



NJ Quality Standards for Early Care and Education Programs

Resource Guide

Introduction

This Resource Guide was developed by the New Jersey Division of Family Development (DFD), Office of Child Care, in collaboration with statewide implementation partners, Technical Assistance Specialists, and early childhood programs across New Jersey. It was designed to support programs in understanding and navigating the Grow NJ Kids Standards, with practical guidance, tools, and examples that bring each standard to life.

The purpose of this guide is to provide a clear, organized reference that programs can use throughout their quality improvement journey—whether preparing for rating, deepening daily practice, or building staff knowledge and confidence. It is intended to supplement Technical Assistance and serve as a working document where programs can reflect, plan, and take notes as they strengthen quality over time.

Programs are encouraged to use this guide as a learning tool, a planning tool, and a conversation tool—something to return to often, not only during rating, but as part of ongoing continuous quality improvement.

How to Use this Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is designed to be a practical, working tool to support your Grow NJ Kids journey. It is not meant to be read once from beginning to end, but rather used intentionally over time—as you reflect on practice, plan improvements, work with technical assistance, and prepare for rating.

Programs are encouraged to [use this guide](#) in the following ways:

- ★ As a **learning tool** to better understand the intent of each Grow NJ Kids standard and how standards connect to daily practice
- ★ As a **planning tool** during Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) development to identify strengths, priorities, and next steps
- ★ As a **reference tool** when collecting evidence, preparing documentation, and submitting for rating.
- ★ As a **conversation tool** to support meaningful discussions with staff, leadership, and Technical Assistance Specialists

Each standard includes [key components](#) to guide use:

- ★ **Intent statements** explaining why the standard matters for children, families, and programs
- ★ **Examples of evidence** illustrating how standards may be demonstrated in practice
- ★ **Reflective questions** supporting internal discussion and quality improvement planning
- ★ **Resources and professional development** highlighting support available through Grow NJ Kids and partners
- ★ **NAEYC and Head Start alignment references**, where applicable, to show how Grow NJ Kids standards connect to national quality and accountability frameworks
- ★ **Rating information** clarifying how standards connect to star levels and point opportunities

Programs should use this guide alongside NJCCIS and in coordination with technical assistance. Not all sections will apply at the same time, and programs are encouraged to focus on what is most relevant to their current stage of participation.

This guide is intended to support continuous quality improvement, helping programs build understanding, confidence, and strong systems over time.

Look for the  icon throughout this guide.

When you see it, click to watch a short video that brings the standard to life with examples, explanations, and practical tips.

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Grow NJ Kids Quality Domains

The Grow NJ Kids Quality Domains work together to create a comprehensive framework that supports high-quality early childhood education (ECE). Each domain—Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning (CTL); Child Wellbeing (CW); Family and Community Engagement (FCE); Workforce Development and Supports (WDS); and Administration and Management Practices (AMP)—plays a crucial role in fostering children's development and learning. By integrating these domains, programs ensure that children receive well-rounded supports that nurture their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. A strong, skilled workforce and effective management practices further enhance program quality, while family and community engagement strengthen connections that contributes to children's long-term success. Together, these domains establish a foundation for continuous improvement, ensuring that every child in Grow NJ Kids programs thrives in a safe, supportive, and enriching environment.



Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment & Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)



The Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) are core components of participation in the Grow NJ Kids program. These processes are completed electronically in NJCCIS and are designed to help programs reflect on current practices, identify strengths, and plan intentional steps toward continuous quality improvement.

The Self-Assessment and QIP are not evaluations or inspections. They are **program-driven tools** that:

- ★ Support reflection on program practices aligned with Grow NJ Kids Standards
 - ★ Help programs identify strengths and priority areas for improvement
 - ★ Guide the use of technical assistance, professional development, and other supports
 - ★ Inform readiness for future rating cycles
-

When Self-Assessments & QIPs Are Required

Programs complete a Self-Assessment and QIP at two key points:

1. After **initial enrollment** in Grow NJ Kids
2. Every three (3) years **after achieving a star rating**

Self-Assessments and QIPs work as a pair in NJCCIS. Once a new self-assessment is started, a corresponding QIP is developed to align with your responses. Program may start a new self-assessment at any time once the previous QIP is marked “Complete”.

Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment is a structured, guided reflection completed by the program in NJCCIS. It aligns directly with the **Grow NJ Kids Standards** and asks programs to consider how well current practices meet each standard.

- ★ The Self-Assessment is completed by the program, not by a validator or evaluator
- ★ Responses should reflect current, everyday practice, not future goals
- ★ Programs are encouraged to involve leadership and key staff in the process
- ★ Honesty is essential. Identifying areas for growth helps unlock targeted supports
- ★ The Self-Assessment **does not** determine your star rating
- ★ There are no “right” or “wrong” answers
- ★ Results help inform technical assistance and continuous quality improvement planning

Quality Improvement Plan

The Quality Improvement Plan is a working plan developed in NJCCIS based on Self-Assessment results. It identifies priority goals, action steps, and timelines for strengthening program quality.

- ★ QIPs focus on manageable, realistic goals
- ★ Programs choose priority areas that are most meaningful to their context
- ★ Each goal includes action steps and identifies supports or resources needed
- ★ QIPs can be updated as progress is made or circumstances change

Using the QIP Effectively

Your QIP is meant to:

- ★ Guide conversations with your Quality Improvement Specialist (QIS) or Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS)
- ★ Support planning for professional development and training
- ★ Help track progress over time
- ★ Align improvement efforts with available Grow NJ Kids supports

Completing the Self-Assessment & QIP in NJCCIS

Both the Self-Assessment and QIP are completed **within NJCCIS**. The system:

- ★ Saves progress so you can return at any time
- ★ Indicates required fields before submission
- ★ Tracks completion timelines
- ★ Provides a print option for Quality Improvement Planning

Program Owners, Directors, and Facility Administrators have the ability to provide additional staff access to the GNJK Self-assessment and QIP through the personnel quicklink in the provider's NJCCIS profile.

Support Is Available

Programs are not expected to complete the Self-Assessment or QIP alone.

Support may include:

- ★ Guidance from your assigned Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS)
- ★ Access to training and professional development
- ★ Resource recommendations aligned to your improvement goals
- ★ Technical assistance tailored to your program type and needs

Questions about timelines, access, or support should be directed to the appropriate contact based on your program type.

Collecting Evidence & Documentation

Evidence and documentation are collected throughout participation in Grow NJ Kids and serve two distinct purposes. Understanding the difference helps programs use documentation appropriately and with confidence.

Evidence for Self-Assessment, Technical Assistance & QIP Planning

After enrolling in Grow NJ Kids, programs begin collecting and reviewing evidence to support the **Self-Assessment** and **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**. During this phase, evidence is used **only for internal reflection** by the program and its assigned Technical Assistance (TA) provider.

This evidence helps:

- ★ Reflect honestly on current practices
- ★ Identify strengths and areas for growth
- ★ Determine which standards are fully, partially, or not yet met
- ★ Inform meaningful, targeted technical assistance
- ★ Develop realistic QIP goals and action steps

What to know:

- ★ This evidence is **not a formal submission**
- ★ Documentation may be referenced rather than uploaded
- ★ Gaps in documentation are expected and appropriate
- ★ Materials do not need to be complete or polished
- ★ Information shared at this stage is used to support growth—not to assign a rating

This phase is a **safe space for learning, planning, and improvement**.

Evidence for Grow NJ Kids Rating Submission

When a program is ready to submit for a Grow NJ Kids rating, evidence is **formally collected and submitted in NJCCIS**. This documentation is used to demonstrate that standards are met **at the time of rating**.

During this phase, evidence:

- ★ Supports validation and rating decisions
- ★ Must clearly demonstrate implementation of standards
- ★ Represents the program's current level of quality
- ★ Is reviewed as part of the official rating process

What to know:

- ★ Documentation submitted for rating is final and formal
- ★ Evidence must reflect current, consistently implemented practices
- ★ Only required documentation should be uploaded
- ★ Materials should be clear, accurate, and representative of everyday practice

What to Consider Before Formal Submission

Before submitting documentation for rating, programs should ask:

- ★ Would this clearly demonstrate the standard to a reviewer?
- ★ Does this reflect what staff are consistently doing?
- ★ Is this documentation current and in active use?
- ★ Does it accurately represent the program today?

If not, the documentation may be better suited for reflection or future improvement rather than rating submission.

Labeling Documents Uploaded to the NJCCIS File Cabinet

To ensure documentation can be easily reviewed and accurately connected to the Grow NJ Kids Standards, all documents uploaded to the NJCCIS File Cabinet must be clearly and consistently labeled.

Required Labeling Format

Each uploaded document must include the **Grow NJ Kids standard number** and a **brief, accurate description of the document**.

When naming files, programs should use the following format:

- ★ **Standard Number – Brief Description of Document**

File names should clearly indicate **what the document is** and **how it relates to the standard**.

When naming uploaded files:

- ★ Include the **standard number** (e.g., CTL 6)
- ★ Use a **clear, descriptive title**
- ★ Ensure the name matches the document's actual content.
- ★ Use simple, consistent wording
- ★ Avoid vague labels such as "document," "policy," or "example"

Programs should not upload files without a standard number in the file name.

Example: CTL 6

If uploading documentation to support CTL 6, appropriate file names may include:

- ★ CTL 6 – Curriculum Implementation Plan
- ★ CTL 6 – Weekly Lesson Plan Sample
- ★ CTL 6 – Curriculum Fidelity Checklist
- ★ CTL 6 – Classroom Observation Tool

Accurate labeling ensures documentation is reviewed under the correct standard and supports a smoother Grow NJ Kids rating process. Taking a few extra moments to name files correctly helps avoid follow-up requests and supports timely completion of your submission.

Grow NJ Kids and Professional Development

The Grow NJ Kids professional development requirements help maintain consistent quality in professional development while supporting the unique developmental needs of staff and recognizing NJ's mixed delivery system. The following represents an overview of how we define professional development and requirements related to professional development. Questions related to professional development should be directed to the Grow NJ Kids Training Services.

As described by [NAEYC](#), professional development is a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work (NAEYC). Professional development is categorized through three means of attainment that support a continuum of learning. These include formal education, training and technical assistance.

- **Formal Education** - offered through a professionally accredited secondary school, college or university. This education is delivered by professionals who meet qualifications required by the state, accreditor and institution and involves interaction between teachers, faculty and students. Completion of coursework or a program requires satisfactory performance on content standards or outcomes-based assessments and results in a recognized education degree and or credential.
- **Training** - a learning experience, or series of experiences, that addresses a specific area of inquiry or related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills.
- **Technical Assistance** - the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application or implementation of services by recipients. Mentoring, coaching, consultation and peer-to-peer activities such as communities of practice are all considered as strategies for technical assistance.

Professional Development Length and Approval Requirements:

- Professional development in a topic area must equal a **minimum of 2 hours unless otherwise listed**. The two hours can represent two 1-hour professional development opportunities.
- Professional development must be delivered by **trainers who are approved** in the New Jersey Child Care Information System (NJCCIS), approved or certified by the training content developer, or able to produce a train-the-trainer certificate on the content provided.
 - **Trainer Approval:** Individuals that have experience providing adult education in early childhood related topics may apply to become an approved Content Specialist or Instructor through the NJ Workforce Registry. Instructions on how to apply for a trainer role in NJCCIS can be found by visiting the registry section of the [NJCCIS help page](#) and downloading “**How to Request a Trainer Role**”.
- Professional development **should align with** [NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies](#).

Professional development for Curriculum, Performance Based Assessments and Developmental Screening:

- Any professional development related to curriculum implementation, performance-based assessments or developmental screening **must be provided by the curriculum/tool developer, by a trainer certified by the curriculum/tool developer or offered through Grow NJ Kids Training Services.**
- Curriculum Training related to CTL 1 and CTL 2 must be related to the implementation of the curricula adopted by the program. Curriculum informational sessions, general training related to ECE, performance-based assessment training (TS Gold, HighScope COR) and courses that are not specific to the implementation of the curriculum materials or components do not meet the definition of “curriculum training”.

Exemptions for New Staff:

- Programs can exclude staff in their first year of employment from professional development completion calculations if these staff members have an up-to-date professional development plan that shows they will complete the required professional development by their second year.

Department of Education (DOE) Preschool Program Requirements:

- DOE programs with their own comprehensive professional development systems must ensure that their professional development meets the intention of the Grow NJ Kids standards. Curriculum training must be provided by an approved trainer certified by the curriculum developer. Staff working in public preschool programs are welcome to complete courses available through NJCCIS to meet PD goals.

Purposeful Professional Development Selection:

- ECE program staff should select professional development that aligns with the specific content standards set by Grow NJ Kids. This professional development should also address the individual needs of each staff member.

Am I choosing High Quality Professional Development?

1. Is the training aligned to the Grow NJ Kids standard(s) your program is trying to meet?
 - a. Is this training required or recommended for the rating level your program is working to achieve?
 - b. Does this PD support individual staff PD plans?
 - c. Is this PD aligned to your curriculum or assessment tool?
 - d. Does this PD meet minimum hour requirements (2 hours/6 hours/etc.)?
 - e. Does the PD avoid disallowed topics (e.g., promotional sales pitches)?
 2. Is the training offered by a legitimate, verified, or qualified training agency?
 3. Is the individual TRAINER qualified to deliver this specific training topic?
 4. Does the training provide evidence of completion (certificate, sign in, etc.)?
- ☐ If the answer to all 4 questions is **YES** – training will meet requirements for GNJK
- ☐ If the answer to 1 or more of the questions is **NO** – individuals should explore other training options or may risk misalignment with GNJK requirements.

Professional Development Resources

Grow NJ Kids partners with the following organizations to provide professional development to participating programs. Courses are available through the NJ Workforce Registry located in the [NJ Child Care Information System \(NJCCIS\)](#).

Resources, Training and Professional Development Sponsored by Grow NJ Kids

PD Provider	Types of PD Provided	How to Find Training offered by this Provider
Grow NJ Kids Training Services (GNJKTS) @ Rutgers University	Curriculum, Child Development, Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners, Environment Rating Scales, NJ State Standards, Strengthening Families, Multilingual Learners, Business Development, Developmental Screening, Performance-Based Assessment, Evaluating and Support Teachers, Leadership Training	Use the “Training Agency” search option in NJCCIS and select “Grow NJ Kids Training Services” to find courses offered by this provider Click Here to View the GNJK Training Services Course Catalog
The Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) @ Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health	Social-Emotional Development and Inclusion Keeping Babies and Children in Mind Training Series, Pyramid Model Training, Leadership Training, Challenging Behaviors, and more.	Use the “Training Agency” search option in NJCCIS and select “Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health” to find courses offered by this provider
The NJ Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC) @ the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium	Food Allergies, Special Diets, Feeding, Caring for children with special health needs, medication administration, prevention of the spread of communicable diseases, Child safety and injury prevention.	Use the “Training Agency” search option in NJCCIS and select “Central NJ Family Health Consortium” to find courses offered by this provider
The Early Childhood Leadership Institute (ECLI) @ Rowan University	HEART of Leadership Training Series	Find more information about ECLI here. Use the “Training Agency” search option in NJCCIS and select “Early Childhood Leadership Institute” to find courses offered by this provider
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) - county-based	Health and Safety, Mandated Reporting, Child Development, First Aid/CPR, Infant/Toddler Care, ECE Business Practices, Strengthening Families, The Growing Brain, the Program for Infant and Toddler Care,	Find more information about your local CCR&R here. Use the “Training Agency” search option in NJCCIS and select the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency in your community to find locally available trainings.

Technical Assistance Resources

Grow NJ Kids partners with the following organizations to provide Technical Assistance to participating programs.

Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Centers and TA Specialists (TAS)

There are 4 regional technical assistance centers located in NJ. All GNJK programs are assigned a TAS within their region. TASs will help all Grow NJ Kids participating programs assess, plan, and guide you as you work towards your quality improvement goals. TAS also support programs as they prepare for each rating cycle and are available to provide coaching, mentoring and consultation supports. Your TAS can provide support or guide you to resources related to all 5 GNJK Domains as well as support with the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-3, ECERS-3 and FCCERS-3).

South TA Center: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem Counties

North TA Center: Bergen, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Union, Sussex, and Warren Counties

Central and Northeast TA Centers: Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth Ocean and Somerset Counties

Grow NJ Kids Quality Improvement Specialists (QIS)

Located at your county CCR&R, Quality Improvement Specialists are assigned to all Center-based and FCC providers that enroll in GNJK. TA is provided during the initial onboarding process to support you as you begin your quality improvement journey. QISs can also provide support with the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-3, ECERS-3 and FCCERS-3). **Find more information about your [local CCR&R here](#).**

Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) @ Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health

Specialized technical assistance in social emotional development and/or inclusion. Pyramid model coaching. **Eligible providers may request support through the Quality Initiatives Quicklink in NJCCIS. Or, for more information visit: [The Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative](#)**

Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC) @ the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium

Food Allergies, Special Diets, Feeding, Caring for children with special health needs, medication administration, prevention of the spread of communicable diseases, Child safety and injury prevention. **Find more information about [Child Care Health Consultants here](#). Or call 1-888-999-1780 or email cchc@cjfhc.org**

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)

Special needs, inclusion, parent engagement and advocacy. **Find more information about [SPAN here](#)**

NJ School-Age Child Care Coalition

School age children's afterschool and out-of-school time support, training and resources. **Eligible providers may request support through the Quality Initiatives Quicklink in NJCCIS. Find more information about [NJSACC here](#).**

Infant Toddler Specialist Network

Infant-toddler care, B-3 Early Learning Standards, learning space arrangement and support, strategies for handling challenging behavior, ITERS-3, FCCERS-3, B-3 child development, health and safety, PD planning and goal development. **Toddler Specialists are [located at your county-based CCR&R](#). Eligible providers may request support through the Quality Initiatives Quicklink in NJCCIS.**

Grow NJ Kids and Professional Development - Who

ADMINISTRATOR



An individual responsible for the overall management, supervision, and leadership of early childhood education programs.

