li>• 6 (15 points)</li> </ul> <p>For ERS, 3.5 is considered the <i>minimum threshold</i>, or base score that all facilities must meet in order to be considered a Level 3-5.</p>

## Curriculum & Staff Supports / 15 points

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Curriculum profile</b> (3 points)</p>	<p>A curriculum serves as a roadmap for planning and implementing a program, which includes goals for children and families, the experiences and materials provided by the facility to help children achieve those goals, and how providers and families work together to support children. Alignment of curriculum to the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines helps ensure that all children across age groups and settings receive developmentally appropriate instruction.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities plan, implement and communicate about their program by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the facility have a curriculum philosophy, or set of values and practices that guide how they work with children and families?</li> <li>• Is the curriculum philosophy written and posted somewhere so that all staff can access it?</li> <li>• Is the curriculum philosophy shared with families?</li> <li>• Does the curriculum philosophy align with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines?</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>■ <i>Information about the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines located in Additional Notes and Resources</i></p>



Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Training</b> (5 points)</p>	<p>Training to implement established curriculum helps staff put the curricular approach into practice. Training on the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines helps staff provide developmentally appropriate instruction and curriculum.</p> <p>This component looks at how staff put facility curriculum into practice by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does lead teaching staff/FCC owner have training on the facility curriculum <b>and</b> on the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines?</li> <li>• Is implementation of curriculum training evident in facility practice?</li> <li>• Does staff receive training on how to implement the curriculum in ways that are specific to their facility?</li> </ul> <p>For this component, <i>lead teaching staff</i> includes lead teachers (centers) and FCC provider assistants.</p>
<p><b>Ongoing mentoring of teaching staff to support improvement in curriculum and teacher child interactions</b> (3 points)</p>	<p>When staff are provided with ongoing support and mentoring to implement curriculum, they are better able to implement the curricular approach in a meaningful way that supports children.</p> <p>This component looks at how facilities support staff on an ongoing basis to improve practice by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do staff attend in-service training?</li> <li>• Do staff receive observations that they can use to enhance practice?</li> <li>• Do staff receive feedback based on observations?</li> <li>• Do facilities provide mentoring to staff to improve curriculum &amp; interactions?</li> <li>• How often is mentoring provided?</li> <li>• Do staff receive mentoring once a year?</li> <li>• Do staff receive mentoring once a month?</li> </ul> <p>For this component, <i>teaching staff</i> refers to teachers (centers) and FCC primary providers.</p>
<p><b>Dedicated time for teaching staff planning time on a weekly basis</b> (2 points)</p>	<p>Planning time for staff is an important element of high quality programs because teachers need time to plan and carry out intentional teaching. This component looks at how facilities support time for planning by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do staff have regular dedicated time to plan <i>together</i>?</li> <li>• Is planning time actually used?</li> </ul> <p>For this component, <i>teaching staff</i> refers to teachers (in centers, teaching teams who work together, i.e. lead teachers and assistants or co-teachers) and FCC providers and assistants. In the case that an FCC provider has no assistants, provider must demonstrate that he/she plans and uses dedicated planning time.</p>

## Component

## Why is this component important?

**Dedicated time for teaching staff to engage in reflective practice with peer group on a monthly basis**

(2 points)

An important part of professionalizing the early care and education field is providing the opportunity to participate in peer learning communities. A peer group is a group of providers who have similar needs and interests (i.e., they work with the same age groups or with the same curriculum) who meet regularly to work toward improving practice. This component looks at whether participation in peer groups supports providers to reflect on and improve practice by considering:

- Do teaching staff participate in peer group reflective practice at least monthly?

For this component, *teaching staff* refers to teachers (centers) and FCC primary providers.

# Quality Standard Area: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING / 10 points

## Why is this Quality Standard area important?

Caregivers and educators need training and education opportunities that support high-quality interactions with children.

