Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (2025)

Purpose

The **Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS)** provide a framework for creating safe, nurturing and engaging environments that promote growth across all developmental domains—social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive. These standards ensure preschool programs across Iowa deliver high-quality early learning experiences to support every child's development and offer a strong foundation for learning. Program standards, paired with the **Iowa Early Learning Standards,** promote consistency and quality in preschool programs statewide.

IQPPS provide a clear framework for defining quality in preschool settings, focusing on nine areas: relationships, family and community connections, curricula, teaching practices, assessment, early learning environments, health and safety, professionalism, leadership and management. Early childhood educators use the IQPPS to guide daily practices, plan meaningful learning experiences, and ensure classrooms meet best practices. Administrators and program leaders use the standards to guide and evaluate program quality, develop improvement plans, inform professional development efforts and maintain compliance with state requirements. Additionally, the standards assist community members and families in recognizing elements of a high-quality preschool program. Collectively, IQPPS provide a shared vision and framework for ensuring every child in Iowa benefits from a strong early learning foundation.

Preschool Program Standards and the Chapter 12 Matrix

Both the preschool program standards and Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 12 provide a representation of components necessary for an effective and efficient infrastructure. Both are also utilized in the respective accreditation processes related to school or program improvement ensuring high quality programming for children, students and their families.

Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 12 provides a broad description of education accreditation standards for Iowa schools and districts. Content in the Chapter 12 Matrix encompasses topics identified in law as requirements for educational programming within preschool through grade 12, including governance, certification and programmatic design.

Preschool program standards serve the same purpose while also providing much more detail reflecting early childhood best practices in multiple areas including curriculum, instructional practice, health, leadership and overall program management.

While Chapter 12 represents preschool through secondary educational programming requirements, the preschool program standards are applicable only to preschools and other early care, health and educational settings. All public districts and schools must adhere to Chapter 12 requirements to maintain their accreditation. All preschool programs and services provided under the authority of the Iowa Department of Education are required to follow one of three state board approved preschool program standards including Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Standards, and Head Start Program Performance Standards. This programming includes Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs, Shared Visions Preschool Programs, and programs or classrooms serving preschool aged children with individualized education programs, or IEPs.

Key Features of the 2025 Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards

The nine standard areas were intentionally ordered in the following sequence:
- Standards 1 and 2 focus on relationships with children, families and the community.
- Standards 3, 4, 5 and 6 focus on services being provided.
- Standards 7, 8 and 9 focus on infrastructure through policies or practices.

Nine Standard Areas
- Standard 1: Relationships
- Standard 2: Family and Community Connections
- Standard 3: Curricula
- Standard 4: Teaching Practices
- Standard 5: Assessment
- Standard 6: Learning Environments
- Standard 7: Health and Safety
- Standard 8: Professionalism
- Standard 9: Leadership and Management

Subsections

Each standard contains subsections which further detail specific content. The subsections provide clarity and structure by highlighting the main components of each standard area.

Standard Areas	Subsections
Standard 1: Relationships	- Creating Caring Environments - Responsive Teaching - Supporting Positive Relationships
Standard 2: Family and Community Connections	- Family Partnerships - Community
Standard 3: Curricula	- Essential Characteristics - Developmental Domains - Content Areas
Standard 4: Teaching Practices	- Planning and Organization - Instructional Strategies
Standard 5: Assessment	- Assessment Plan - Assessment Implementation
Standard 6: Learning Environments	- Environmental Design - Indoor Learning - Outdoor Learning
Standard 7: Health and Safety	- Policies and Practices - Maintaining Healthy Environments - Nutrition
Standard 8: Professionalism	- Staff Qualifications - Professional Learning
Standard 9: Leadership and Management	- Administrator Qualifications - Staff Infrastructure - Program Infrastructure

IQPPS Standards Overview

Standard 1: Relationships

Effective early childhood programs prioritize nurturing relationships, promote a positive sense of self, and encourage respect and cooperation among children. When programs create safe and engaging environments that build on children's interests, they begin to develop trusting relationships between adults and children. Through positive interactions with peers and the significant adults in their lives, young children develop and foster essential social and emotional skills that support cooperation, motivation and understanding.