SUPERVISOR



An individual responsible for the supervision and leadership of early childhood education staff.

EDUCATOR



A person who provides education and care for young children.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF



Staff who do not provide instruction to children but are present in the facility and engage socially with children. Examples of non-instructional staff in professional development requirements include bus drivers, cooks, nutrition support staff, and custodial staff.



Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Foundational Standards

This section of the guide focuses on the **Foundational Standards** — the building blocks of high-quality early childhood environments. These standards represent the everyday practices that ensure children are safe, supported, and engaged in nurturing, developmentally rich experiences.

To receive a Grow NJ Kids star rating, all **Foundational Standards must be fully met and verified by your Technical Assistance Specialist**. Programs will need to provide documentation and evidence of implementation in order to complete this review.

As you move through this section, notice what is already strong in your program, celebrate progress, and identify any steps needed to prepare for TAS verification.



Foundational Standards (FS) (Required) – Star Level 2

(Reviewed virtually or onsite by a Technical Assistance Specialist)

All programs participating in Grow NJ Kids are **required** to show evidence of meeting ALL Foundational Standards (FS 1-9) prior to submitting for rating. Foundational standards must be verified by the program's assigned Technical Assistance Specialist before a rating application will be accepted.

FS 1: Educators and supervisors have received an overview of the most recent NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.



Intent: To align staff practices with statewide expectations, ensuring consistency and quality across classrooms. For children, this means learning experiences are developmentally appropriate; for families, it reassures them their child's care reflects evidence-based best practices.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts and/or college transcripts showing completion of coursework for educators and supervisors applicable to the age group staff are currently working with. This standard can be met through informal training, done with a director, mentor, coach, etc. A sign off that the staff member has received an overview is sufficient for this standard.

Resources: Training on the NJ B-3 Early Learning Standards and NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are offered by Grow NJ Kids Training Services and your local CCR&R. Visit www.NJCCIS.com to register.

- **NJ Birth to 3 Early Learning Standards** – Self-paced, available 24/7, English/Spanish through NJCCIS offered by Grow NJ Kids Training Services
- **NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards** – Self-paced, available 24/7, English/Spanish through NJCCIS offered by Grow NJ Kids Training Services

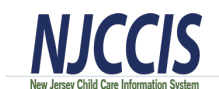
FS 2: All educators are enrolled in the NJ Workforce Registry.



Intent: To promote accountability and tracks professional development, giving families confidence that their child's teachers are recognized, qualified, and part of a professional system committed to growth.

Required Evidence: A copy of each staff member's NJCCIS Membership Card or listing of NJCCIS ID#s

Resources: Visit www.NJCCIS.com to register. Remember to visit the help page to learn more about how to associate staff to your program, access professional development and more.



FS 3: Written personnel and program operational policies (i.e., staff handbook) are used to communicate program policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities to staff.



Intent: To create clarity and consistency for staff, fostering family trust and confidence when well-communicated, transparent policies guide staff behavior and program operations.

Required Evidence: A copy of the staff program policies handbook.

Resources: Whether you're developing your first policy manual, considering making revisions, or need general advice on this topic, ask your QIS or TAS for support. Additionally, consider attending a Peer Learning Community or networking meeting hosted by your regional TA center to connect and share ideas with other participating programs.

FS 4: Administrators and supervisors have completed professional development on evaluating and supporting early childhood educators.



Intent: To strengthen leadership's ability to guide teacher growth, resulting in higher-quality instruction for children and more engaged, skilled teachers who meet families' expectations and children's needs.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts, and/or college transcripts that reflect completion of **professional development**.

Resources: Training offered by Grow NJ Kids Training Services. Check www.NJCCIS.com to search for available courses on this topic. You may also show evidence of related college coursework, or classes/training you have completed.

FS 5: All educators who have completed their first year of employment receive an annual written performance evaluation conducted by their supervisor.



Intent: To promote continuous improvement and reflection, resulting in educators who are more responsive to children's learning needs and family feedback.

Required Evidence: Completed annual written performance evaluation protocol or form for at least 80% of program staff. Confidential information may be redacted.

Resources: Speak with your TAS if you are seeking support related to staff performance evaluations. They can provide resources related to preparing for, facilitating and documenting annual performance reviews. They are also available to review and provide feedback on your current policies related to staff performance evaluations.

FS 6: All educators and leadership have an annual Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).



Intent: To support lifelong learning and professional growth, giving children teachers who continually improve their practice and showing families that the program values and invests in staff quality.

Required Evidence: Annual Individualized Professional Development Plans. Plans could be included in annual performance evaluations.

Resources: Coming soon – visit NJCCIS to create your own custom IPDP or download a printable template. [Click this link](#) to learn more about how **Head Start** uses IDPDs to support career pathways SMART Goals to create comprehensive, individualized PD plans.

NJCCIS Registry Users: All NJCCIS Registry Users have access to the Professional Development Plan template located in each users Professional Development Profile.

FS 7: Program implements a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process that includes regular assessments, goal setting, and action plans to address identified areas for enhancement. The CQI process should include family and staff participation and feedback. Programs utilize the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in NJCCIS to document their CQI Journey.



Intent: To integrates a cycle of assessment and goal-setting with family and staff input, strengthening programs, improving children’s learning and care environments over time, and ensuring families feel heard as partners.

Required Evidence: Completed QIP on NJCCIS and narrative on how CQI process included family and staff participation and feedback.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) - A commitment and process made by Grow NJ Kids Programs to identify, describe, and analyze strengths and challenges within a programs policies, protocols and practices. Programs committed to CQI consistently test, implement, learn, and revise their practices with a goal of continuous growth and improvement. The Grow NJ Kids QIP is the tool utilized to document a program’s CQI journey.

Resources: Learn [how to create a QIP here](#). Complete your QIP through the GNJK quicklink on [NJCCIS](#). Visit the [help page](#) for step-by-step instruction on creating your QIP.

FS 8: Programs serving infants have a Safe Sleep policy in accordance with the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and [Caring for our Children 3.1.4.1](#) (waived for programs who do not serve infants and toddlers). This standard is not applicable for programs serving children over 1 year of age.



Intent: To prioritize infant safety through evidence-based sleep practices, giving families confidence that their infants are protected from preventable risks.

Required Evidence: Policy that states the importance of using Safe Sleep practices, lists the ABCs of Safe Sleep, lists items prohibited in cribs, and includes a commitment to use the ABCs of Safe Sleep for every baby and every sleep. Staff signatures indicating receipt of the program's Safe Sleep Policy. Evidence of policy implementation observed or confirmed.

Resources: Did you know? NJ has a network of [Child Care Health Consultants](#) (CCHC) dedicated to supporting child-care centers and family child-care providers participating in Grow NJ Kids. The CCHC's role is to support child care providers by promoting best practice standards for optimal health and safety in child care settings, based on the National Health and Safety Standards. Want to learn more about how to support safe sleep practices in your program? Email the Child Care Health Consultants at cchc@cjfhc.org.

FS 9: The program has established and enforces policies aimed at preventing suspension and expulsion.



Intent: To promote inclusion and equity, keeping children in supportive environments rather than excluding them and providing families with stability while avoiding disruption in care and stigma.

Required Evidence: Policies aimed at preventing suspension and expulsion. These policies must include proactive strategies to support children's social and emotional development, teacher training and intervention plans for addressing challenging behaviors, and collaborative efforts with families and specialists to ensure every child receives the support they need to thrive. Enforcement of policies can be demonstrated using documentation and/or narratives.

Resources: See the NJ DFD [Policy Statement on Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion of Children Birth to Age Five for Early Childhood Programs](#). School-based preschool, centers contracted with a local BOE to provide preschool services and Head Start programs can visit the NJ Department of Education website for specific guidance on the prevention of suspension and expulsion.

Foundational Standards Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the Foundational Standards.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Domain #1 Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Standards (CTL)

The **Curriculum, Teaching & Learning domain** reflects the core practices that guide how children learn and engage each day. Standards in this section support the intentional use of curriculum, developmentally appropriate instruction, and ongoing observation to understand each child's progress. CTL focuses on purposeful planning, responsive teaching, and environments that promote exploration, problem-solving, early literacy, and school readiness.

Programs may use this section to review **how curriculum is implemented, how learning experiences are individualized, and how staff support children's development across all learning domains**. This section is designed to strengthen both daily instruction and long-term learning outcomes.



Domain #1: Curriculum Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Grow NJ Kids focus on **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL)** ensures that the developmental milestones and learning needs of children are being met through evidence-based practices. By focusing on CTL, Grow NJ Kids programs tailor their curriculum and activities to foster cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in a holistic manner. A strong commitment to CTL also fosters a culture of intentional and reflective practice where educators are encouraged to observe, document, and analyze children's progress, leading to informed decision-making and individualized support.

Important Terms

Developmentally and Culturally Responsive Practice - Valuing and recognizing child development as both universal and cross-cultural in nature. The notion of cross-cultural development suggests that children's social, cognitive, physical, emotional, and language development are culturally constructed in important ways.

Developmental Screening - The practice of systematically looking for and monitoring signs that a young child may not be meeting developmental milestones in one or more areas of development. Screening is not meant to establish a diagnosis for the child but rather to help professionals determine whether more in-depth assessment is needed. Examples of Developmental Screening include Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3), Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) and Brigance.

Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) - A child-centered approach that evaluates a child's ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a practical context. Examples of a PBA include Teaching Strategies Gold, HighScope COR, and the Work Sampling System (WSS).

Inclusion - The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities, and members of culturally, linguistically or racially diverse communities.

IDEA - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a [law](#) that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children, supports early intervention services for infants and toddlers, and their families, and awards competitive discretionary grants.

Part B and C of IDEA

- **Part B** - Provides grants to states for programs that educate school-aged children with disabilities.
- **Part C** - Provides grants to states for programs that serve infants and toddlers with disabilities

NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals - A [guide](#) for professionals working with children birth through age five as well as those professionals engaged in teacher preparation, home visitation, and intervention services as to what professionals should know and be able to do with very young children in multiple settings.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - A legally binding custom learning plan for a student with disabilities in a U.S. public school. It's developed in collaboration with educators, case managers and parents to outline the student's goals, services, accommodations, and how their progress will be measured, ensuring they get the support they need to succeed in school.

504 Plan - A legally binding school plan that provides accommodations and supports to students with disabilities so they can fully participate in school. It's created under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ensured equal access to learning, but does not include special education services like an IEP does.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) - Both a process and a document. An IFSP is provided if a child is found eligible for early intervention services. An IFSP supports infants and toddlers to develop to their fullest potential.

Home Language - A language learned in childhood in the home environment, also referred to as first language, or native language.

GROW NJ KIDS ALIGNED CURRICULA

DOE - Aligned Curricula

The following curricula have been approved by the New Jersey Department of Education and are aligned to the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and/or Birth to Three Early Learning Standards.

Programs implementing any of the curricula below meet the curriculum requirements for Grow NJ Kids.

Any program using one of the following curricula can move forward in the Grow NJ Kids process:

- **Creative Curriculum – Teaching Strategies***
- **High Scope***
- **Tools of the Mind***
- **Connect4Learning**
- **Frog Street**

*Regular, free professional development opportunities are currently offered through Grow NJ Kids Training Services and available through NJCCIS: **Creative Curriculum**, **High Scope**, and **Tools of the Mind**.

Grow NJ Kids - Aligned Curricula

The following curricula have also been aligned by the Grow NJ Kids Curriculum Alignment Committee:

- **F.L.E.X – Goddard School**
- **The Kiddie Academy Curriculum – Kiddie Academy**
- **KinderCare Curriculum – KinderCare Education Early Foundation**
- **Multiple Intelligence and Project Approach – Montclair Community Pre-K**
- **Montessori – Westmont Montessori School**
- **Little People at Work**
- **Learning Experience Academic Program (L.E.A.P.) – The Learning Experience**
- **Kids ‘R’ Kids – Kids ‘R’ Kids of Montville**
- **Early Learning Academies - Kidsnet Learning Center**
- **Funshine Express – The Owl’s Nest Childcare Center**
- **Experience Early Learning (Mother Goose Time) – Intentional Children’s Academy**
- **Prime Time (Ascend) – Prime Time Learning Center**
- **Ready to Shine - Acelero Learning**
- **Wonder of Learning – The Goddard School**
- **Seedlings Curriculum – Lightbridge Academy**
- **World at their Fingertips Curriculum – Bright Horizons**

Curriculum Materials and Professional Development are not currently provided for the GNJK-aligned curricula listed above.

Programs using any other curriculum may submit their curriculum to the Grow NJ Kids Curriculum Alignment Committee for a review. Please refer to the handout detailing the **Curriculum Alignment Process**, or contact Rita Koromi at Rita.Koromi@dhs.nj.gov for more information.

Domain #1: Curriculum Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Overview of Scoring

Domain	Topics Overview		Standards	Points
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL)	- Curriculum - Lesson Planning - Transitions - Assessment - Inclusion	- Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion Diversity - Developmental Screening - Professional Development - Classroom Environment (ERS)	12	60

Professional Development in this Domain

Professional Development Topic (NJ ECE Core Knowledge and Competency)	Required	Optional for Points	Audience Educators (E) Administrators and Supervisors (A) Non-Instructional Staff (N)
Developmentally and Culturally Responsive Practice <i>(1. Child Growth and Development)</i>	Level 3		E, A
Lesson planning <i>(3. Learning Environment and Curriculum)</i>	Level 3		
Curriculum Training focused on Implementation <i>(3. Learning Environment and Curriculum)</i>	Levels 4 and 5		
Developmental Screening <i>(5. Child Assessment)</i>		X	
Overview of NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards <i>(1. Child Growth and Development)</i>		X	N
Developmentally and Culturally Responsive Practice <i>(1. Child Growth and Development)</i>		X	
Appropriate Adult-Child Interactions <i>(4. Teaching-Learning Interactions and Approaches)</i>		X	
Performance Based Assessment <i>(5. Child Assessment)</i>		X	
Inclusion and Inclusive Practices <i>(7. Serving Diverse Populations)</i>		X	E, A
Supporting Children's Home Language <i>(7. Serving Diverse Populations)</i>		X	
Supporting Child Transitions <i>(3. Learning Environment and Curriculum)</i>		X	
The Environment Rating Scales <i>(3. Learning Environment and Curriculum)</i>		X	

CTL 1

Intent To strengthen leadership's capacity to support effective instruction, enabling children to receive learning that reflects their cultures and needs while families see their values and traditions respected

Standard**Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors**

Administrators and supervisors have completed professional development on each of the following topics:

Required to qualify for 3-stars – Lesson Planning and Developmentally Responsive Practice

- ★ Developmentally and culturally responsive practice related to curriculum implementation (minimum of 2 hours within past 3 years) **and**
- ★ Lesson planning; **or**
- ★ 6 hours of professional development on curriculum implementation

Required to qualify for 4 or 5 stars – Curriculum Implementation Training

- ★ Foundational and ongoing professional development related to curriculum implementation must be delivered by or approved by the curriculum developer.
- ★ Minimum of 6 hours of professional development required every 3 years up to 36 hours. After 36 hours, supervisors can select specialized professional development related* to curriculum implementation

**Related Curriculum Training: Once an individual has completed 36 hours of formal curriculum training by the curriculum developer or the program has completed all available training offered by the developer, staff may complete training that is related to the implementation of curriculum. Related trainings do not have to be provided by the curriculum developer however the topic and content should support the individual's efforts to effectively implement the curriculum in the classroom.*

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 6**Level 3 Point Max**

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (1 point) **or**
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points)

Level 4- and 5-Point Max

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points) **or**
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (4 points)

Head Start Alignment**2016 and 2025**

Star Rating 3: §1302.91(a); §1302.92(a); §1302.32(a)(2) 3 points are waived

Star Rating 4: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2025: R.4.02 (Star Rating 3 only)

2022: 6D.12; 6D.18


CTL 1

Reflective Questions

- ★ Are you aligning your professional development (PD) with your OOL requirements and your needs?
- ★ How are supervisors applying what they learn in PD to support educators' lesson planning and classroom practices?
- ★ How is curriculum PD tracked and revisited over the three-year period to ensure continuity and accountability?
- ★ In what ways do I evaluate whether the PD aligns with the curriculum developer's guidance and supports fidelity of implementation?

Resources

- ★ Check out this [resource](#) from the National Early Care & Education Workforce Center

Bright Ideas

- ★ Develop a one-page tracker for past and future professional development. Align your tracker with your NJCCIS Transcript.
- ★ Set up quarterly meetings where the admin reflects on their PD practice and its impact on the program

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Curriculum, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), Child Development, Culturally Responsive Practice

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services or seek training directly through your curriculum vendor.

Rating Information

- ★ To earn a star 3, at least 1 point needs to be earned for this standard.
- ★ To earn a star 4 or 5, at least 50% of administrators/supervisors must have at least 6 hours of curriculum training in the past 3 years.

Notes

CTL 2

Intent: To ensure educators create meaningful, inclusive lessons, benefiting children through engaging, relevant learning and reassuring families that their backgrounds are honored in the classroom.