## How Facility earns points in this standard area:

- ▶ The Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals is the foundation for the Professional Development & Training Standard Area of the Early Achievers Quality Standards.
- ▶ Individual staff qualifications make up facility points in this standard area as outlined below.
- ▶ All education is verified through existing processes in MERIT, the state professional development registry.
- ▶ Related fields are determined during education verification using the existing criteria for related degrees, which considers ECE competencies.
- ▶ Facilities are responsible for ensuring that all staff information is up to date in MERIT. All staff education must be approved in MERIT prior to on-site evaluation for rating in order to be included in facility rating.

## Center Director or Program Supervisor

AA in ECE or related field	Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (1 point)
BA in ECE or related field	Level 4 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (2 points)
MA in ECE or related field	Level 5 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (4 points)

- *Information about MERIT and The Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals located in Additional Notes & Resources.*

## Center Designated Lead Teaching Staff

(at least one staff person per classroom must be designated lead)

25% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher)	Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (1 point)
25% have AA or higher in ECE or related field	Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (2 points)
25% have BA in higher in ECE or related field	Level 4 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (3 points)

## Center—All Other Teaching Staff (assistants and aides)

25% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher)	Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (1 point)
50% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher)	Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (2 points)
25% have AA or higher in ECE or related field	Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (3 points)

## Family Child Care Provider or Primary Worker

CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher)	Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (3 points)
AA in ECE or related field	Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (5 points)
BA in ECE or related field	Level 4 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (7 points)
MA in ECE or related field	Level 5 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (10 points)

# Quality Standard Area: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP /10 points

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Complete modified<sup>4</sup> Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (director/owner)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p> <p><small>4 Early Achievers uses a modified Strengthening Families Self-Assessment which includes an additional section titled Health Literacy.</small></p>	<p>Family engagement and involvement is critical to children's positive early learning experiences. A key component of successful relationships between facilities and families is thoughtful and intentional planning. Family engagement activities must be systemic and integrated into a facility's practice in order to achieve family engagement outcomes and help children be healthy and ready for school.</p> <p>The <b>Strengthening Families</b> approach is a framework based on enhancing families' protective factors to build upon existing family strengths and promote positive child development and outcomes. The Strengthening Families Self-Assessment helps facilities gather information about whether their current practices help build protective factors in the families they serve. This component considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the facility completed the modified Strengthening Families Self-Assessment<sup>5</sup>?</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>■ <i>Information about Strengthening Families and a link to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment located in Additional Notes &amp; Resources.</i></p> <p><small>5 If facility uses Center for Study of Social Policy (CSSP) Strengthening Families online data system to complete self-assessment, facility must print out summary as evidence of completion.</small></p>
<p><b>Develop a plan of action based on Strengthening Families Self-Assessment</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>This component looks at how a facility uses information learned from the modified Strengthening Families Self-Assessment to improve family engagement and partnership by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the facility developed a plan of action<sup>6</sup> based on results of the modified Strengthening Families Self-Assessment?</li> </ul> <p><small>6 If facility uses CSSP Strengthening Families online data system to complete plan of action, facility must print out summary as evidence of completion.</small></p>
<p><b>Provide evidence of continuous feedback and improvement (plan of action)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>This component looks at how a facility <i>implements</i> the plan of action based on the results of the modified Strengthening Families Self-Assessment on an ongoing basis by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the facility plan of action continuously updated and improved<sup>7</sup>?</li> </ul> <p><small>7 If facility uses CSSP Strengthening Families online data system to update plan of action, facility must print out summary or provide other written documentation as evidence of completion.</small></p>