Additionally, high-quality programs support children in forming meaningful connections with their families, teachers, and communities. These relationships encourage children to explore, take risks, solve problems and engage deeply with the world around them. In turn, such relationships act as protective factors promoting overall well-being and reducing challenging behaviors.

By fostering positive relationships and supportive environments, programs ensure children develop the social-emotional competencies essential for lifelong learning and well-being.

Standard 2: Family and Community Connections

Programs build strong family and community partnerships which are essential to supporting children's growth and development. Through routine communication and active collaboration, program staff and families work together to create a partnership that supports learning both in the classroom and beyond.

In addition, program staff establish connections with community organizations to link families with resources and opportunities. These partnerships strengthen the network of support among families, educators and the broader community to enhance children's learning.

Standard 3: Curricula

High-quality preschool programs implement comprehensive, research-based curriculum aligned with the Iowa Early Learning Standards. Teachers use the curriculum to intentionally design engaging, play-based learning experiences reflecting children's interests, strengths and needs. Programs create learning environments rich with diverse materials and opportunities for exploration, discovery and collaboration.

Teachers create predictable yet flexible daily schedules which balance child-initiated and teacher-guided activities both indoors and outdoors. Routines and schedules support children's independence, curiosity and sense of belonging. Through responsive implementation of a high-quality curriculum, programs create inclusive environments where all children are supported in developing skills and confidence needed for lifelong learning.

Standard 4: Teaching Practices

Programs implement effective teaching practices that are intentional, responsive and grounded in a deep understanding of child development. Teachers plan daily opportunities for child-initiated play and design learning experiences built on each child's interests, relationships and abilities.

Learning environments are thoughtfully organized to encourage exploration, discovery, and conceptual understanding; while schedules and transitions are structured to maintain engagement and prevent challenging behaviors. Through purposeful interactions, teachers scaffold learning, support language development, nurture independence and build executive functioning skills. Together, these teaching practices create inclusive and engaging classrooms where every child is supported in achieving success.

Standard 5: Assessment

Effective programs use formal and informal assessments to monitor children's development, guide instruction and adjust the learning environment as necessary. Assessments are conducted in partnership with families, ensuring open communication and collaboration. Teaching staff use authentic assessment strategies to gather information which provide a comprehensive understanding of each child's strengths and areas for growth. A systematic and on-going assessment process facilitates reflection of children's progress and analysis of results to guide instructional decisions. This process also supports programs in identifying additional resources and enrichment opportunities for teaching staff.

Standard 6: Learning Environments

Programs provide safe, accessible and developmentally appropriate learning environments.
A variety of materials and equipment are rotated as children's skills and interests develop and expand. These inclusive learning environments address all developmental domains and curriculum goals while providing access to all children. Programs foster children's exploration through play and offer nurturing spaces to create engaging learning environments.
Indoor and outdoor spaces are designed to allow staff to supervise children and accommodate individual, small-group and large-group activities. Additionally, indoor and outdoor areas are structured to minimize hazards and meet safety standards. Outdoor environments serve as an extension of the indoor classroom by offering opportunities in the content areas, as well as gross motor activity and interaction with natural materials. Programs ensure environments foster engagement, independence and equitable participation for every child.

Standard 7: Health and Safety

Programs maintain safe and healthy environments to support children's well-being and development. Staff implement policies and procedures designed to provide a safe and healthy early learning experience. Routines are established for maintaining health records and implementing individualized care plans for children with special medical, health or dietary needs. Additionally, staff receive the required training for health and safety procedures while also promoting nutritious meals and snacks, hygiene, self-care routines and communicable disease prevention.
Facilities and equipment meet safety and accessibility standards, including fire, environmental, and ADA requirements. Collectively, these practices ensure all children are safe, healthy, and able to thrive in a nurturing environment.

Standard 8: Professionalism

High-quality early childhood programs employ educators who are skilled, knowledgeable, and committed to fostering intentional learning opportunities for all children. Educators with specialized training in early childhood education are prepared to cultivate responsive relationships with children, while using rich and meaningful language. In addition, they create inclusive and engaging learning environments that promote growth and learning for all children. Supported through ongoing professional development and evaluation, educators create conditions in which children can thrive and achieve their full potential.