Standard

Educators have completed professional development on each of the following topics:

Required to qualify for 3 Stars – Lesson Planning and Developmentally Responsive Practice

- ★ Developmentally and culturally responsive practice related to curriculum implementation (minimum of 4 hours within past 3 years) **AND**
- ★ Lesson planning; **OR,**
- ★ 6 hrs of professional development on curriculum implementation

Required to qualify for 4 or 5 Stars – Curriculum Implementation Training

- ★ Foundational and ongoing professional development **related to curriculum implementation** must be delivered by or approved by the curriculum developer.
- ★ Minimum of 12 hours of professional development required every 3 years up to 36 hours. After 36 hours, supervisors can select specialized professional development related* to curriculum implementation

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Related Curriculum Training: Once an individual has completed 36 hours of formal curriculum training by the curriculum developer or the program has completed all available training offered by the developer, staff may complete training that is related to the implementation of curriculum. Related trainings do not have to be provided by the curriculum developer however the topic and content should support the individual's efforts to effectively implement the curriculum in the classroom.

Points: Up to 12

Level 3 Point Max

- ★ 50% of educators complete professional development (2 point) **or**
- ★ 100% of educators complete professional development (4 points)

Level 4- and 5-Point Max

- ★ 50% of educators complete professional development (6 points) **or**
- ★ 100% of educators complete professional development (8 points) to 12

Head Start Alignment

2016: Star Rating 3: §1302.91(a); §1302.92 (b)(1) and (5); §648A(a)(1)(a-c) and (5) - 4 points are waived and requirements are met for Star 3
Star Rating 4: No alignment

2025: Star Rating 3: §1302.91(a); §1302.92 (b)(1) and (6); §648A(a)(1)(a-c) and (5) 4 points are waived, and requirements are met for Star 3
Star Rating 4: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.
2022: 6D.7; 6D.9

2025: R.4.02 (Star Rating 3 only)



CTL 2

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I verify that all educators have received the required curriculum implementation training within the correct time frame?
- ★ How do educators apply their training in lesson planning and daily practice?
- ★ What supports are in place to ensure educators feel confident implementing the curriculum with fidelity?
- ★ How do I identify when additional or specialized curriculum-related PD is needed?

Resources

- ★ [ECTA Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center – Inclusion Resources](#)
- ★ [Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Offer in-house study groups where educators review curriculum modules together.
- ★ Pair new teachers with mentors who model lesson planning using the curriculum.
- ★ Provide incentives (certificates, recognition) for completing curriculum PD milestones.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Curriculum, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), Child Development, Culturally Responsive Practice, Lesson Planning

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services or seek training directly through your curriculum vendor.

Rating Information

- ★ To earn a star 3, at least 2 points need to be earned for this standard.
- ★ To earn a star 4 or 5, at least 50% of educators must have at least 12 hours of curriculum training in the past 3 years.

Notes

CTL 3

Intent: To equip staff to assess and support each child holistically, improving the quality of early childhood education and care by ensuring professional training in core areas that influence child outcomes and strengthen both individual success and program accountability.

Standard

Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors and Educators

Administrators/Supervisors and Educators have completed professional development on the following topics:

- ★ Implementation of Developmental Screening
- ★ Implementation of program's specific Performance Based Assessment (PBA)
- ★ Inclusion and inclusive practices (minimum of 2 hours within past 3 years)
- ★ Supporting children's home language
- ★ Supporting Child Transitions
- ★ The Environment Rating Scales (minimum of 2 hours within past 3 years)

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 12

- ★ 50% of administrators, supervisors and educators complete professional development (1 point per topic) **or**
- ★ 100% of administrators, supervisors and educators complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.



CTL 3

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I schedule and document PD across all of these content areas within a 3-year period?
- ★ How do we ensure continuity and consistency between PD topics—linking what we learn about inclusion, transitions, and curriculum?
- ★ How do you engage educators in choosing specialized PD?
- ★ What strategies do you use to support staff in accessing PD?

Resources

- ★ [DAP: Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ After completion of your annual 12 hours of curriculum specific training, consider topics to enhance the design and use of your learning centers!
- ★ Work with your Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS) to map out required PD topics over a three-year cycle.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Developmental Screening, Performance Based Assessment (TS Gold and HighScope COR), ESL/Multi-Lingual Learners, ERS

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Topics: Inclusion and Inclusive Practices

Offered by: Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at Montclair State University

Rating Information

- ★ Administrators/supervisors and educators do not need to take PD on all topics, but the required % of staff must be met for the program to earn the point(s) for the topic(s)

Notes:

CTL 4

Intent: To ensure all adults in the program foster positive, supportive relationships, creating a safe, welcoming environment for children and a strong sense of community for families.

Standard

Professional Development for Non-Instructional Staff

Program's non-instructional staff receive a minimum of 2 hours of professional development on each of the following topics:

- ★ Developmentally and culturally responsive practices (within past 3 years)
- ★ Overview of NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards
- ★ Appropriate adult-child interactions (Within past 3 years)

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 6

- ★ 50% of non-instructional staff complete professional development (1 point per topic) **or**
- ★ 100% of non-instructional staff complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: §1302.92(b)(3)(6) 2 points are waived, additional points can be earned if the program submits evidence of professional development on Overview of NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, and/or appropriate adult-child interactions within past 3 years.

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10E

2022: 10E.2

2025: Not applicable.



CTL 4

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we communicate the importance of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive practice across all staff roles?
- ★ What are your goals related to interactions between young children and non-instructional staff?
- ★ In what ways can non-instructional staff apply what they learn about interactions and standards in their daily routines?

Resources

- ★ [NJ Birth to Three Standards](#)
- ★ [NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Encourage discussion during staff meetings about how non-instructional roles support positive interactions and responsive practice.
- ★ Have toddler and pre-school teachers invite non-instructional staff to their circle times. Make it a priority for children to know these important team members and to understand the jobs they do to make the program safe and healthy!

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: DAP, Adult-Child Interactions, NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards and NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services. Many courses are self-paced and available 24/7

Rating Information

- ★ Non-instructional staff must have NJCCIS accounts that are included on the program's personnel record in NJCCIS
- ★ Non-instructional staff do not need to take PD on all topics, but the required % of staff must be met for the program to earn the point(s) for the topic(s)

Notes:

CTL 5

Intent: To align teaching to standards and individual differences, creating a high-quality, equitable learning environment where all children can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally by meeting them where they are developmentally and culturally.

Standard

Required Standard for Level 3: Lesson plans and activities for all classrooms are developmentally and culturally appropriate, support children’s individual differences and align to the NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Lesson plans for all classrooms reflect individualized activities and are aligned to NJ Birth to Three Learning Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards (including standards that address cultures within the classroom and community) and/or Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), 504 plans, or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)
- ★ Documentation that lesson plans are implemented

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.31(a)(b); §648A(a)m

2025: §1302.31(a)(b); §648A(a)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.3.07; A.5.06



Reflective Questions

- ★ How do educators ensure lesson plans reflect both developmental appropriateness and cultural responsiveness?
- ★ How are lesson plans aligned to the NJ Birth–3 or Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards?
- ★ How do supervisors review and provide feedback on lesson plans to support continuous improvement?
- ★ How do we adapt lesson plans for children with varying needs, interests, and learning styles?
- ★ How do families' cultures, languages, and experiences inform our planning?

Resources

- ★ [Transforming Teaching: Creating Lesson Plans for Child Centered Learning in Preschool](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Use lesson plan templates that clearly connect activities to the NJ Birth to Three and Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.
- ★ Schedule monthly lesson-plan review meetings to discuss how plans reflect developmental goals and cultural relevance.
- ★ Invite teachers to bring sample lesson plans to staff meetings and to share activities/lessons with each other that really engaged the children.
- ★ Encourage teachers to help each other modify lessons for individual children or children in different age groups.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Check out the Lesson Planning courses and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners Training Series

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ Required for Star 3
- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ Programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program
- ★ To receive credit, programs **must submit a narrative description** explaining how submitted lesson plans include evidence that plans and activities are developmentally and culturally appropriate, support children's individual differences and align to NJ learning standards

Notes:

CTL 6

Intent: To provide children with high-quality, consistent, and effective early learning experiences grounded in research on what works best for young children, ensuring they are well-prepared for school and lifelong learning.

Standard

Required Standard for Level 4 and 5: Program adopts and fully implements a research-based validated curriculum that aligns to the NJ Birth to Three Standards and/or the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Documentation that research-based curriculum has been obtained
- ★ Documentation that research-based curriculum is implemented and learning standard coded lesson plans demonstrate aligned to the curriculum

Points: up to 4

- ★ Research-based curriculum obtained by program (1 point)
- ★ Lesson plans aligned to curriculum and coded to the early learning standards (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.32(a)(1); §648(f)(3):

2025: §1302.32(a)(1); §642(f)(3):

Both 2016 and 2025 - Waived for programs using a curriculum that is aligned to the NJ learning standards; if using another curriculum, the standard is not waived.

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: R.3.01; R.3.03; R.4.02; A.3.02

Notes:

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we ensure the curriculum selected is evidence-based and developmentally appropriate for the ages served?
- ★ How do educators demonstrate fidelity to the curriculum while maintaining flexibility to meet children's needs?
- ★ How is curriculum implementation monitored and supported through coaching or supervision?
- ★ How often do we review whether the curriculum continues to meet program and community needs?
- ★ How do we use child outcomes and classroom observations to evaluate the curriculum's effectiveness?

Resources

- ★ [Find out more information about the NJDOE Approved Curricula](#)
- ★ [DAP: Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals | NAEYC](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Confirm that the curriculum used is listed as research-based and aligned to NJ standards.
- ★ Have supervisors implement regular curriculum fidelity checks and follow up with support and feedback.
- ★ Create a resource hub where educators can access lesson plan templates, videos of best practices, standards, and curriculum adaptation strategies.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Creative Curriculum, HighScope and Tools of the Mind Curriculum Training

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ **For Star 4 and Star 5**, programs must receive **all 4 points** for this standard
 - ★ This is a voluntary standard for programs seeking a **Star 3**, and these programs can earn up to 4 points
 - ★ Evidence that the curriculum is fully implemented into daily practice is required for review.
 - ★ If submitting lesson plans as evidence of curriculum implementation, programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program, dated for various times of the year, a narrative of how curriculum is implemented throughout the program,
 - ★ Lesson plans submitted **must include a narrative description** explaining how the plans demonstrate alignment to the curriculum
 - ★ Programs can also provide evidence of curriculum implementation through student work samples, videos, a narrative, daily schedules, examples of lesson plan modifications, and how lessons are delivered and teaching strategies are adapted, and/or photos. A narrative should accompany this evidence describing what is captured and how it aligns to the curriculum
-

CTL 7

Intent: To detect concerns early and connects families to supports, benefiting children through timely help and families through clear guidance and resources.

Standard

Program has a written policy outlining the implementation of developmental screening that includes that screenings are performed in accordance with the instrument guidelines or at a minimum at 9, 18, 30, 42 and 60 months, 3, 4, and 5 years of age in accordance with CDC guidelines. A system is established to refer families to further evaluation that address children's developmental and behavioral needs.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Program policy on conducting developmental screenings (who completes screenings, how often are screenings completed, what happens if a student is enrolled during the school year, how are results shared with families, how is referral process described)
- ★ Evidence of screenings taking place*
- ★ Sample family communication and referral

*Onsite review – 25% random sample of completed developmental screenings for each age group

Points: up to 4

- ★ Developmental screening tools obtained by program and policy related to implementation of developmental screening (1 point)
- ★ Developmental screenings conducted a minimum of 1x per year for students receiving parental consent (1 point) **or**
- ★ Developmental screenings performed in accordance with the instrument guidelines or at a minimum at 9, 18, & 30 months, 3, 4, & 5 years of age for students receiving parental consent (2 points)
- ★ Families receive information related to developmental screenings and as appropriate receive referrals for further evaluation (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.33(a), (1)(3)(i-ii); §642(b)(14-15); §642(f)(6)
 2025: §1302.33(a), (1)(3)(i-ii); §642(b)(14-15); §642(f)(6)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 4C.3; 7B.3
 2022: 4C.1; 4C.2; 4C.3
 2025: A.5.01



CTL 7

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I ensure screenings are conducted at recommended intervals and with fidelity to instrument guidelines?
- ★ How are families informed, engaged, and supported throughout the screening and referral process?
- ★ How do I document screening results and follow-up actions consistently?
- ★ How do we coordinate with outside agencies or specialists when concerns arise?
- ★ How do screening practices support early identification and inclusion for all children?

Resources

- ★ [Learn the Signs Act Early](#)
- ★ [Helping parents understand the benefits of developmental screening - Ages and Stages](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Assign one person per age group to oversee the implementation of developmental screening. Start with a manageable screening goal. Then as you master the process add on additional age groups or screening cycles.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: ASQ-3, ESI-3 and Brigance Training

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services or your local LEA

Rating Information

- ★ A 25% random sample of completed developmental screenings for each age group can be reviewed during the virtual documentation review, as evidence of screenings taking place
- ★ In-district DOE programs can submit DOE requirements related to developmental screenings in lieu of parental consent

Notes:

CTL 8

Intent: To ensure teaching responds to real child outcomes, providing children with instruction tailored to their growth and families with meaningful data on progress.

Standard

Program implements a performance-based assessment (PBA) system and uses child assessment data to improve practice.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Documentation that PBA system has been acquired
- ★ Narrative describing implementation
- ★ Description of how PBA data is used to tailor instruction
- ★ Lesson plans that reflect modifications made based on PBA data
- ★ PBA data reflected in staff professional development plans
- ★ Evidence that the following occurred twice during the school year for each classroom:
 - ★ Child assessment data sent to families*; or
 - ★ Parent conferences (virtual or in person) offered to review child assessment data - conference sign-in sheets*
- ★ Narrative description of how and when leadership share PBA data, and how classroom instruction is modified
- ★ *Onsite review – 25% random sample (per age group/classroom) of assessment data sent to families or shared at conferences twice per year

Points: up to 5

- ★ Purchase or acquisition of PBA (1 point)
- ★ PBA Implementation (1 Point)
- ★ Lesson plans reflect modifications based on PBA data (1 Point)
- ★ Child Assessment data shared with families (1 point)
- ★ Use of PBA data to improve classroom and/or program practices (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.33(b)(1-2); §1302.102(b)(2); §648(f)(3)

2025: §1302.33(b)(1-2); §1302.102(b)(2); §648(f)(3)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 4A.2; 4E.1; 4E.2; 4E.5; 4D.5; 4D.6

2022: 4D.4; 4D.5; 4D.6; 4D.7; 4C.3; 4E.5

2025: A.5.04; A.5.05; A.5.07; R.5.01; R.5.02



Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I ensure all educators understand and consistently use the approved PBA tool?
- ★ How is child assessment data reviewed and used to guide instructional planning and individualized support?
- ★ How do we engage families in understanding assessment results and setting goals for their children?
- ★ How do we analyze aggregate data to inform program-level decisions or QIP goals?

Resources

- ★ [Engaging Families as Assessment Partners](#)
- ★ [DAP: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning | NAEYC](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Break down tasks into manageable steps. (e.g., observations in September, documentation in October, data review in November).
- ★ Develop a checklist for educators to self-assess their progress.
- ★ Review PBA reports at team meetings to identify trends and align instructional strategies.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Introduction to TS Gold: Live Virtual; Gold for Administrators and Coaches; COR Advantage Online Training

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ Submitted lesson plans or professional development plans **must include a narrative** describing the included modifications or courses added as a result of analyzing PBA data
- ★ When submitting lesson plans, programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program
- ★ Child assessment data shared with families - A 25% random sample for each age group can be reviewed during the virtual documentation review

Notes:

CTL 9

Intent: To create a learning environment where every child, regardless of ability or background, is fully included, supported, and given the opportunity to grow, learn, and belong.

Standard

Program demonstrates a commitment to inclusion by ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to and can participate in all aspects of the program. This includes providing necessary adaptations and supports to facilitate meaningful participation and engagement.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Program policy that demonstrates commitment to inclusive practices
- ★ Lesson plans noting adaptations and documentation of learning environment and learning experiences

Points: up to 2

- ★ Documentation of Inclusion Policy (1 point)
- ★ Documentation of implementation of inclusive practices (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.60; §1302.61(a); §1302.63 (a); §640(d)(1-2)

2025: §1302.60; §1302.61(a); §1302.63 (a); §640(d)(1-2)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 4A.2

2022: 4C.3

2025: Not applicable.



CTL 9

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I ensure our environment and materials support full participation for all children?
- ★ How do educators adapt instruction and activities to meet diverse needs?
- ★ How are families and specialists involved in developing individualized strategies for inclusion?
- ★ How do we provide PD and coaching that promotes inclusive practices?
- ★ How do we measure progress toward building a truly inclusive culture?

Resources

- ★ [Early Care and Education Environment Indicators and Elements of High-Quality Inclusion](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Utilize the ECE Environment Indicators and Elements of High-Quality Inclusion tool annually with your staff to inform your inclusion goals each year. Celebrate successes and keep learning about inclusion!

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Meeting the Needs of Children with Diverse Abilities, Lesson Planning

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ Lesson plans can be submitted as evidence of the Implementation of inclusive practices; if lesson plans are submitted, programs **must include a narrative** describing the practices that can be validated on the lesson plans
- ★ When submitting lesson plans, programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program

Notes:

CTL 10

Intent: To affirm children’s identities and promotes dual-language development, while families feel respected, engaged, and valued as cultural partners.