Component	Why is this component important?
<p><b>Have a parenting support and education program in place (examples include Incredible Years, Triple P Parenting, CSEFEL Parenting Modulus, Parents as Teachers)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Parents and caregivers are a child's first and most important teacher. This component looks how facilities provide support and resources to parents/caregivers by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the facility provide a parent education program?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide information about community-based programs available for parents in languages represented in the facility (examples include community mental health, child nutrition, physical fitness, food banks, Child Find, medical/dental resources)</b></p> <p>(1 point)</p>	<p>Connections between families, facilities and the broader community can result in greater sharing and maximizing of resources. Family resources are most meaningful and best used when they are relevant and in languages represented by the families in the facility. This component looks at how facilities support families by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does facility share information about community resources with families?</li> <li>• Are resources available for families in their language?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence of transition plans/policies in place for changes in settings and providers</b></p> <p>(3 points)</p>	<p>Involving families is essential to support positive transitions for children. This component looks at how facilities support children and families to have successful transitions by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does facility have a written policy or plan to support transitions?</li> <li>• Are policies or plans implemented at the facility to support children's transitions?</li> <li>• Does facility actively involve family in transition plans?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partner with parents to determine perception of child strengths and needs</b></p> <p>(2 points)</p>	<p>Families provide invaluable information about their children, and must be involved throughout a child's participation in a facility. This component looks at how facilities partner with parents to learn about and support children throughout their experience with the provider by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does facility gather information from families about children during orientation to help understand how to best support that child?</li> <li>• Does the facility work with parents on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of the child?</li> <li>• Does the facility work with parents on an ongoing basis to support the developing strengths of each child?</li> </ul>

# EXAMPLES OF FACILITY DOCUMENTATION

Below are some ways that facilities might demonstrate how they meet Quality Standards components during the on-site evaluation visit. **This is not a comprehensive list, nor are facilities expected to have all of these documents.** Rather, facilities should first think about how their current practice demonstrates the essence of each component, and then identify sources of facility documentation that show evidence of how they meet the component. Facilities must have all documentation ready at the time of the evaluation visit in order to get credit<sup>8</sup>.

- ▶ Child files/portfolios
- ▶ Child enrollment packet/intake information
- ▶ Family orientation materials
- ▶ Parent handbook
- ▶ Program policies
- ▶ Staff handbooks/policies and procedures
- ▶ Staffing plans
- ▶ Lesson plans
- ▶ Daily schedules
- ▶ Curriculum plans/activity matrix
- ▶ Staff meeting agendas & minutes
- ▶ Staff training certificates
- ▶ Staff training agendas
- ▶ Copies of completed child developmental screening forms
- ▶ Copies of completed child assessments
- ▶ Completed WaKIDS alignment tool<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ Completed modified strengthening families self-assessment<sup>10</sup>
- ▶ Completed Strengthening Families plan of action<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Written curriculum statement
- ▶ Completed Early Learning and Development Guidelines Curricular Alignment tool<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ Parent training curriculum
- ▶ Flyers or notices of family events
- ▶ Minutes and agendas from parent trainings or meetings
- ▶ Information posted in family resource area/library/classrooms/bulletin boards/resource binder
- ▶ Notes from family conferences or meetings with families
- ▶ Copies of letters sent to families
- ▶ Notes from family home visits
- ▶ Copies of information/resources distributed to families
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Facility website

*8 Staff Education information is not collected by evaluation team during on-site visit. All family child care and child care center staff education qualifications will be verified through the existing process in MERIT. Facilities are responsible for ensuring that all staff information is complete during Level 2 participation. All staff education must be approved before a facility requests a rating.*

*9 Available on the DEL website or through your TA Specialist.*

*10 If facility uses Center for Study of Social Policy (CSSP) Strengthening Families online data system to complete self-assessment, facility must print out summary as evidence of completion.*

*11 If facility uses CSSP Strengthening Families online data system to complete action plan, facility must print out summary as evidence of completion.*

*12 Available on the DEL website or through your TA Specialist.*





# ADDITIONAL NOTES & RESOURCES

## CHILD OUTCOMES

### Developmental screening resources:

- ▶ **Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Learn the Signs, Act Early:** **FREE**, downloadable developmental milestones checklists for children birth through 5: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones)