Standard

Program demonstrates a commitment to supporting children’s home languages and cultural traditions through intentional practices that foster dual-language development, family engagement, and culturally responsive learning environments.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Verification of the program collecting information on each child’s home language(s) during enrollment to inform classroom practices
- ★ Verification that the program engages families as partners by seeking their input on culturally appropriate practices and language needs
- ★ Verification that the program employs bilingual staff
- ★ Verification that the program regularly evaluates and adapts language support practices based on child outcomes and family feedback
- ★ Verification that inclusive materials and resources are widely accessible and available to children and families

Points: up to 3

- ★ 1 activity demonstrating commitment and/or intentional practices (1 point) **or**
- ★ 2 activities demonstrating commitment and/or intentional practices (2 points) **or**
- ★ 3 or more activities demonstrating commitment and/or intentional practices (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.31(b)(1)(2); §1302.34 (a)(b)(1-2); §1302.50 (b)(1-6); §1302.90 (d)(1-2); §1302.91(e)(5); §1302.91(e)(6)(i-ii); §1302.33(c)(1)(2)(i-iii); §1302.33(c)(3) and (4); §1302.51(a)(1-3); §1302.101(b)(1)(2)(i-iii); §648 (d)(2)(B); §637(21)(G)(v)

2025: §1302.31(b)(1)(2); §1302.34 (a)(b)(1-2); §1302.50 (b)(1-6); §1302.90 (d)(1-2); §1302.91(e)(5); §1302.91(e)(6)(i-ii); §1302.33(c)(1)(2)(i-iii); §1302.33(c)(3) and (4); §1302.51(a)(1-3); §1302.101(b)(1)(2)(i-iii); §637.(21)(G)(v); §648.(d)(2)(B)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: 6D.10

2025: R.4.03


CTL 10

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we integrate children's home languages into daily routines, visuals, and interactions?
- ★ How do educators learn about and honor families' cultural traditions within curriculum planning?
- ★ How do we ensure materials, books, and displays reflect the diversity of enrolled families?
- ★ How do we partner with families to co-create culturally relevant experiences?
- ★ How do we assess whether our practices promote equitable language and cultural inclusion?

Resources

- ★ [Strategies for Culturally Responsive Strength- Based Practices](#)
- ★ [Supporting the Development of Children who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Let educators take turns planning and implementing cultural events. Consider opportunities for family members to stop by to share a book, cooking activity, or song that represents their culture.
- ★ Curate **multicultural books and materials** that reflect enrolled families.
- ★ Utilize your family survey to ensure program practices meet families' needs and goals (see standard FCE 5)

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers

Rating Information

- ★ The program's new student/enrollment questionnaire requesting each student's home language
- ★ Communication between programs and families asking for input on culturally appropriate practices and language needs
- ★ A narrative description outlining the steps the program takes to regularly evaluate and adapt language support practices based on child outcomes and family feedback

Notes:

CTL 11

Intent: To ensure strong transition practices that help children feel secure, supported, and successful as they move through early learning experiences, reduce stress during classroom or program changes, promote emotional security, family engagement, and continuity of care and learning, and provide families with guidance and reassurance during these important milestones.

Standard

Program has created and implements a comprehensive plan for child transitions which ensures a smooth and supportive process for children moving between classrooms, activities, different programs including from Part C to Part B services and on to kindergarten. This plan involves collaboration among educators, families, and any relevant service providers to facilitate continuity of care and a consistent, nurturing environment.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Transition policies to facilitate continuity of care and a consistent, nurturing environment
- ★ Evidence of meetings that support staggered or gradual transition between age groups
- ★ Evidence of children visiting next classroom assignment prior to full-time move
- ★ Verification of staff moving with children to support continuity of care
- ★ Staff facilitating special education transitions
- ★ Verification of family events related to kindergarten transition

Points up to 2

- ★ Evidence of 1 transition strategy (1 point) **or**
- ★ Evidence of 2 or more transition strategies (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.70(a),(b),(c) and (e); §1302.71(a-d); §1302.72 (a-b)

2025: §1302.70 (a),(b), (c) and (e); §1302.71(a-d); §1302.72 (a-b)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 4B

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ Do we have a written, comprehensive transition plan that outlines clear procedures for all types of transitions (within program, between programs, and to kindergarten)?
- ★ How do we prepare children emotionally and socially for new environments or routines?
- ★ Are all staff aware of their specific roles and responsibilities within the transition process?
- ★ How do we collaborate with early intervention (Part C) or local school districts (Part B) to ensure families understand the process and feel supported?
- ★ Are families actively involved in planning and discussing transitions for their child?

Resources

- ★ [Transitions to Kindergarten | NAEYC](#)
- ★ [Helping Children Transition Between Activities](#)
- ★ [Transition from Early Intervention Services to Part B Preschool Special Education Checklist](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Develop formalized transition planning meetings with educators and parents. Create a template for questions that should be addressed and ask families to add their own questions about their child's transition.
- ★ Host family transition meetings or "Step-Up Days" to introduce new teachers and spaces. Coordinate with local districts for students transitioning to public school.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers

Rating Information

- ★ Any family events related to transitions should be collaborative events for the program, children **and** families
- ★ Programs can submit a transition policy towards the evidence of 1 transition strategy
- ★ Evidence of continuity of care (looping) for young children can be submitted for both CTL 11 and Additional Point Opportunity 4

Notes:

CTL 12

Intent: To maintain children in supportive environments while building educator capacity to manage behaviors constructively, ensuring families experience stability and partnership rather than exclusion.

Standard

Program utilizes resources including family engagement and teacher training/support to prevent suspension and expulsion.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ List of resources to support teachers and families who are supporting children with challenging behaviors with narrative on how resources have been utilized
- ★ Family communication related to efforts to support appropriate child behaviors

See [Policy Statement on Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion of Children Birth to Age Five for Early Childhood Programs](#).

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.17 (a-b); §1302.45(b)(6)

2025: §1302.17 (b); §1302.45(b)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: R.6.05; A.6.16

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we identify early signs of challenging behavior and intervene proactively?
- ★ What systems are in place to provide coaching, consultation, or mental health supports for staff and families?
- ★ How do we communicate behavioral expectations in culturally and developmentally appropriate ways?
- ★ How do we partner with families to co-create behavior support strategies?
- ★ How do we monitor and document trends to ensure equitable discipline practices?
- ★ How does the social-emotional training educators receive in the CW domain create an environment that prevents suspension/expulsion?

Resources

- ★ [Policy Statement on Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion of Children Birth to Age Five from Early Childhood Programs](#)
- ★ [Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings: A Program Leaders Guide to Supporting All Children's Success](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Create a collaborative early-intervention system that brings together teachers, families, and support staff to identify and address behavioral or emotional challenges before they lead to suspension or expulsion.
- ★ Offer **reflective supervision** so teachers can discuss stress and strategies

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Child Behaviors that Challenge Others

Offered by: Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ Different from standard FS 9 in that FS 9 requires a policy aimed at preventing suspension and expulsion; *CTL 12 requires **evidence of resources used to prevent suspension and expulsion***

Notes:

Domain 1: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the CTL domain.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Domain #2 Child Wellbeing (CW)

The **Child Wellbeing domain** emphasizes the conditions that allow children to feel safe, healthy, and emotionally secure. The standards support consistent routines, nurturing adult-child relationships, and environments that protect and promote children's physical and emotional needs. Child well-being is foundational to learning and is reflected in daily interactions, caregiving practices, and the overall climate of the classroom.

Programs may use this section to assess the **quality-of-care routines, health and safety procedures, and strategies that support secure attachments and positive behavior**. This domain promotes environments where every child is respected, understood, and able to thrive.



Domain #2: Child Wellbeing (CW)

A focus on **Child Wellbeing (CW)** creates a foundation for healthy development and lifelong learning. When Grow NJ Kids programs prioritize CW, they address the essential needs of children, such as physical health, emotional security, and social connections. This approach ensures that children are not only academically prepared but also equipped with resilience and adaptability. Practices centered around CW foster an environment where children feel safe, valued, and supported. These environments are crucial for promoting positive outcomes and reducing the impact of adverse experiences that can hinder a child's growth and development.

Important Terms

Physical Health - an essential component of overall wellbeing that directly affects long-term health. Important aspects of physical health include exercise, nutrition, and sleep.

Social Emotional Development - The process of learning how to understand and manage emotions, form relationships, and interact with others. It's also known as social and emotional learning (SEL).

Medical Home - Best described as a model of primary care that is patient-centered, consistent, comprehensive, team-based, coordinated, accessible, and focused on quality and safety.

Breast Feeding Friendly - Actively supporting breastfeeding families and helping parents continue breastfeeding when they return to work or school.

Vision Screening - Vision screening is a way to find children who might have eye problems or vision issues. The goal is to find problems early so they can be fixed. Screening ages according to the American Academy of Pediatrics Periodicity Schedule are: well-child visits beginning at 1 month through 30 months, 3, 4, 5, and 6 years.

Hearing Screening - Hearing screening is a test to tell if people have hearing loss. Recommended Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) benchmarks include screening for hearing loss before 1 month of age.

Dental Screening/ Oral Exam - The American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that every child should visit a dentist by age 1 or as soon as the first tooth appears.

Domain #2: Child Wellbeing (CW)

Overview of Scoring

Domain	Topics Overview	Standards	Points
Child Wellbeing (CW)	★ Health ★ Nutrition ★ Safety ★ Wellbeing ★ Cultural Competency ★ Professional Development	8	27

Professional Development in this Domain

Professional Development Topic (NJ ECE Core Knowledge and Competency)	Required	Optional for Points	Audience Educators (E) Administrators and Supervisors (A) Non- Instructional Staff (N)
Physical Health (6. Child Wellness: Health, Safety, Nutrition & Physical Activities)		x	E, A
Social-emotional learning (SEL), and effective strategies to support children's mental health (4. Teaching-Learning Interactions and Approaches)		x	
Pediatric First Aid and CPR (6. Child Wellness: Health, Safety, Nutrition and Physical Activities)		x	E, A, N

CW 1

Intent: To build leadership competence in safety and wellness, ensuring children are safer and families gain peace of mind knowing health and safety are prioritized at the highest level.

Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors

Administrators and supervisors have completed at least 2 hours of professional development on each of the following topics and are currently certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR:

- ★ Pediatric First Aid and CPR Certification (must include proof of certification)
- ★ Physical health (within past 3 years)
- ★ Social-emotional learning (SEL), and effective evidence-based strategies to support children's mental health

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 6

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (1 point per topic)
or
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: §1302.47(b)(4)(i)(J); §1302.92(b)(3); §637 (21)(G)(i) *2 points are waived, and programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of professional development on Pediatric First Aid and CPR Certification (must include proof of certification) or physical health (within past 3 years)*

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 5A.15

2022: 5A.15

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ Does your program have a reliable system in place to track administrator and supervisor CPR/First Aid certification status and expiration dates?
- ★ Do you revisit health-related training often enough to keep practices aligned with the most current guidelines and standards?
- ★ Are administrators and supervisors translating their learning into strategies that staff can apply in classrooms?

Resources

- ★ [The National Center for Pyramid Innovations](#)
- ★ [The Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Introduce daily SEL check-ins in each classroom to reinforce and track opportunities educators use to consistently promote social-emotional skills.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Many options available through NJCCIS by the following training providers:

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services, Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC), Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI), and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Two hours of training required for each topic for which the program submits evidence
- ★ Evidence of **current certification** for Pediatric First Aid and CPR by the required % of staff must be submitted for review
- ★ Training on physical health and social-emotional learning must have been completed within the three years prior to rating submission
- ★ Administrators and supervisors do not need to take PD on all topics, but the required % of staff must be met for the program to earn the point(s) for the topic(s)

Notes:

CW 2

Intent: To ensure teachers can prevent, respond to, and support children's physical and emotional needs, giving families confidence that staff can protect and nurture their children.

Standard

Professional Development for Educators

Educators have completed at least 2 hours of professional development on each of the following topics and are currently certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR:

- ★ Pediatric First Aid and CPR (must include proof of certification)
- ★ Physical health (within past 3 years)
- ★ Social-emotional learning (SEL), and effective evidence-based strategies to support children's mental health

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 6

- ★ Minimum of 1 educator from each classroom completes professional development (1 point per topic) **or**
- ★ 100% of educators complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.47(b)(4)(i)(J); §637. (21)(G)(i)(v)

2 points waived for pediatric first aid/CPR; programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of professional development on physical health and/or social-emotional learning

2025: §1302.47(b)(4)(i)(J); §1302.92(b)(3); §637. (21)(G)(i)(v)

4 points waived for pediatric first aid/CPR and social-emotional learning, and programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of professional development on physical health

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 5A.15

2022: 5A.15

2025: A.6.18 (2 points); O.6.13 (1 point)

If both NAEYC Standards are met: 2 points

Note: Programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of professional development on Physical health and/or Social-emotional learning

Reflective Questions

- ★ Do you have daily activities that support physical health in your lesson plans?
- ★ Do you incorporate evidence-based strategies to support children's social and emotional well-being?

Resources

- ★ The Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning - [Practical Strategies for Teachers](#) and [Book Nook](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Use the first 5 minutes of your outdoor play time for a large group gross motor activity that emphasizes teamwork/cooperation.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Many options available through NJCCIS by the following training providers:

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services, Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC), Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI), and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Two hours of training is required for each topic for which the program submits evidence
- ★ Evidence of **current certification** for Pediatric First Aid and CPR by the required % of staff must be submitted for review
- ★ Training on physical health and social-emotional learning must have been completed within the three years prior to rating submission
- ★ Only evidence from formal professional development trainings or college transcripts will be considered (i.e., training provided by GNJK Health Consultants, SEFI, college coursework)

Notes:

CW 3

Intent: To guarantee all staff can act in emergencies, safeguarding children and reassuring families.

Standard

Professional Development for Non-Instructional Staff

Non-instructional staff are currently certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR.

- ★ Pediatric First Aid and CPR Certification (must include proof of certification)

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts

Points: up to 2

- ★ 50% of non-instructional staff complete professional development (1 point) **or**
100% of non-instructional staff complete professional development (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

2018-2019: 5A.15

2022: 5A.15

2025: Not applicable.

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 5A.15

2022: 5A.15

2025: Not applicable.



CW 3

Reflective Questions

- ★ Are your PD requirements for non-instructional staff to be certified in CPR and First Aid explicit in your job description?
- ★ Do you offer accessible options for the standard to be met?

Resources

- ★ [American Heart Association Posters for your Program](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Invite your parents, non-instructional staff, and educators to attend CPR Training annually. This is a great way to support parents and form deeper relationships!

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Pediatric First Aid and CPR

Offered by: Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Evidence of **current certification** for Pediatric First Aid and CPR by the required % of staff must be submitted for review

Notes:

CW 4

Intent: To encourage healthy routines and education, helping children build lifelong wellness habits and supporting families with programs that reinforce positive health practices at home.

Standard

Program delivers an array of program practices that promote the physical health of children and families.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Documentation reflecting nutrition and/or physical activity curriculum
- ★ Lesson plans that reflect nutrition and physical activity content are included in classroom instruction
- ★ Program sponsored health fair for families
- ★ Extended outdoor play, when the majority of children are present, is reflected in the schedule and practice
- ★ Program menus align with the standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- ★ Daily health checks are implemented

Points: up to 3

- ★ 1 physical health activity implemented (1 point) **or**
- ★ 2 physical health activities implemented (2 points) **or**
- ★ 3 or more physical health activities implemented (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.40(a)(b); §1302.41(a)(b)(1)(2); §1302.43; §1302.44(a)(1); §1302.46(a)

2 points waived; programs can earn additional 1 point if they submit evidence of any physical health activities

2025: §1302.40(a)(b); §1302.41(a)(b)(1)(2); §1302.43; §1302.44(a)(1); §1302.46(a)

2 points waived; programs can earn additional 1 point if they submit evidence of any physical health activities

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 5B, 10D.3

2022: 10D.3

2025: A.6.10; A.6.21

Reflective Questions

- ★ What daily routines and policies in your program actively support the physical health of children (e.g., nutrition, handwashing, outdoor play, rest)?
- ★ Are meals and snacks your provide (or that families send) aligned with healthy eating guidelines?
- ★ How do you encourage healthy eating habits and physical activity in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive?
- ★ Are your health practices consistent and applied across all classrooms and age groups?

Resources

- ★ The Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning - [Practical Strategies for Teachers](#) and [Book Nook](#)
- ★ [Rocking and Rolling. Fresh Air, Fun, and Exploration: Why Outdoor Play Is Essential for Healthy Development | NAEYC](#)
- ★ [MyPlate.gov | What Is MyPlate?](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Ensure children get outside to play every day, weather permitting. If the weather prevents outdoor play, use open spaces for gross motor movement.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Early Childhood Physical Activity for Toddlers and Preschoolers; Lesson Planning with the NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ When submitting lesson plans, programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program
- ★ Lesson plans **must include a narrative description** outlining how the lesson plans reflect the nutrition and physical activity content and how the activity is included in classroom instruction
- ★ Photos (i.e., from health fair, classroom activities, etc.) must include a narrative description outlining what is captured in the photos and how it aligns to the intent of the standard.

Notes

CW 5

Intent: To create emotionally nurturing environments, helping children build resilience and emotional skills while supporting families with fewer behavior challenges and stronger emotional readiness for school.

Standard

Program establishes and implements evidence-based practices to support children's social and emotional wellbeing. This includes incorporation of social emotional learning (SEL) concepts into daily activities, routines, and interactions rather than treating them as stand-alone lessons, creating a nurturing environment, and developing individualized plans to support children's social and emotional needs.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Lesson plans from each age range* demonstrating SEL concepts integrated into daily activities
- ★ Pictures from each age-range* served indicating practices that support SEL
- ★ Partnership and regular communication with Mental Health Consultant
- ★ Video evidence of interactions, routines etc.

**Age range includes infant/toddler (0-3) and preschool (3-5)*

Points: up to 4

- ★ 1 SEL concept per age group integrated in daily activities (1 point) **or**
- ★ 2 SEL concepts per age group integrated in daily activities (2 points) **or**
- ★ 3 or more SEL concepts per age group integrated in daily activities (4 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.31(a)(b); §1302.45 (a)(1); §642A. (a)(14)(B)

2 points waived, additional 2 points can be earned if the program submits evidence of 1 or more SEL concepts integrated into daily activities

2025: §1302.31(a)(b); §1302.45(a)(1-2); §642A. (a)(14)(B)

2 points waived, additional 2 points can be earned if the program submits evidence of 1 or more SEL concepts integrated into daily activities.

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: R.3.03; A.3.05

Reflective Questions

- ★ In what ways are SEL concepts intentionally embedded into daily routines (e.g., greetings, mealtimes, transitions) rather than taught only in isolated lessons?
- ★ How do staff model social-emotional skills—such as problem solving, empathy, or self-regulation—through their own interactions with children and families?
- ★ Do classroom activities reflect developmentally appropriate SEL strategies for the different ages we serve?

Resources

- ★ [Promoting Young Children’s Social and Emotional Health](#)
- ★ [12–24 Months: Social-Emotional Development | ZERO TO THREE](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Implement daily SEL check-ins across classrooms. Let this be an opportunity to reinforce positive practices and provide coaching as needed.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Keeping Babies and Children in Mind, Pyramid Model, and many other Social-Emotional topics are available through the Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at MSU.

Offered by: Montclair State University, Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health

Rating Information

- ★ When submitting lesson plans, programs must submit a sample of 50% of the lesson plans for each age group served by the program
- ★ Lesson plans **must include a narrative description** outlining how the lesson plans reflect that social-emotional learning (SEL) concepts have been integrated into daily activities
- ★ Photos and videos must be from classrooms *in each age group served by the program*, and must also include a narrative describing how SEL concepts have been incorporated into the areas captured in the photos/videos

Notes:

CW 6

Intent: To encourage continuity of care, providing children with consistent health oversight and empowering families to prioritize preventive care.

Standard

Parents receive information and or resources on the importance of having a medical home or consistency in a primary care provider.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Workshop sign-in sheets, newsletter, overview in parent handbook, or any other communication educating parents about the importance of a medical home
- ★ Documentation of resources on community health services/providers offered

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.42 (a)(1-2); §1302.46(a)(b)(1)(i)

2025: §1302.42 (a)(1-2); §1302.46(a)(b)(1)(i)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How are you currently sharing information with families about the importance of having a consistent primary care provider (medical home)?
- ★ Do you provide families with accessible, culturally responsive resources or referrals to help them establish or maintain a medical home?

Resources

- ★ [A Medical Home Where Everybody Knows Your Name - HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/healthychildren/1-to-2-year-olds/Preventive-Care/Pages/A-Medical-Home-Where-Everybody-Knows-Your-Name.aspx)
- ★ [The Medical Home and Head Start Working Together | HeadStart.gov](https://www.headstart.gov/medical-home)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Invite a local pediatrician and a representative from your health department to be a guest speaker at your next parent event. Have them talk about medical homes, immunizations and other top of the mind issues your parents may be focused on.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Meetings are great places to discuss continuity of care with peers. Programs may also seek PD and support from the NJ Child Care Health Consultants

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Health Consultants

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ There is not a minimum number of workshops, newsletters or other evidence that the program must submit to receive credit for this standard, but it must be clear to the rating evaluator that the intent of this standard has been met

Notes:

CW 7

Intent: To support infant nutrition and family needs, ensuring children receive optimal nutrition and families feel supported in their feeding choices.

Standard

Program has a policy that supports breastfeeding friendly principles, including accepting and storing breast milk and providing a comfortable place for breastfeeding for families and staff.

Note: Not applicable if program does not serve infants.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Breastfeeding friendly policy that supports families and staff that includes accepting and storing breast milk (applicable only for infants/toddlers enrolled), providing a comfortable place for breastfeeding (family members and staff) and staff signatures verifying receipt of the policy
- ★ Documentation of staff orientation of breastfeeding friendly policies

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.44 (a)(2)(viii)

2025: §1302.44 (a)(2)(viii)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 9A.4; 5B.1; 5B.6; 5B.7

2022: 5B.6; 5B.7; 9A.4

2025: A.6.07

Reflective Questions

- ★ Do you have a clear, written breastfeeding policy, and is it communicated to families and staff in a welcoming and accessible way?
- ★ Are you breast milk handling and storage practices aligned with state and national health/safety guidelines?
- ★ How do you monitor that staff consistently follow these procedures?

Resources

- ★ [Supporting Breastfeeding families in Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Programs](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Establish a committee of infant parents and educators to talk about how your program could be more breastfeeding friendly.
- ★ Include breastfeeding related questions in your annual parent and staff survey for continual feedback.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Meetings are great places to discuss breastfeeding policies and procedures with peers. Programs may also seek PD and support from the NJ Child Care Health Consultants

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and the Child Care Health Consultants

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is not applicable if the program does not serve infants. In cases where the program does not serve infants, points are not awarded
- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ The program must submit both the breastfeeding policy and evidence of staff orientation of the policies to receive credit.

Notes:

CW 8

Intent: To detect potential health issues early, providing children with timely intervention and families with clear communication on next steps.

Standard

Vision, hearing, and/or dental screenings are completed, with parental consent, and results are shared with families.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Vision, hearing, and/or dental screenings are completed with parental consent and results are shared with families. The screenings are offered onsite, or information provided for accessible off-site screenings and must be completed by a medical professional

*Onsite review – 25% random sample (per type of screening) of completed screenings

Points: up to 2

- ★ One type of screening (1 point) **or**
- ★ Two or more types of screenings (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.41(a)(b)(1); §1302.42 (b)(1)(i-ii), (2); §645A.(i)(2)(E)

2025: §1302.41(a)(b)(1); §1302.42 (b)(1)(i-ii), (2); §645A.(i)(2)(E)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 4C.2

2022: 4C.2

2025: A.5.03

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do you ensure screenings are completed on schedule and for all eligible children?
- ★ Do we have a clear process for obtaining, documenting, and storing parental consent for screenings?
- ★ Do we have strong partnerships with health professionals or community agencies to provide high-quality screenings?

Resources

- ★ [Hearing Screening Fact Sheet](#)
- ★ [Vision Screening for Young Children](#)
- ★ [Brush up on Oral Health](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Contact your local health department to explore opportunities for them to send a community health professional to provide screenings at your program.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Meetings are great places to discuss health screening processes with peers. Programs may also seek PD and support from the NJ Child Care Health Consultants

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Health Consultants

Rating Information

- ★ A 25% random sample of completed vision, hearing, and/or dental screenings can be reviewed during the virtual documentation review, as evidence of screenings taking place
- ★ Screenings from each age group must be reviewed to ensure implementation across all age groups served by the program
- ★ This standard requires either that the screenings are offered **onsite by the program** or the program *has a partnership with a provider that is conducting the screenings offsite*

Notes:

Domain 2: Child Wellbeing Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the CW domain.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Domain #3 Family & Community Engagement (FCE)

The **Family & Community Engagement Domain** recognizes families as children's primary teachers and essential partners in quality care and education. These standards support meaningful communication, culturally responsive engagement, shared problem-solving, and access to community resources that strengthen the early learning experience.

Programs may use this section to **reflect on how families are welcomed, informed, and included in decision-making**. This domain encourages ongoing, reciprocal relationships with families and collaboration with community partners to enhance support for children and their caregivers.



Domain #3: Family and Community Engagement (FCE)

A focus on **Family and Community Engagement (FCE)** acknowledges the essential role that families and communities play in the development and education of young children. Actively involving families and communities in the design and implementation of Grow NJ Kids programs ensures that programs are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of the children they serve. When families are engaged, trust and open communication grow, creating a collaborative partnership where parents and educators work together to support each child's learning and development.

Community engagement further strengthens this partnership by connecting programs with valuable local resources, services, and organizations. These relationships expand opportunities for children and families, enhance program quality, and foster a supportive network that promotes the well-being of the entire community.

Important Terms

Cultural Responsiveness - Understanding and appropriately including and responding to the diverse cultural variables and dimensions that individuals bring to interactions, valuing and affirming their cultural identities, and creating inclusive environments.

Anti-bias - Dismantling prejudices against race, gender, sexuality, religion, and more.

Family Engagement - A collaborative and ongoing process where families, schools, and communities work together to support a child's learning, achievement, and well-being, fostering a shared responsibility for a child's development.

Strengthening Families Framework - A research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Domain #3: Family and Community Engagement (FCE)

Overview of Scoring

Domain	Topics Overview	Standards	Points
Family and Community Engagement (FCE)	★ Communication ★ Feedback ★ Engagement ★ Supports ★ Community Partnerships ★ Learning Opportunities ★ Home Visiting ★ Professional Development	10	30

Professional Development in this Domain

Professional Development Topic (NJ ECE Core Knowledge and Competency)	Required	Optional for Points	Audience Educators (E) Administrators and Supervisors (A) Non-Instructional Staff (N)
Family and Community Engagement or Strengthening Families Framework (2. Family and Community Partnerships)		X	E, A
Supporting and engaging with diverse communities (7. Serving Diverse Populations)			

FCE 1

Intent To ensure leadership values diverse family voices, allowing children to experience more inclusive environments and families to feel respected and represented.

Standard

Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors

Administrators and supervisors have completed at least 2 hours of professional development on one or more of the following topics:

- ★ Supporting and engaging with diverse communities to ensure cultural responsiveness and anti-bias (within past 3 years)
- ★ Family and Community Engagement or Strengthening Families Framework (within the past 3 years)

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 4

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (1 point per topic)
or
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How are administrators and supervisors applying their professional development learning to strengthen relationships with families and communities in our program?
- ★ In what ways are cultural responsiveness and anti-bias principles embedded into our daily practices, policies, and family engagement efforts?
- ★ How do you evaluate whether engagement strategies are inclusive, respectful, and meaningful for the diverse families served?
- ★ Are you using the Strengthening Families Framework (or similar approaches) to intentionally build protective factors for children and families, and how is that reflected in the program's culture?

Resources

- ★ [What is Anti-Bias Education?](#)
- ★ [About-Strengthening-Families.pdf](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Quarterly, invite families to your staff meetings to share their cultural practices at home and discuss how these practices support their child's development.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Intro to Protective Factors, Bringing the Protective Factors to Life, Strengthening Families, Foundations of Family and Community Engagement for Early Childhood Educators

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Administrators and supervisors do not need to take PD on all topics, but the required % of staff must be met for the program to earn the point(s) for the topic(s)
- ★ Staff must have taken two hours of training within the three years prior to rating submission for each topic for which they plan to submit evidence
- ★ College coursework that will be accepted includes: CDA or other college coursework; coursework that focused on engagement of families in education and must have been completed within the past 3 years

Notes:

FCE 2

Intent To build educator capacity to collaborate with families, allowing children to benefit from consistency between home and school and families to feel empowered as partners.

Standard

Professional Development for Educators

Educators have completed at least 2 hours of professional development on one or more of the following topics:

- ★ Supporting and engaging with diverse communities to ensure cultural responsiveness and anti-bias (within past 3 years)
- ★ Family and Community Engagement or Strengthening Families Framework (within the past 3 years)

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 4

- ★ Minimum of 1 educator from each classroom completes professional development (1 point per topic) **or**
- ★ 100% of educators complete professional development (2 points per topic)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ In what ways do I actively seek to include family voices, ideas, and strengths in classroom activities, curriculum, and decision-making?
- ★ How do I recognize and address my own biases so that every family feels welcomed and valued in our program?
- ★ What strategies do I use to connect families with resources or supports in the community, and how can I strengthen those efforts?

Resources

- ★ [About-Strengthening-Families.pdf](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Find opportunities to participate in PD together as a center to build program community and foster action around the content. Consider inviting families to participate for relevant topics.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Intro to Protective Factors, Bringing the Protective Factors to Life, Strengthening Families, Foundations of Family and Community Engagement for Early Childhood Educators

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Educators do not need to take PD on all topics, but the required % of staff must be met for the program to earn the point(s) for the topic(s)
- ★ Staff must have taken two hours of training within the three years prior to rating submission for each topic for which they plan to submit evidence
- ★ College coursework that will be accepted includes: CDA or college coursework; coursework that focused on engagement of families in education and must have been completed within the past 3 years

Notes:

FCE 3

Intent To build transparency and shared responsibility, allowing children to benefit from learning reinforced at home and families to feel informed and connected.

Standard

Program creates one-way and two-way communication and engagement with families about their child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and supports for learning at home.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Completed weekly family communication log that includes updates on child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and supports for learning at home from each classroom
- ★ Documentation of a two-way communication and engagement tool supporting parent's lead role in their children's development
- ★ Evidence of use of a communication app that includes updates on child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and supports for learning at home from each classroom
- ★ Weekly or monthly classroom newsletter that includes updates on child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and supports for learning at home from each classroom
- ★ Sign-in sheets from conferences or other individualized strategies where information related to each child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and strategies for learning at home are discussed
- ★ Parent input via survey or other means related to satisfaction with regular communication about their child's learning and development, curriculum objectives and supports for learning at home

Points: up to 3

- ★ Consistent/regular communication about children's learning with all families (1 point)
- ★ Tailored information for and communication with families via conferences or other individualized strategies (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.50(a)(b)(2); §1302.34(a), (b)(1), (3) and (4)

2025: §1302.50(a)(b)(2); §1302.34(a), (b)(1), (3) and (4)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 7B

2022: 7B.1; 7B.2; 7C.1; 6B.1

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we balance one-way updates with two-way dialogue so families' voices are valued?
- ★ Are our communication methods accessible and culturally responsive for all families?
- ★ How do we help families connect learning at school with learning at home?

Resources

- ★ [ABCs of Family Engagement: Key Considerations for Building Relationships with Families and Strengthening Family Engagement Practices](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Consider having educators text families during the day with pictures and updates about their children. Families can be contacted on a rotating cycle but at a minimum of 1x per week.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Meeting the Needs of Children with Diverse Abilities Birth to Five; also, consider attending Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities with your local TA Center to discuss communication strategies with peers.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services and Grown NJ Kids TA Centers

Rating Information

- ★ Programs must submit evidence of **both** one-way and two-way communication to receive credit for this standard (i.e., families must have a way to communicate back to the program)
- ★ There is not a minimum number of examples required for each type of evidence that the program must submit to receive credit for this standard, but it must be clear to the reviewer that the requirements of this standard have been implemented

Notes:

FCE 4

Intent To encourage consistent child participation to strengthens learning, while families receive support when barriers to attendance arise.

Standard

Program has an attendance policy and tracks and monitors absences of individual children and contacts families when children are absent after three consecutive days.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Attendance policy that includes that a staff member reaches out to families of children that are absent after three consecutive days
- ★ Evidence of follow up with families if a child has been absent 3 consecutive dates (call log etc.)

Points: up to 2

- ★ Policy (1 point)
- ★ Evidence of follow-up with families (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.16 (a)(b)

2025: §1302.16 (a)(b)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

FCE 4

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do you track and monitor attendance in a way that is consistent, accurate, and supportive of families?
- ★ When children are absent, how do you communicate with families in ways that are caring, respectful, and culturally sensitive rather than punitive?
- ★ Do you analyze attendance patterns to identify barriers (e.g., transportation, health, family needs) and connect families with appropriate supports?
- ★ How do the program's health practices support attendance? How do they relate to the work in creating a healthy environment (e.g., handwashing and sanitation)?

Resources

- ★ [Early-Childhood-Educators-Dec-2024.pdf](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Write down your weekly attendance follow-up protocols and post in each classroom. Include the protocol in your staff and family handbook.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers

Rating Information

- ★ No additional rating considerations.

Notes:

FCE 5

Intent To give families a voice in shaping quality, allowing children to benefit when programs adapt to family needs and families to feel a sense of ownership and trust.

Standard

Program has a system in place to gather annual family feedback and uses this information to inform program policy and operations.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Policy for collecting feedback from families that includes annual collection method
- ★ Samples of feedback provided within the last year
- ★ Narrative description of how family feedback is used to inform program policy, operations and improvements

Points: up to 3

- ★ Policy (1 point)
- ★ Samples from 25% of families collected within last year and example of how evidence informed program change (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.102, (b)(1)(i-iv)(2) (i-ii); §641A(g)(1)(2)(A)

2025: §1302.102, (b)(1)(i-iv)(2) (i-ii); §641A(g)(1)(2)(A)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10F.4

2022: 10F.2

2025: R.2.02

FCE 5

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do you ensure that all families have an accessible and meaningful way to share feedback each year?
- ★ In what ways are you analyzing and using family feedback to improve policies, practices, and daily operations?
- ★ How do you close the loop by sharing with families what you've learned from their feedback and the changes you've made?

Resources

- ★ [The Five Rs for Promoting Positive Family Engagement](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Hold annual family feedback implementation meetings.
- ★ Consider how this information can be used to support development in other standards (e.g., CTL 10, FCE 3, FCE 9).

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers

Rating Information

- ★ To receive points for this standard, it must be clear that the program has **both**, a system in place to gather annual family feedback **and** uses this information to inform program policy and operations
- ★ To receive 1 point, the program can submit evidence such as a policy for collecting feedback from families that includes annual collection method or a narrative description of how family feedback is used to inform program policy, operations and improvements
- ★ To receive 2 points, the program must submit samples of feedback from 25% of families collected within last year and an example of how evidence informed program change
- ★ Samples of family feedback from each age group must be reviewed.

Notes:

FCE 6

Intent To integrate family voices in decision-making, allowing families to influence program priorities and children to experience environments shaped by their caregivers' perspectives.

Standard

Program incorporates diverse perspectives into decision-making processes by establishing a family advisory council or committee that reflects the diversity of families in care. This ensures that the voices of all families are heard and considered in program planning and implementation.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Meeting schedule and agendas from current school year for family advisory council meetings
- ★ Evidence of considering unique strengths and needs of families in curriculum and programming
- ★ Evidence of designing the learning environment with inclusion in mind

Points: up to 2

- ★ Meeting schedule and agendas from current school year for family advisory council meetings (1 point)
- ★ Evidence of considerations for unique needs of families and the design of learning environments with inclusion in mind (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1301.3(a)(b)(1), (c)(1)(2); §1301.4(a)(b)(1-3); §642(c)(2)(A)(B)
 2025: §1301.3(a)(b)(1, (c)(1)(2); §1301.4(a)(b)(1-3): §642(c)(2)(A)(B)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.
 2022: 10F.2
 2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ Does the family advisory council/committee truly reflect the diversity of the families you serve (culture, language, background, needs)?
- ★ How are you ensuring that all families feel their voices are valued and have real influence on program planning and decision-making?
- ★ In what ways do you share with families how their input shaped policies, practices, or program improvements?