### Referral Information:

- ▶ In Washington, **Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)** provides early intervention services to children birth to 3 who have disabilities and/or developmental delays. Eligible infants and toddlers and their families are entitled to individualized, high-quality early intervention services. To find more information about eligibility and services, including a directory, visit: [www.del.wa.gov/development/esit](http://www.del.wa.gov/development/esit)
- ▶ **Child Find** refers to the process of screening, identifying and referring children who may be eligible for special education services. For children 3 and older, visit the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for information about preschool special education services and contact information for local school districts: [www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/EarlyChildhood/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/EarlyChildhood/default.aspx)

### WaKIDS:

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is our state's kindergarten readiness process. To learn more, visit: [www.k12.wa.us/wakids](http://www.k12.wa.us/wakids)

To download the WaKIDS “Introducing Me” template to collect and share information about children’s likes, dislikes, and family culture between families and kindergarten teachers, visit: [www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/IntroducingMe.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/IntroducingMe.pdf)

## FACILITY CURRICULUM & LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & INTERACTIONS

### Program assessment tools used in Quality Standards:

- ▶ For more information about the **Environment Rating Scales (ERS)**, visit: [ers.fpg.unc.edu](http://ers.fpg.unc.edu)
- ▶ For more information about the **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)**, visit: [www.teachstone.org](http://www.teachstone.org)

For access to video clips from the Teachstone Library that show engaging interactions and environments, contact your local child care resource and referral agency.

### Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines:

The *Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines* are a statewide resource for families, caregivers, child care professionals, teachers and others who care for or work with children. They are designed to provide essential information to support and enhance children's learning and development. To download the full publication, visit: [www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/Guidelines.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/Guidelines.pdf)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

### MERIT:

**MERIT (Washington's Managed Education and Registry Information Tool)** is our state's professional development registry. This online tool is used to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education and school-age professionals in Washington. MERIT is the source of verification for staff education qualifications in the Professional Development & Training Quality Standard area of Early Achievers. Facilities are responsible for ensuring that staff education information is complete. For more information about MERIT visit: [www.del.wa.gov/requirements/professional/merit.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/requirements/professional/merit.aspx)

### The Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals:

The Core Competencies:

- ▶ Define what professionals need to know and be able to do to provide quality education and care
- ▶ Serve as the foundation for decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all settings and programs

- ▶ Establish a set of standards for care and education to support professionalism in the field

To learn more, visit [www.del.wa.gov/requirements/professional](http://www.del.wa.gov/requirements/professional)

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP

### Strengthening Families:

The **Strengthening Families** approach, developed by the Center for Study of Social Policy, is a framework based on enhancing families' protective factors in order to promote positive outcomes for children. Five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families approach: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. Strengthening Families offers tools for child care facilities, including self-assessments, that help them look at how to support and build upon the strengths of the families in their care.

For general information about Strengthening Families, visit: [www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families](http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families)

To download copies of Strengthening Families self-assessments\*, visit: [www.cssp.org/publications/strengthening-families](http://www.cssp.org/publications/strengthening-families)

To complete the Strengthening Families self-assessment\* using the Center for Study of Social Policy online database, visit: [www.mosaic-network.com/gemslive/cssp/](http://www.mosaic-network.com/gemslive/cssp/)

\*Early Achievers uses a *modified* Strengthening Families Self-Assessment which includes an additional section titled "Health Literacy". This section will be provided during the Early Achievers Level 2 training: QRIS Strengthening Families Training for Early Learning Professionals. **Facilities that download the self-assessment from the CSSP website or that want to complete the online assessment must additionally complete the Health and Literacy section.**

### Additional Parent/Family resources & training information

- ▶ [www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)
- ▶ [www.triplep.net](http://www.triplep.net)
- ▶ [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)
- ▶ [csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html)



# GLOSSARY

## Child assessment

### Related concepts:

- *Formal & informal assessment*
- *Aggregate and individual data*

While developmental screening offers a quick snapshot of development and helps spot potential concerns, ongoing **child assessment** observes and collects information about children's learning styles, growth, progress and areas of need on a *continual* basis. Facilities use child assessment information to inform planning of materials, activities, and experiences that meet each child's needs as well as the needs of the group.