Resources

- ★ [Family Engagement Toolkit](#)
- ★ [Principles of Effective Family Engagement | NAEYC](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Schedule quarterly family advisory council meetings.
- ★ Offer child care services while the council meets to ensure families can participate or set up virtual meetings for them. Consider offering a light dinner.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ This standard requires evidence that the program has an *advisory council* whose feedback is considered towards program planning and implementation (i.e., curriculum, schedule, activities, approach, policies)
- ★ A narrative description should be submitted detailing how the advisory council contributes to the program

Notes:

FCE 7

Intent To connect families and staff to safety, health, and wellness supports, allowing children to benefit when families can access community resources.

Standard

Community resources are available, accessible, and updated annually for families and staff that includes community and school-based resources and/or direct services to promote child/family safety, health, and well-being.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Community resource handbook*
- ★ Website
- ★ Family bulletin board
- ★ Handout with links

A listing of languages primarily spoken by children/families currently enrolled must be provided to receive full credit for this standard

**Depending on size, this can be reviewed on site*

Points: up to 2

- ★ Annually updated and accessible resources (1 point)
- ★ Resources/materials within resources are available in languages reflected in program (1 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: R.2.04; A.2.10; A.2.13

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do you make sure that your list of community resources is current, accurate, and updated at least annually?
- ★ Are the resources you provide accessible and relevant to the diverse needs of the families and staff in your program?
- ★ In what ways do you actively share and connect families and staff with these resources, rather than just making them available?

Resources

- ★ [CECE and Health Consumer Education Resources in NJ](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Offer an online, regularly updated resource portal.
- ★ If any educators have recently completed their CDA Portfolio, consider using their resources to build a center-wide resource book.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ To receive credit, programs **must submit a list of the languages spoken by the families of children enrolled** in the program. If all families speak English, this must be noted
- ★ A community resource handbook can be reviewed during the virtual documentation review. Resource handbook should be dated with most recent date of update.
- ★ Evidence submitted must include resources for both families *and* staff

Notes:

FCE 8

Intent To expand supports and services, allowing children to gain broader opportunities and families to access stronger networks of care.

Standard

Program partners with at least two community organizations that serve diverse populations to build stronger connections and better understand the needs of the families they serve. These partnerships provide valuable resources and support for program staff and families.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Memo of Understanding (MOU) (formal partnership)
- ★ Pictures, emails, flyers (informal partnership)
- ★ List of partners and how they contribute to program
- ★ Guest speakers at family events
- ★ Support services offered (i.e., translation)

A narrative describing the partnerships and how they meet the needs of families/children/staff is required for credit to be received for this standard

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.53(a)

2025: §1302.53(a)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ Does your current partnerships reflect the diversity of the families you serve, and are they responsive to their unique needs?
- ★ How are you intentionally using these partnerships to provide meaningful resources and supports for both families and staff?
- ★ In what ways do you evaluate the effectiveness of these partnerships and how do you ensure they are mutually beneficial and sustainable?
- ★ What strategies do you use to actively engage and collaborate with community organizations rather than just referring families to them?

Resources

- ★ [United Ways of New Jersey | 211](#)
- ★ [Engaging Community Partners to Strengthen Family Services](#)
- ★ [Engaging Community Partners to Strengthen Family Services | HeadStart.gov](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Hold regular partnership review meetings.
- ★ Establish a “Community Partnerships Wall” and include QR codes for food banks, housing assistance, ESL classes, early intervention services, and mental health resources.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Evidence of **at least two partnerships** with community organizations that serve diverse populations must be submitted; the partnerships can be formal or informal
- ★ A narrative describing the partnerships and how they meet the needs of families/children/staff is required for credit to be received for this standard
- ★ If the program plans to submit photos, emails or flyers, a narrative must be submitted that describes what is included in the evidence and how it demonstrates partnerships with community organizations
- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given

Notes:

FCE 9

Intent To provide relevant workshops and resources, allowing families to strengthen their skills to support children’s development and children to benefit from more informed parenting.

Standard

Learning opportunities to promote child and family health and wellness, positive relationships, and children’s learning and development are created with family input, provided routinely and are accessible to families.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Flyers and sign-in sheets for on-site opportunities or flyers and evidence that information was shared about off-site learning opportunities on child development, wellness, relationship development, health and safety, etc.
- ★ Narrative description of how program topics are driven by family input
- ★ Services provided in language accessible for families. If all children/families speak the same language, a plan for how these services would be provided in the future should families enroll that speak different languages

Points: up to 4

- ★ Flyers and sign-in sheets for on-site opportunities or flyers and evidence that information was shared about off-site learning opportunities on child development, wellness, relationship development, health and safety, etc.
- ★ Narrative description of how program topics are driven by family input
- ★ Services provided in language accessible for families. If all children/families speak the same language, a plan for how these services would be provided in the future should families enroll that speak different languages

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.34(a)(b)(4); §1302.45(b)(5); §1302.46(a)(b)(1)(i); §1302.51; §1302.90(d)(1)

2025: §1302.34(a)(b)(4); §1302.45(b)(4); §1302.46(a)(b)(1)(i); §1302.51; §1302.90(d)(1)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 7A

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

FCE 9

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do you gather and incorporate family input when planning learning opportunities to ensure they are meaningful and relevant?
- ★ Can you use the information gathered from family feedback (FCE 5) to inform this standard?
- ★ Are these opportunities provided consistently and in ways that are accessible for all families (e.g., language, timing, format)?
- ★ How do you evaluate whether these opportunities are strengthening child and family health, wellness, relationships, and learning?

Resources

- ★ [Center on the Developing Child | Harvard University | Lifelong Health and Well-being](#)
- ★ [Good Guidance: The 7 Essential Life Skills | NAEYC](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Launch a “Learning at Home” Kit Program: provide learning kits on healthy eating, stress management, and social-emotional development, including books and simple activities families can do together.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Family engagement, child development, curriculum implementation, multiculturalism and diversity

Offered by: Family engagement, child development, curriculum implementation, multiculturalism and diversity

Rating Information

- ★ If the program hosts a workshop for families onsite, **both an agenda and a sign-in sheet** must be submitted as evidence
- ★ If the program shared information with families about workshops or learning opportunities facilitated offsite by an outside organization, the program must submit the information that was shared with families **and** evidence that the information was received (i.e., screenshot of website or social media post, photo of bulletin board, parent sign-off)
- ★ If all parents speak the same language and translation services are not needed at this time, to receive 1 point for *translation/Interpreters provided for multilingual families*: the program may submit a plan for how these services would be provided in the future should families enroll that speak different languages

Notes:

FCE 10

Intent To incorporate protective factors that help families thrive, allowing children to benefit from safe, stable, nurturing families and parents to feel supported and resilient.

Standard

The Strengthening Families Protective Factors (SFPF) Framework is used annually to assess engagement of and interactions with families.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Completed Strengthening Families Self-Assessment
- ★ Completed Strengthening Families Quality Improvement Plan
- ★ Evidence of activities completed from the Quality Improvement Plan that were developed because of findings from the program's self-assessment

Points: up to 4

- ★ Conduct annual assessment (1 point)
- ★ Implement 1 activity from the plan (1 point) **or**
- ★ Implement 2 or more activities from the plan (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.50(b)(3), §1302.50(a)(b)(2); §1302.52(a)(b)(c)(1-3); §642. (b)(7)

2025: §1302.50(b)(3), §1302.50(a)(b)(2); §1302.52(a)(b)(c)(1-3); §642. (b)(7)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ Is the Strengthening Families Framework implemented annually in an effective manner?

Resources

- ★ [About-Strengthening-Families.pdf](#)
- ★ [Strengthening Families 101](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Plan an annual Strengthening Families implementation meeting and invite your parent advisory council or other interested families.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Concrete Supports: Instructor Guide to Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work; Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services, Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Rating Information

- ★ Programs must submit their Strengthening Families self-assessment or quality improvement plan to receive credit for implementing activities
- ★ The program should submit a short narrative description outlining the activities that have been implemented and how they were developed based on needs identified in the self-assessment or quality improvement plan, along with evidence of completed activities

Notes:

Domain 3: Family & Community Engagement Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the FCE domain.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Domain #4 Workforce Development & Supports (WDS)

The **Workforce Development & Support Domain** focuses on building and sustaining a skilled early childhood workforce. The standards address qualifications, ongoing professional learning, staff support systems, and program structures that contribute to a stable, reflective, and high-quality team. Educators who feel prepared and valued are better able to meet the needs of children and families.

Programs may use this section to **review staff training plans, professional development pathways, supervision and coaching models, and strategies that promote retention and well-being**. This domain supports a workforce that continues to grow in knowledge, confidence, and capacity.



Domain #4: Workforce Development and Supports (WDS)

The quality of ECE is directly influenced by the skills and competencies of program leaders, educators, supervisors and support staff. By focusing on **Workforce Development and Supports (WDS)**, Grow NJ Kids ensures that program leaders, educators, supervisors and support staff receive ongoing professional development, equipping them with the skills to provide high-quality learning experiences for children. In addition, a well-supported workforce is more likely to remain committed and engaged in their roles, reducing turnover rates and creating a stable environment for young learners.

Important Terms

NJ Career Lattice – A tool that guides the professional growth and development of individuals working in early childhood, primary education, family child care, and after-school programs. Progression on the NJ Registry Career Lattice is based on on-going professional development including in-service training, community-based trainings, preparation, credentials and degrees.

Positive Organizational Climate – A workplace characterized by trust, respect, open communication, and a sense of community, where employees feel valued, empowered, and supported, leading to higher engagement, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

Inclusive Hiring Practices – Practices that aim to minimize bias and create an equitable application, interview, selection, and offer process for candidates from diverse backgrounds, ensuring everyone involved in the hiring process prioritizes inclusivity.

Domain #4: Workforce Development and Supports (WDS)

Overview of Scoring

Domain	Topics Overview	Standards	Points
Workforce Development and Supports (WDS)	★ Education Level ★ Professional Development ★ Leadership ★ Communication ★ Wellness Supports and Resources	9	28

Professional Development in this Domain

Professional Development Topic (NJ ECE Core Knowledge and Competency)	Required	Optional for Points	Audience Educators (E) Administrators and Supervisors (A) Non-Instructional Staff (N)
Key Characteristics and Skills of High-Impact Leaders (8. Professionalism and Leadership)		X	A

WDS 1

Intent To build capacity for effective and supportive leadership, indirectly benefiting children through well-supported teachers and fostering family stability through strong leadership.

Standard

Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors

Administrators and supervisors have completed at least 2 hours of professional development related to key characteristics and skills of high impact leaders.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework

Points: up to 2

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (1 point) **or**
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

WDS 1

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we identify leadership topics that best align with our program’s goals and staff needs?
- ★ How does leadership PD influence our program’s culture, decision-making, and continuous improvement?
- ★ How do our administrators intentionally model high-impact leadership practices for their teams?

Resources

- ★ [The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership](#)
- ★ [McCormick Center: Whole Leadership Framework](#)
- ★ [Improving your Program with Pedagogical Leadership](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Share contact information with another leader from the professional development session and connect from time to time for support and encouragement.
- ★ Create an annual “Leadership Learning Plan” where administrators choose a focus area (e.g., communication, mentoring, data-driven decision-making) and share insights at staff meetings.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Evaluating and Supporting Early Childhood Educators, Hybrid; For-Profit Strategic Planning; Developing Mission and Vision Statements; Advanced Planning for Measurable Success; Leading and Managing Change/HEART of Leadership Directors Training Series. Additional leadership topics coming soon.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services and ECLI

Rating Information

- ★ College coursework that will be accepted includes: educational leadership or other coursework that supports reflective practices, administrative leadership, guiding and fostering the development of others, etc.

Notes:

WDS 2

Intent To encourage professional growth, leading to more skilled teachers who enhance children’s learning and provide families with higher-quality instruction.

Standard

Program supports educators, administrators, supervisors and non-instructional staff in attaining higher qualifications on the NJ Career Lattice.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Narrative description of how the career lattice is incorporated into **professional development** planning, and professional development plans for all educators, supervisors, administrators and non-instructional staff
- ★ Policy for providing or accessing incentives for staff for attaining higher qualifications, and evidence of incentives provided (paystub with information redacted, staff member signed receipt)

Points: up to 4

- ★ Program incorporates the NJ Career Lattice into individualized professional development planning (1 point)
- ★ Program provides incentives for staff to attain higher qualifications (3 point)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §640(a)(5)(A)(ii-iii)(I-III)

2025: §1302.90(e)(1)(i); §1302.90(e)(4); §1302.101(a)(2); §648A(2)(A)(i-ii); §640(a)(5)(A)(ii-iii)(I-III)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 6D

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.8.11

WDS 2**Reflective Questions**

- ★ How do we communicate and encourage staff to advance their training and education?
- ★ What barriers might staff experience in continuing their education, and how can we address them?
- ★ What supports (e.g., release time, mentorship, financial aid) do we provide to help staff pursue additional credentials or degrees?
- ★ How do we track and monitor staff progress along the NJ Career Lattice to inform workforce planning?

Resources

- ★ Visit www.childcarenj.gov/providers to access resources related to the Career Lattice.
- ★ Visit www.NJCCIS.com and go to “Registry” to learn more about the NJ ECE Scholarship Program

Bright Ideas

- ★ Invite staff who have advanced on the NJ Career Lattice to share their journeys and advice with others.
- ★ Share information about educator scholarships available through NJCCIS with staff.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Beginning December 2025, PD related to the Career Lattice will be available on NJCCIS.

Offered by: Public Consulting Group – NJ Workforce Registry

Rating Information

- ★ No additional information

Notes:

WDS 3

Intent To establish a consistent quality baseline, ensuring educators meet professional competency standards—instilling family confidence and promoting children’s developmental growth.

Standard

Minimum educator qualifications help to ensure that the ECE program provides high-quality instruction and care. This standard emphasizes the importance of continued education for educators to enhance their skills and knowledge, thereby improving program outcomes for children.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ NJ Workforce Registry career level documentation

Points: up to 6

- ★ At least 50% of educators or 1 full time*educator per classroom are a level 2 or higher qualification on the Career Lattice (1 point) **or**
- ★ 75% of full time*educators and 1 full time educator per classroom are a level 2 or higher qualification on the Career Lattice (3 points) **or**
- ★ At least 50% of educators or 1 full time*educator per classroom are a level 3 or higher qualification on the Career Lattice (3 points) **or**
- ★ 75% of full time*educators and 1 full time educator per classroom are a level 3 or higher qualification on the Career Lattice (5 points) **or**
- ★ 100% of full time*educators are a level 3 or higher qualification on the Career Lattice (6 points)

*As defined by the employing program

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.91; §637 (21)(A); §648A(a)(2)(A)(i-ii), (B)(i)(ii), (C)(i). Waived for preschool-only (Head Start) programs (full 6 points). Programs with Early Head Start classrooms must submit evidence to receive points.

2025: §1302.91; §648A(a)(2)(A)(i-ii), (B)(i)(ii), (C)(i). Waived for preschool-only (Head Start) programs (full 6 points). Programs with Early Head Start classrooms must submit evidence to receive points.

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 6C

2022: 6C.2

2025: A.8.05 (3 points)

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we ensure that all educators meet or exceed required qualifications for their positions?
- ★ How do we support educators who are working toward meeting minimum or preferred qualifications?
- ★ In what ways do higher qualifications translate into improved classroom practices and child outcomes?

Resources

- ★ Visit www.childcarenj.gov/providers to access resources related to the Career Lattice.
- ★ Apply for your lattice level at www.NJCCIS.com

Bright Ideas

- ★ Provide information on local colleges and universities to staff during their orientation and discuss options.
- ★ Encourage reflective practice groups where educators share how coursework or PD experiences influence classroom strategies.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Beginning December 2025, PD related to the Career Lattice will be available on NJCCIS.

Offered by: Public Consulting Group – NJ Workforce Registry

Rating Information

- ★ Programs must define what denotes *full time* and *part time* within their program; **this information should be included in a narrative submitted by the program**
- ★ Completion of this standard will be validated using the Workforce Registry, so programs should ensure that all staff member's career level documentation is updated in the registry
- ★ The % of staff that must be met to accumulate points for this standard is for ***the staff working in each classroom***, not total staff for each age group

Notes:

WDS 4

Intent To make professional learning relevant and effective, equipping staff to meet current needs and ensuring programming evolves through evidence-based improvement—enhancing outcomes for children and supporting families.

Standard

Professional development at the program-level is data-driven and centered around program and staff needs.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Narrative description of the program’s process for collecting and reviewing data (via surveys, professional development plans, performance appraisals, staff observations) and how the data is used to drive individual PD
- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts
- ★ College transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework
- ★ Samples of professional development plans
- ★ Schedule of professional development offered

Points: 3 Met/Not Met:

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.92 (c)(4)(ii); §1302.102 (b)(2)(i); §1302.102(c)(2)(i), (iv-v); §642.(f)(8)
 2025: §1302.92 (c)(4)(ii); §1302.102 (b)(2)(i); §1302.102(c)(2)(i), (iv-v); §642.(f)(8)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10F.4
 2022: 6A; 10F.2
 2025: A.8.11; A.8.15; A.9.04

WDS 4

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we use data (observations, surveys, assessments) to identify professional development priorities?
- ★ What improvements have resulted from these data-driven decisions?
- ★ How do we measure the impact of professional development on classroom quality or child outcomes?

Resources

- ★ [Use Data and Evaluation to Inform Decision-Making](#)
- ★ [A Data-driven Approach to Improve Preschool System Equity](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Conduct quarterly professional development planning sessions based on staff feedback and data.
- ★ Use QIP, self-assessment results, CLASS, or ITERS/ECERS data to identify PD priorities each year.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Evaluating and Supporting Early Childhood Educators: Online Hybrid; Advanced Trainings from curriculum Developers such as improving Preschool Quality Assessment - Powered by HighScope, etc.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be awarded.
- ★ A narrative must be included in the evidence submitted for this standard. The narrative should describe the program's process for collecting data (i.e., data collection methods used), and how the data is analyzed to determine professional development

Notes:

WDS 5

Intent To cultivate meaningful staff engagement and shared clarity, building stronger programs that foster positive outcomes for children and lasting stability for families.

Standard

Multiple types of bi-directional communication responsive to staff needs and preferences are used to inform staff of program activities, policies, etc.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Samples of multiple types (more than 2) of internal bi-directional communication strategies with staff

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10.F

2022: 6D.5; 6D.14

2025: Not applicable.

WDS 5

Reflective Questions

- ★ What methods do we currently use to communicate with staff, and how effective are they?
- ★ How do we create opportunities for staff to share input, ideas, and feedback with leadership?
- ★ How do we foster a culture where staff feel encouraged to share concerns, ideas, and feedback with leadership?
- ★ How do we follow up on staff feedback to demonstrate responsiveness and accountability?

Resources

- ★ [McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership Communication Resources](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Host quarterly “Coffee and Conversation” sessions where staff can openly share ideas or feedback with administrators.
- ★ Implement “**You Said, We Did**” updates to show how staff input has influenced program decisions.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and CCR&R

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ Evidence submitted **must include at least two different types of samples of communication that is bidirectional**

Notes:

WDS 6

Intent To enhance staff morale and retention, supporting children through consistent, fulfilled educators and providing families with dependable caregiving relationships.

Standard

Program promotes a positive organizational climate based on staff needs and feedback.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Evidence of regular feedback collected from staff regarding organizational climate, morale and wellbeing and ways to improve climate
- ★ Evidence that staff feedback has been implemented

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: §1302.45 (a)(1); §1302.93 (d); §648.(a)(2)(B)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10F.4

2022: 6A; 10F.2

2025: Not applicable.

WDS 6

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do we gather and respond to staff feedback about workplace climate and satisfaction?
- ★ How do we celebrate successes and acknowledge contributions across all roles?
- ★ What strategies do we use to address concerns or challenges raised by staff?
- ★ How do we sustain a culture of positivity and teamwork even during periods of change or stress?

Resources

- ★ [Inspiring Early Childhood Leadership: Eight Strategies to Ignite Passion and Transform Program Quality by Susan MacDonald](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Conduct brief annual or semiannual climate surveys and review results together as a team to create an “Action for Improvement” plan.
- ★ Include climate and culture discussions in staff meetings—celebrate what’s working and brainstorm solutions to challenges.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Check out courses such as Building the Right Climate for a World-Class Workplace; Mentoring Your Teachers; The Leader's Role in Creating Team Spirit

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ To receive credit for this standard, programs must submit both evidence that feedback on the program climate is collected from staff regularly **and** evidence that improvements addressing staff feedback have been implemented

Notes:

WDS 7

Intent To cultivate a supportive and empowering work environment that values staff contributions, fostering motivated educators who are deeply responsive to the needs of children and families.

Standard

Program fosters a supportive environment where educators and staff feel appreciated and listened to.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Program implements a system for recognizing and appreciating the hard work and contributions of educators and staff such as:
 - ★ Employee of the month programs
 - ★ Thank-you/appreciation notes
 - ★ Public recognition events
 - ★ Opportunities for advancement
 - ★ Feedback surveys or suggestion box and evidence of strategy to address needs/concerns
 - ★ Regular performance evaluations

Points: up to 3

- ★ Evidence of 1 strategy implemented (1 point) **or**
- ★ Evidence of 2 or more strategies implemented (2 points) **or**
- ★ Evidence of 3 or more strategies implemented (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10F.4

2022: 6A; 10F.2

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I demonstrate appreciation for staff contributions on a regular basis?
- ★ What opportunities exist for staff to voice concerns or ideas safely and constructively?
- ★ How do I ensure that staff input influences program decisions?
- ★ How do I promote a sense of belonging and teamwork across roles?

Resources

- ★ [The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace – Appreciation at Work](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Plan monthly staff recognition events. These can be birthday celebrations and/or celebrations of classroom success.
- ★ Implement a simple gratitude ritual (e.g., “appreciation board,” notes of thanks, or peer shout-outs) that’s visible in shared spaces.
- ★ Schedule periodic one-on-one check-ins between leadership and staff focused on goals, not only performance

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Cultivating Staff Retention; Building the Right Climate for a World-Class Workplace; The Leader's Role in Creating Team Spirit

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ There is not a minimum number of examples required for each strategy that the program must submit to receive credit for this standard

Notes:

WDS 8

Intent To promote staff well-being by preventing burnout and stress through emotional support, resources, and a nurturing environment—acknowledging that the health and fulfillment of caregivers are essential to positive outcomes for children.

Standard

Program provides comprehensive support for the social-emotional wellness of administrators, educators, and non-instructional staff.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ A narrative describing one or more of the following:
 - ★ Employee of the month programs
 - ★ Designated quiet spaces or break areas where educators and staff can relax, take a break, or practice self-care during the day
 - ★ Evidence program provides resources such as wellness apps, relaxation tools, or access to recreational activities or equipment that promote the physical and mental health of the staff
 - ★ Healthy snacks and drinks provided to staff
 - ★ Regular breaks provided to staff
 - ★ Flexible scheduling offered to staff
 - ★ Opportunities for social connections for staff (holiday parties etc.)

Points: up to 3

- ★ Evidence of 1 strategy implemented (1 point) **or**
- ★ Evidence of 2 or more strategies implemented (2 points) **or**
- ★ Evidence of 3 or more strategies implemented (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.93(b) - 1 point waived; programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of social-emotional wellness strategies for staff

2025: §1302.93(b) - 1 point waived; programs can earn additional points by submitting evidence of social-emotional wellness strategies for staff

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.9.08

Reflective Questions

- ★ What systems or resources are in place to support staff well-being (e.g., wellness check-ins, mindfulness opportunities)?
- ★ How do I create a culture that normalizes self-care and emotional support?
- ★ How do I recognize early signs of stress or burnout among staff, and how do I respond?
- ★ In what ways do I model healthy coping and work-life balance as a leader?
- ★ How do staff wellness initiatives contribute to retention and morale?

Resources

- ★ [Be Well Care Well](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Start meetings with a short wellness moment—deep breathing, stretching, or a positive reflection.
- ★ Provide access to community wellness resources or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and post them where staff can easily find them.
- ★ Offer “wellness days” or flexible planning time to help staff recharge and manage stress.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Building the Right Climate for a World-Class Workplace; The Leader's Role in Creating Team Spirit

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ To receive points for this standard, the program must submit a narrative describing the strategies implemented to provide comprehensive support for the social-emotional wellness of staff **and** evidence of the strategies that have been implemented
- ★ Example evidence of strategies implemented could include photos or screenshots

Notes:

WDS 9

Intent To strengthen representation and cultural competence within the workforce, ensuring children see their identities affirmed and families experience a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Standard

Program actively recruits and retains a diverse workforce by implementing inclusive hiring practices and creating a supportive environment that values and respects differences.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Hiring policy inclusive of hiring criteria and standardized interview processes
- ★ Job postings
- ★ Documentation of outreach in multiple locations and in multiple languages
- ★ Recruitment committee reflecting diversity of community served
- ★ Diversity statement in job description

Points: 3 Met/Not Met

- ★ Evidence of 2 or more strategies

Head Start Alignment

2016: §648(c)

2025: §1302.11 (b)(1)(ii); §648(c)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do our hiring practices ensure equitable access and reduce bias?
- ★ In what ways do we reflect the diversity of the community we serve within our staff?
- ★ How do I support and retain diverse staff once they are part of the team?
- ★ How do staff feel that their identities and perspectives are valued in our workplace?

Resources

- ★ [NJAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement](#)
- ★ [How To Create an Inclusive Interview Process](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Conduct a quarterly review of hiring and retention practices.
- ★ Partner with community organizations, colleges, and workforce programs to reach diverse candidates.
- ★ Include staff in reviewing job postings to ensure inclusive language and accessibility.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Hiring Quality Staff; Optimizing Hiring Procedures; Staying HR Compliant and Building Your Team; Simplifying New Hire Paperwork

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ The program **must submit evidence of at least two different strategies** for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce to receive credit for this standard

Notes:

Domain 4: Workforce Development & Supports Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the WDS domain.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Domain #5 Administration & Management Practices (AMP)

The **Administration & Management Practices Domain** outlines the leadership, operational systems, and policies that create consistency and quality across the program. These standards reflect clear communication, strong administrative procedures, compliance with regulations, financial stability, and alignment between policies and daily practice.

Programs may use this section to **examine documentation systems, organizational workflows, fiscal management, and leadership structures**. This domain supports the development of systems that are reliable, sustainable, and able to support high-quality programming over time.



Domain #5: Administration and Management Practices (AMP)

Effective **Administration and Management Practices (AMP)** guarantee that ECE programs are systematically structured, economically sustainable, and equipped to provide reliable, high-quality services. Strong leadership combined with efficient management techniques fosters an environment where both staff and children flourish. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is an essential ingredient to administering a quality ECE program. An iterative CQI process ensures services are consistently reviewed, assessed, and enhanced. Through CQI, Grow NJ Kids programs identify areas needing improvement and implement strategies that lead to better outcomes for children, families, and staff.

Important Terms

The Environment Rating Scales – Tools designed to assess process quality in an early childhood or school age care group. Process quality consists of the various interactions that go on in a classroom between staff and children, staff, parents, and other adults, among the children themselves, and the interactions children have with the many materials and activities in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, schedule and materials that support these interactions.

- ★ The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale® designed to assess group programs for children from birth to 3 years of age.
- ★ The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale® designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten aged children, from 3 through 5 years of age.
- ★ The School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale® designed to assess before and after school group.
- ★ The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale® designed to assess family child care programs conducted in a provider's home.

Employee Benefits - Non-wage compensation offered by employers to employees in addition to their regular salary or wages. These benefits can include things like health insurance, paid time off, free or reduced child care, retirement plans, and other perks that enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction.

Wage Scale - A schedule outlining the different levels of pay for related jobs or tasks, based on factors like experience, skill, and performance.

Domain #5: Administration and Management Practices (AMP)

Overview of Scoring

Domain	Topics Overview	Standards	Points
Administration and Management Practices (AMP)	★ Policies and Procedures ★ Benefits ★ Business Practices ★ Use of Data ★ CQI ★ Self-Assessment ★ Regulatory Compliance ★ Hiring Practices	9	25

Professional Development in this Domain

Professional Development Topic (NJ ECE Core Knowledge and Competency)	Required	Optional for Points	Audience Educators (E) Administrators and Supervisors (A) Non-Instructional Staff (N)
Environment Rating Scales (9. Program Organization and Management/Program Evaluation)	Level 3 and above		A

AMP 1

Intent: To equip leaders to uphold environmental quality standards in classrooms, fostering enriched settings for children and reinforcing families' trust in the program's dedication to excellence.

Standard

Professional Development for Administrators/Supervisors

Required Standard for Level 3 and Above: Administrators and supervisors have completed at least 2 hours of professional development on the following topic:

- ★ The Environment Rating Scales

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts

Note: Each Administrator/Supervisor completes professional development on a minimum of 1 instrument (ITERS-3, ECERS-3,) to support coverage of all instruments that apply to the program. Additional training/training hours related to the ERS may be applied to CTL 3.

Points: up to 3

- ★ 50% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (2 points) **or**
- ★ 100% of administrators and supervisors complete professional development (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

Reflective Questions

- ★ How confident am I in using the Environment Rating Scales to identify areas for improvement in classrooms?
- ★ How do I ensure that what I learn from ERS professional development translates into meaningful feedback and support for educators?
- ★ What systems are in place to track completion of ERS professional development and ongoing application of the tools?
- ★ How do I engage my staff in understanding the ERS indicators and connecting them to daily practices?

Resources

- ★ [Environment Rating Scales Institute](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Schedule annual ERS refresher sessions or peer learning groups where leaders discuss observation strategies and quality indicators.
- ★ Integrate ERS reflection into staff meetings by reviewing one subscale at a time and identifying small, achievable improvements.
- ★ Encourage leaders to complete ERS co-observations with staff to build shared understanding and connect professional development to classroom practice.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: ECERS-3 Online Overview: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, the Why Behind the ERS
Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ **This standard is required for Stars 3, 4 and 5 - program must achieve at least two points for this standard**
- ★ Each Administrator/Supervisor must complete professional development on a minimum of 1 ERS tool to ensure coverage of all tools that apply to the program
- ★ Administrators/supervisors must take at least two hours of training on *the current versions of the tools*
- ★ Training does not need to have been completed in the three years prior to rating submission, as long as new versions of the ERS tools have not been implemented by GNJK
- ★ Professional development provided by a GNJK Technical Assistance Center or CCR&R can be considered for this standard if the training is captured in NJCCIS

Notes:

AMP 2

Intent: To enhance staff retention and wellness, fostering stability for children and continuity of relationships for families.

Standard

Program staff have access to paid benefits.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Benefit policy describing the benefits offered to staff
- ★ Paid vacation time
- ★ Sick time
- ★ Health insurance
- ★ Tuition/professional development reimbursement
- ★ Retirement plan option
- ★ Reduced cost or free child care

Points: up to 4

- ★ Benefit Policy (1 point)
- ★ 1 benefit offered (1 point) or
- ★ 2 benefits offered (2 points) or
- ★ 3 or more benefits offered (3 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: §1302.90 (f) (1-2); §640(a)(5)(A)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 6A.11; 6A.12; 6A.13; 6A.14

2022: 6A.11; 6A.12; 6A.13

2025: A.9.05

AMP 2

Reflective Questions

- ★ What paid benefits (health insurance, leave, retirement, etc.) are currently offered, and how do they compare to industry benchmarks?
- ★ How do I communicate the value and details of these benefits to ensure staff understand and utilize them?
- ★ How do I assess staff satisfaction with the benefits offered, and how do I use that feedback to improve retention?
- ★ What creative partnerships or funding opportunities could help us expand paid benefits?
- ★ How do I ensure equitable access to benefits across different staff roles (full-time, part-time, etc.)?

Resources

- ★ [NJAEYC | Compensation Means More Than Wages](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Conduct a staff survey to determine which benefits (health, dental, PTO, retirement) are most valued, then prioritize options that strengthen retention.
- ★ Explore shared services opportunities through your local CCR&R. Or explore pooled benefit models through local associations, chambers of commerce, or child care networks.
- ★ Provide a clear “Benefits-at-a-Glance” summary to ensure transparency and promote full staff participation in benefit programs.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Understanding Human Resource Laws; Staying HR Compliant and Building Your Team; Offering Employee Benefit Packages

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ It is not necessary for the program to submit evidence of the benefits offered to staff, but the benefit policy must outline the benefits available.

Notes:

AMP 3

Intent: To foster professional development among staff, indirectly enhancing family outcomes through the improved quality delivered by skilled and fairly compensated educators.

Standard

Program implements a transparent wage scale that links wages to staff qualifications.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Wage scale that outlines how pay is linked to staff qualifications and evidence of employee access to wage scale
- ★ Evidence of pay aligning to wage scale

Points: up to 3

- ★ Wage scale (1 point)
- ★ Evidence of pay aligning to scale (2 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.9.07

AMP 3

Reflective Questions

- ★ How was our wage scale developed, and does it clearly show how education and experience affect compensation?
- ★ How do I ensure all staff understand the wage scale and how it applies to them?
- ★ In what ways does our wage scale promote fairness, equity, and retention?

Resources

- ★ [Early Care and Education Workforce Salary Scale Playbook: Implementation Guide](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Develop a simple wage scale chart that shows education and credential milestones and post it in a staff-only area.
- ★ Review and update the wage scale annually to align with state wage benchmarks and cost-of-living adjustments.
- ★ Share information during onboarding and annual reviews to help staff understand how advancing their education can increase earning potential.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Developing a Salary Scale

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services

Rating Information

- ★ Programs may redact staff information on any evidence submitted.

Notes:

AMP 4

Intent: To support thoughtful lesson preparation and reflective practice, enhancing the quality of children’s learning experiences and strengthening communication with families about their child’s activities.

Standard

Paid planning time policy is implemented for all educators to engage in lesson planning, performance-based assessment, reflective teaching practices, and/or planning time to support developmentally and culturally appropriate practice.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Policy for time outside the classroom allotted for planning and reflective practices
- ★ Current schedule of planning/reflective practice opportunities for educators
- ★ Teacher confirmation via written narrative or interview

Points: up to 4

- ★ All educators .5 hours/weekly (1 point) **or**
- ★ Lead educators 2 hours/month (2 points) **or**
- ★ All educators 1 hour/weekly (4 points)

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: Not applicable.

AMP 4

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I schedule paid planning time so it is consistent, protected, and used effectively?
- ★ How do I ensure planning time supports individualized instruction and developmentally appropriate practices?
- ★ In what ways do educators collaborate during planning time to strengthen curriculum and assessment practices?
- ★ How do I measure whether paid planning time contributes to improved teaching quality and child outcomes?