Assessment is both a formal and informal process. For the purposes of the Early Achievers Quality Standards:

- **Formal assessment** refers to the use of published developmental assessments, checklists or structured observational procedures such as Teaching Strategies GOLD.
- **Informal assessment** includes observation of children using methods such as running logs, anecdotal notes, collection of children's work in portfolios, and discussions with families. (informal methods may be part of the formal assessment process, but are not alone considered formal assessment and are not sufficient for diagnostic purposes.

Information learned about children through assessment, or data, should be used when planning for individual children and groups of children. For the purposes of the Early Achievers Quality Standards:

- **Individual data** refers to assessment information about one specific child.
- **Aggregate data** refers to assessment information about a group of children (e.g., classroom) that is combined to get a high-level look at the group's strengths and needs.

## Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

**CLASS** is an observation-based assessment tool that measures how teachers/providers interact with children to create supportive, nurturing relationships, enhance learning, and provide instruction. The **CLASS** will be conducted in classrooms and family child care homes by UW as part of the facility on-site evaluation for rating. Facility **CLASS** scores make up 40 percent of the total Early Achievers Quality Standards points.

## Curriculum

### Related concepts:

- *Curriculum Profile*

A **curriculum** serves as a roadmap for planning and implementing a program, which includes goals for children and families, the experiences and materials provided by the facility to help children achieve those goals, and how providers and families work together to support children.

There is not one “best” curriculum for all programs, nor does Early Achievers require the use of a *specific* curriculum. More importantly, curricula should be aligned with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines and reflect the values and philosophy of the facility and the children and families served. The **curriculum profile** is a written statement that describes the facility’s curriculum philosophy and includes elements such as:

- Knowledge of early childhood development and how children learn
- How facility curriculum approach supports child development
- How curriculum is planned, implemented and adapted to support child development based on the needs, interests, and experiences of children and families served, including inclusion of children with special needs
- Specific goals for children based on child assessment information and how the curriculum will help children meet goals
- Positive relationships with families and family engagement
- Role of the educator/environment in implementing the curriculum, i.e. how the environment, teacher/provider, materials, activities and experiences provided help children learn

## The Department of Early Learning (DEL)

**The Department of Early Learning** is a state agency dedicated to helping ensure our state offers world-class, developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning opportunities for all of Washington’s youngest learners, so each child enters kindergarten with a solid foundation for success in school and life. Washington’s children realize their full potential. **DEL** is the lead administrative agency for Early Achievers.

## Developmental screening

### Related concepts:

- *Reliable & Valid*

Children reach developmental milestones in learning, communicating, building relationships, behaving, touching, hearing, seeing and moving. While every child grows and develops at his or her own pace, it is important that parents and care providers observe and track children's growth to help ensure that development is on track

**The purpose of developmental screening at the child care facility level is not to diagnose children with developmental delays and/or other conditions.** Rather, use of *developmental screening* tools helps parents and child care providers recognize areas that may need a second look by a professional who can do further screening and evaluation.

The Early Achievers Quality Standards do not require the use of a specific developmental screening tool, but **facilities must use developmental screening tools that are valid and reliable\***.

A measurement that is *valid* means that we are measuring the skill or concept that we are actually attempting to measure.

A measurement that is *reliable* means that everyone is using the same standards to measure the skill or concept, and that the test is consistent, i.e. will different people using the same measurement get the same results?