Resources

- ★ [Inclusive Schools Network | Scheduling for Success: Common Planning Time](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Build protected planning time into weekly schedules. For example by having program staff or assistants provide coverage so lead teachers have uninterrupted planning time.
- ★ Encourage teams to use planning time collaboratively to align curriculum, reflect on assessments, or plan inclusive activities.
- ★ Track how planning time is used and highlight successful strategies that lead to stronger classroom environments.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and CCR&R

Rating Information

- ★ No additional rating considerations.

Notes:

AMP 5

Intent: To ensure organizational sustainability and accountability, instilling family confidence in the responsible management of tuition and funding.

Standard

Program maintains accurate and up-to-date financial records using accounting software. Regular audits, either internal or external, are conducted to ensure transparency and accountability.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Evidence of financial reporting process
- ★ Description of regular review process

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Waiver: This standard is waived for District Funded Preschool programs. Points automatically awarded

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.101(a)(4); §75.302(b)(5); §647 (c)(1)

2025: §1302.101(a)(4); §75.302(b)(5); §647 (c)(1)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10C.1; 10C.2; 10C.3; 10C.4

2022: 10C.1; 10C.2; 10C.3

2025: A.9.13

AMP 5

Reflective Questions

- ★ How current and accurate are our financial records, and how do we ensure ongoing accountability?
- ★ What accounting systems or tools are used, and do they meet the needs of our program's size and structure?
- ★ How do I communicate financial information transparently with stakeholders (e.g., board members, owners, funders)?

Resources

- ★ [McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership | Administrative Leadership](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Use **child-care specific accounting software** for real-time access and data security. These systems also simplify recordkeeping and reporting.
- ★ Conduct quarterly internal reviews to check financial accuracy before annual audits.
- ★ Provide annual fiscal training for administrative staff to ensure consistent and transparent documentation practices.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Utilizing Financial Management Technology; Software for Financial Management; Receipts & Financial Recordkeeping Practices

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ To receive credit for this standard, programs **must submit both evidence of keeping accurate and updated financial records and a description of the program's auditing process**

Notes:

AMP 6

Intent: To foster long-term program stability, enabling families to rely on sustained quality without unexpected interruptions.

Standard

Program has a current, comprehensive annual budget that outlines all expected revenues and expenditures. Regular financial reviews and adjustments are conducted to ensure alignment with financial goals.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Evidence that program has a one-year operating budget with statement of income and expenditures
- ★ Narrative describing how financial reviews support alignment with financial goals

Points: up to 2

- ★ Evidence of operating budget with income and expenditures (1 point)
- ★ Narrative describing how financial reviews support financial goals (1 point)

Waiver: This standard is waived for District Funded Preschool programs. Points automatically awarded

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.101(a)(1); §642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa); §75.302(b)(5); §644. (a)(2)(B); §647 (c)(1); 45 CFR 303(c)
 2025: §1302.101(a)(1); §642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa); §644. (a)(2)(B); §647 (c)(1); 45 CFR 303(c)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: 10C.1; 10C.2
 2022: 10C.1; 10C.2
 2025: A.9.12

AMP 6

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I monitor and adjust the budget throughout the year to align with program goals and realities?
- ★ What tools or reports do I use to review financial progress and make data-informed decisions?
- ★ How do I ensure our budget supports both short-term needs and long-term sustainability?
- ★ How are financial decisions communicated transparently to staff or stakeholders?

Resources

- ★ [Can Strengthening Business Practices Help Level the Field for Child Care Programs in Underserved Communities?](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Review the budget at least quarterly to compare projected vs. actual expenses and revenues.
- ★ Involve leadership or board members in the budgeting process to promote shared accountability.
- ★ Use financial data to plan for sustainability—e.g., setting aside reserves, forecasting enrollment changes, or adjusting tuition rates thoughtfully.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Budgeting Tools and Techniques

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ No additional rating considerations.

Notes:

AMP 7

Intent: To maintain program viability, ensuring families benefit from stable programs and continued access to services.

Standard

Program has a strategic or business plan that includes marketing/recruitment plan to maximize full enrollment.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Strategic or business plan updated within the last three years that includes marketing/recruitment

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1302.13; §1302.14(a)(1); §640.(g)(1)(c); §642. (d)(2)(G)

2025: §1302.11 (b)(1)(i-iii); §1302.13; §1302.14(a)(1); §640.(g)(1)(c); §642. (d)(2)(G)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.9.18

AMP 7

Reflective Questions

- ★ How current and relevant is our strategic/business plan, and how often do we review it?
- ★ What goals within our plan specifically address marketing, recruitment, and enrollment stability?
- ★ How do I use data (e.g., enrollment trends, community demographics) to guide recruitment strategies?

Resources

- ★ [Child Care Aware | Marketing Toolbox Resources](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Identify your program's goals, target audience, and financial priorities to guide decision-making.
- ★ Include plans for marketing, staffing, and sustainability to ensure enrollment and stability.
- ★ Review and update the plan annually to reflect current data, challenges, and opportunities.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Non-Profit Boards Strategic Planning; Strategic Business Planning for Growth

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ The strategic/business plan submitted **must be dated** to validate that it has been updated within the last three years

Notes:

AMP 8

Intent: To establish a living framework of policies and procedures that advance equitable, inclusive, and high-quality practices, ensuring continuous review and improvement to serve a diverse community effectively.

Standard

Program develops and implements clear, written policies and procedures for all aspects of the program. These are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current best practices including equity and inclusivity.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Operation Manual and/or staff and family handbooks
- ★ Documentation of dates reviewed, and evidence policies and procedures have been reviewed by a diverse group, feedback has been sought, and revisions have been made to reflect attention to current needs, equity and inclusion
- ★ Documentation of the utilization of the Model Work Standards to assess and inform policy and procedure updates (completed assessment with action plan)

Points: up to 3

- ★ Operation Manual and/or staff and family handbooks* (2 points)
- ★ Policies and procedures reviewed by diverse group, feedback sought, and revisions made (1 point)

* Depending on the size of manual(s), this could be reviewed onsite

Head Start Alignment

2016: §1301.3 (c)(1); §1301.2(a)(b); §642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(V)(aa-cc)

2025: §1301.3 (c)(1); §1301.2 (a)(b); §642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(V)(aa-cc)

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.9.11; A.6.22

AMP 8

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I ensure all policies and procedures are current, consistent, and accessible to staff and families?
- ★ What process do I use to review policies for clarity, equity, and inclusivity?
- ★ How do I gather staff input when policies are updated or new procedures are introduced?
- ★ How do I communicate policy changes to ensure understanding and compliance?

Resources

- ★ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) | [Model Work Standards](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Review policies annually with input from staff and families to ensure clarity and cultural responsiveness.
- ★ Create a “Policy Review Calendar” to rotate topics (e.g., enrollment, health and safety, family engagement) throughout the year.
- ★ Use plain language and visuals in policy handbooks to make information accessible for all staff and families.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Processes & Systems that Optimize Operations; Developing an Employee Handbook

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids Training Services – Early Education Business Consultants (EEBC)

Rating Information

- ★ The program’s Operations Manual or Staff and Family Handbooks can be reviewed during the virtual documentation review of evidence kept onsite if files are too large for sharing.
- ★ To receive a point for *policies and procedures reviewed by a diverse group, feedback sought, and revisions made*, the program must submit a narrative describing the protocol for collecting feedback from a diverse group and how that feedback has been used to make modifications to policies and procedures
- ★ Submitted Operations Manual or handbooks must include operations for both *staff and families*

Notes:

AMP 9

Intent: To maintain program integrity through legal, ethical, and safe practices, fostering a secure, high-quality environment for children and sustaining trust among families, staff, and regulatory bodies.

Standard

Program adheres to all relevant local, state, and federal regulations and regularly reviews compliance requirements and updates policies accordingly.

Examples of Evidence Could Include:

- ★ Evidence of program policies, practices or processes that support an annual review of compliance across relevant or applicable initiatives they are involved in (i.e., CCDF funding (Subsidy), NJDOE, CACFP, NAEYC, OOL, Grow NJ Kids, Head Start, Zoning, etc.)

Points: 2 Met/Not Met

Head Start Alignment

2016: No alignment

2025: No alignment

NAEYC Alignment

2018-2019: Not applicable.

2022: Not applicable.

2025: A.9.14; R.9.03

AMP 9

Reflective Questions

- ★ How do I stay current on changes in regulations that impact our program operations?
- ★ What systems do I have in place to monitor compliance across licensing, health, and employment areas?
- ★ How do I prepare for inspections or audits to ensure readiness at all times?
- ★ What steps do I take to address and document corrective actions when compliance issues arise?

Resources

- ★ [Who Regulates Child Care? - Child Care Aware® of America](#)
- ★ [Home | National Resource Center](#) for Health and Safety in ECE
- ★ [NJDOE Preschool Requirements](#)

Bright Ideas

- ★ Maintain a compliance checklist and assign responsibilities (e.g., safety, staffing, health, PD) to ensure ongoing readiness.
- ★ Conduct quarterly “mock inspections” to identify and correct issues proactively.
- ★ Designate a compliance lead or small team to track updates from OOL, DOH, DOE, and other affiliated organizations and share them with staff.

Professional Development Opportunities

Topics: Peer Learning Communities and Networking Opportunities are available to network with other programs working to meet this standard.

Offered by: Grow NJ Kids TA Centers and CCR&R

Rating Information

- ★ This standard is *not progressive*, partial credit will not be given
- ★ Programs can submit a narrative for this standard outlining their adherence to applicable local, state, and federal regulations, and commitment to regularly reviewing compliance requirements and making applicable updates according to those regulations and requirements

Notes:

Domain 5: Administration & Management Practices Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the AMP domain.

Grow NJ Kids Quality Standards

Additional Point Opportunities (AP)

The **Additional Points section** highlights practices that reflect quality beyond the core requirements of the Grow NJ Kids Standards. These points recognize enhancements in curriculum, instruction, inclusion, family partnerships, community collaboration, workforce development, and other areas where programs **demonstrate advanced commitment to growth**.

Programs may use this section to **document innovative practices, celebrate areas of excellence, and showcase strengths that exceed minimum expectations**. Additional points represent both recognition of high-quality work and an opportunity for continued advancement.



Additional Point Opportunities (AP)

(Partial credit not awarded. AP items are scored as met/not met)

Programs may receive additional points towards their star rating by meeting one or more of the high-quality activities below.

AP 1: Program is accredited by American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI).

Intent: To guarantee that the Montessori program adheres to the core principles, practices, and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, as recognized by internationally respected accrediting bodies (AMS or AMI).

Required Evidence: Current accreditation certificate from AMS or AMI

Points: 3

Rating Information: The program must be *accredited* by American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI). Affiliated programs cannot receive points for this standard.

Resources:

[Association Montessori International](#)
[AMS School Accreditation](#) | [The American Montessori Society](#)

AP 2: Program offers additional supports to families such as providing transportation, having mental health professionals on staff or on call, offering on site therapeutic services such as speech, physical and or occupational therapy and/or having certified special education staff.

Intent: To ensure that programs are equipped to meet the diverse and comprehensive needs of children and families, particularly those who may face barriers to accessing services or who require specialized support.

Required Evidence: Documentation of additional supports offered

Points: 3

Waiver: *Points will be automatically awarded for DOE school-based programs*

Rating Information: A narrative describing the additional supports the program provides to families can be submitted as evidence for this standard.

Resources:

[Delivering Comprehensive Services in All Head Start Programs](#) | [HeadStart.gov](#)
[National Congress on School Transportation](#)
[CECMHC](#) | [Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)

AP 3: Program Director or Administrator has completed the HEART of Leadership series.

Intent: To ensure that programs are equipped to meet the diverse and comprehensive needs of children and families, particularly those who may face barriers to accessing services or who require specialized support.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts.

Points: 3

Rating Information: The Early Childhood Leadership Institute (ECLI) at Rowan University maintains tracking of all HEART participants and can verify successful completion for any individual that may need verification. The HEART of Leadership series does not need to be taken in the three years prior to rating submission. The only evidence accepted for this standard is a letter or verification from the Early Childhood Leadership Institute (ECLI) at Rowan University.

Resources:

[HEART of Leadership Series – Early Childhood Leadership Institute](#)

AP 4: Program offers continuity of care (looping) for young children. Teachers remain with the child's age group for 2 plus years.

Intent: To support the emotional security, learning continuity, and developmental success of young children by maintaining consistent teacher-child relationships over a span of two or more years.

Required Evidence: Program policy for continuity of care and evidence of implementation

Points: 3

Rating Information: Programs can submit a narrative description or their continuity of care policy as evidence for this standard. Evidence of teachers remaining with children over the course of 2 or more years must be presented.

Resources:

[Relationships: The Heart of Development and Learning | ZERO TO THREE](#)

[The Many Benefits of Continuity of Care for Infants, Toddlers, Families, and Caregiving Staff | NAEYC](#)

[Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care | ZERO TO THREE](#)

AP 5: Program offers a multi-language approach. Curriculum is implemented in 2 or more languages.

Intent: To create an inclusive, equitable, and enriched learning environment by implementing a curriculum in two or more languages—supporting multilingual learners, honoring diverse cultural identities, and enhancing cognitive development for all children.

Required Evidence: Documentation or receipt of language immersion curriculum; lesson plans reflecting curriculum is implemented in at least 2 languages

Points: 3

Rating Information: Programs must submit a sample of the lesson plans from 50% of the classrooms for each age group served by the program, with a narrative reflecting that the curriculum is implemented in at least two languages.

Resources:

[Culture and Language | HeadStart.gov](#)

[Integrating Language Into Early Childhood Education](#)

[Bilingualism in the Early Years: What the Science Says | LEARNing Landscapes](#)

AP 6: A minimum of 1 educator from each classroom completes the [three module Pyramid Model Training Series](#) to ensure programming that supports all infants and young children (ages 0-8) in developing social-emotional competence.

Intent: The intent of this standard is to ensure each classroom has at least one educator trained in Pyramid Model practices to support children’s social-emotional development.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts.

Points: 4

Rating Information: At least 1 educator **from each classroom** must complete the full *Pyramid Model* training series (30 hours).

Resources:

Training offered by : [New Jersey Pyramid Model Partnership – Center For Autism And Early Childhood Mental Health - Montclair State University](#)

AP 7: A minimum of 1 educator from each classroom completes Keeping Babies and Children in Mind training Series (21 hours).

Intent: To ensure that each classroom has at least one educator trained in the Keeping Babies and Children in Mind series, providing a foundation in brain development and trauma-informed care to enhance responsive, high-quality caregiving and promote positive outcomes for infants and young children.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts.

Points: 4

Rating Information: At least 1 educator **from each classroom** must complete the full *Keeping Babies and Children in Mind* training series (21 hours).

Resources:

Training offered by [Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative \(SEFI\) – Center For Autism And Early Childhood Mental Health - Montclair State University](#)

AP 8: Program is a Pyramid Model Implementation program.

Intent: To ensure the program systematically implements the Pyramid Model framework to promote social-emotional competence, prevent challenging behaviors, and enhance the quality of early childhood care and education through evidence-based practices.

Required Evidence: Certificate or letter of good standing from the Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at Montclair State University

Points: 5

Rating Information: The evidence accepted for this standard is a letter or verification from the Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at Montclair State University

Resources:

Supported by : [New Jersey Pyramid Model Partnership – Center For Autism And Early Childhood Mental Health - Montclair State University](#)

A limited number of programs are selected, by application, each year to participate the Pyramid Model Implementation initiative.

AP 9: Educators, supervisors and administrators receive professional development and/or coursework on the implementation and benefits of home visiting. [Home Visits](#) are modeled after Head Start guidelines and are offered to all enrolled families.

Intent: To ensure that staff are well-trained in the implementation and benefits of home visiting, modeled after Head Start guidelines, so that all enrolled families receive supportive, individualized visits that strengthen family engagement and promote optimal child development.

Required Evidence: Professional development records/certificates, NJ Workforce Registry transcripts, and/or college transcripts showing completion of aligned coursework for a minimum of 1 teacher per classroom and all administrators and supervisors. Letter, newsletter, or handbook that reflects that home visits are offered and implementing home visiting to families once a year by an administrator, teacher and/or family support worker, with list of families wanting a home visit. Documentation for completed home visits. *

Points: 5

Rating Information:

- Training on the implementation and benefits of home visits must be completed by **at least 1 teacher per classroom and all administrators and supervisors.**
- The training does not need to have been taken during the three years prior to rating submission
- College coursework could be considered in lieu of the professional development required for this standard, and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis
- The program **must also submit** evidence that home visits were offered to all families, a list of the families that requested a home visit, and documentation of completed home visits
- Completed home visits must have been facilitated by an administrator, teacher and/or family support worker.
- Home visits can be completed in another mutually agreed upon location outside of the home, but credit for this standard cannot be given for meetings held at the school or conducted virtually
- Documentation of completed home visits can be reviewed during the virtual review of onsite documentation
- Depending on how many the school completed, documentation of completed home visits may be reviewed virtually or onsite.

Resources:

Training available through NJCCIS offered by Prevent Child Abuse – NJ

[Home Visitor's Online Handbook | HeadStart.gov](#)

AP 10: Program is a Pyramid Model Demonstration site.

Intent: To ensure the program serves as a high-quality, exemplary site for the Pyramid Model, leading implementation efforts, supporting other programs, and advancing best practices in promoting social-emotional competence and preventing challenging behaviors.

Required Evidence: Certificate or letter of good standing from the Social Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at Montclair State University

Points: 10

Rating Information: The evidence accepted for this standard is a letter or verification from the Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) at Montclair State University

Resources:

Supported by : [New Jersey Pyramid Model Partnership – Center For Autism And Early Childhood Mental Health - Montclair State University](#)

Opportunities for Additional Points: Notes

Use this space to capture your ideas, questions, and next steps related to the additional point opportunities