For examples of valid and reliable screening tools, visit:

- Washington State: A Guide to Assessment in Early Childhood  
[www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/assessment\\_print.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/assessment_print.pdf)
- American Academy of Pediatrics:  
[www2.aap.org/sections/dbpeds/screening.asp](http://www2.aap.org/sections/dbpeds/screening.asp)
- The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center:  
Developmental Screening and Assessment Instruments with an Emphasis on Social and Emotional Development for Young Children Ages Birth through Five  
[www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf](http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf)

\* In addition, DEL supports the use of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Learn the Signs, Act Early Developmental Milestones. Resources and materials are available to providers and families free of charge at: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/)

## Early Achievers

Early Achievers is Washington's quality rating and improvement system, and is a voluntary program designed to:

- Support child care providers in providing high-quality care by providing resources including training, coaching and incentives
- Help parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs
- Ensure that children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life

## Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

The *ERS* is an observation-based assessment that measures classroom/family child care environment quality in the following categories: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language and Reasoning/Listening and Talking; Activities; Interactions; Program Structure; and Parents and Staff. The ERS will be conducted in classrooms and family child care homes by UW as part of the facility on-site evaluation for rating. Facility ERS scores make up 15 percent of the total Early Achievers Quality Standards points.

## Facility

In this document, *facility* refers to the participating licensed child care center or family child care home.

## Focal Child

*Focal child* means that in addition to looking at a facility's *overall* program quality, the unique experiences of a sample of individual children also are considered when assessing facility quality

## Individualized instruction

*Individualized instruction* means that teachers/providers plan and act with specific goals in mind for the children in their care based on children's interests, development and needs. Individualized instruction is intentional, meaning that teachers use the environment, activities, experiences and materials to support and expand on the development of each child in their care.

## In-service training

For the purposes of the Early Achievers Quality Standards (In: *Curriculum and Staff Supports*), *in-service training* refers to continuing professional development provided *after* staff are employed at a facility with the purpose of developing specific skills. (distinguished from pre-service or initial training).



## **Mentoring**

(From NAEYC/NACCRRA *Early Childhood Education: Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*) **Mentoring** is a relationship-based process between professionals, with a more-experienced individual with adult learning knowledge and skills, the mentor, providing guidance and example to the less-experienced mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.

## **MERIT**

**MERIT** (Washington's Managed Education and Registry Information Tool) is used to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education and school age professionals. Facilities use MERIT to access and complete the Early Achievers Registration and Application for Level 2. MERIT is the source of evidence during evaluation for staff education qualifications for facility Professional Development & Training Standard points.

## **Minimum threshold**

A facility must achieve designated minimum CLASS and ERS scores in order to achieve a rating of Level 3, regardless of total facility points earned. Each assessed facility/family child care home must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and a 3.5 on the ERS. These scores, or **minimum thresholds** represent the foundational level of quality that all facilities must have in order to be rated Levels 3-5. Facilities that do not meet the minimum thresholds will receive a rating of Level 2.

## **Peer learning community**

A **peer learning community** is a group of providers who have similar needs and interests who meet to learn from each other to inform and improve their own practice. Examples of providers who have similar needs and interests could include a group of family child care providers; center teachers who work with infants and toddlers; or providers who work with a specific curriculum or philosophy.

## **Reflective practice**

*Reflective practice* refers to the process of thinking critically about your current practice with the goal of ongoing refinement and improvement of practice.

In the Quality Standards, reflective practice is referred to in the context of peer learning communities who meet regularly to work toward identifying best practices and improving intentional teaching. Providers reflect on their experiences working with children, and share their own learning and interpretations about their experiences. Peers ask questions to promote reflection, provide feedback, use the feedback provided by their peers to inform their own learning and ultimately improve their own practice.

## **Transition plan**

*Transition plans/policies* address how to ensure that children and families have successful, positive transitions from setting to setting, including between classrooms, to different child care settings and to kindergarten. Transition plans may also address how to support children with challenging behaviors as a child transitions to a more positive experience within the same facility.

Transition planning involves considering questions such as:

- How will families be involved?
- What information do we need to gather from and provide to families? To the new provider/teacher?
- What resources does the family/child need to be successful?
- What goals does the family have for the child in the new setting?
- What aspects of the new setting may be different and how will the child receive experiences to prepare for the transition?
- Are there plans in place to support children that present ongoing challenging behaviors?
- How do plans help transition children away from challenging behaviors toward school readiness?