Standard 9: Leadership and Management

Programs implement clear administrative structures with policies and procedures to promote operational efficiency accountability and compliance. Leaders support staff by providing an infrastructure allowing for planning and data-informed decision-making, while fostering a collaborative culture that engages families and community partners. By effectively managing financial, human, and material resources; programs create the conditions necessary for high-quality early learning environments.

Cited Resources:

Webster-Stratton, C. (1999). How to promote children's social and emotional competence. Sage Publications.

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (2019, June 26). Building positive relationships with young children.

Principles of Child Development and Learning and Implications That Inform Practice. NAEYC, 2020.

Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Head Start early learning outcomes framework: Ages birth to five. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/elof-2015.pd

Required Criterion

The IQPPS are comprised of 111 standards in total, with 27 identified as required. Required criteria identify the minimum essential practices, policies and conditions necessary to ensure a safe, developmentally appropriate and high-quality early learning environment. Preschool programs must demonstrate compliance with all required criteria for state accountability and IQPPS verification.

Definitions of Key Terms

Program: refers to the preschool service or setting (i.e. preschool classroom, school district preschool, or community-based preschool) implementing the IQPPS standards.

Administrator: designated leader of the preschool program who possesses the required educational qualifications and ensures the effective implementation of the IQPPS standards with fidelity.

Program Staff: staff working directly with the preschool program (i.e. teaching staff, administration, nurse, etc.)
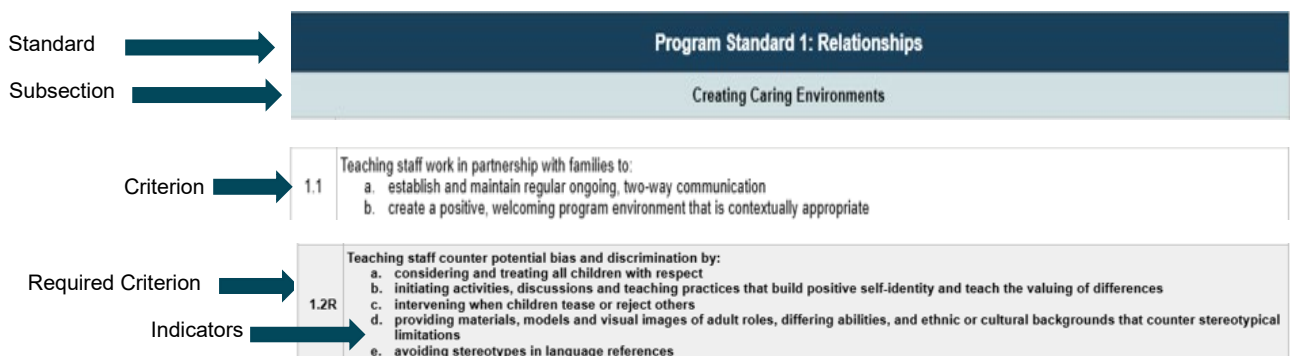
Teaching Staff: all personnel within the preschool program whose primary role is working directly with children in the classroom (i.e. lead teachers, co-teachers, assistant teachers, or paraeducators).

Teacher: licensed professional within the preschool program, who holds the required early childhood credentials and is responsible for designing and implementing learning environments, creating instructional plans, assessing child progress, supervising classroom routines, and collaborating with families.

Teaching Assistant: member of the instructional team in the preschool program (i.e. assistant teacher, paraeducator or aide) who works under the supervision of the lead teacher to support

Organization of Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards

Program Standard 1: Relationships	
Creating Caring Environments	
1.1	Teaching staff work in partnership with families to: a. establish and maintain regular ongoing, two-way communication b. create a positive, welcoming program environment that is contextually appropriate
1.2R	Teaching staff counter potential bias and discrimination by: a. considering and treating all children with respect b. initiating activities, discussions and teaching practices that build positive self-identity and teach the valuing of differences c. intervening when children tease or reject others d. providing materials, models and visual images of adult roles, differing abilities, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds that counter stereotypical limitations e. avoiding stereotypes in language references

Standard ➡ **Program Standard 1: Relationships**

Subsection ➡ Creating Caring Environments

Criterion ➡ 1.1 Teaching staff work in partnership with families to:
a. establish and maintain regular ongoing, two-way communication
b. create a positive, welcoming program environment that is contextually appropriate

Required Criterion ➡
Indicators ➡ 1.2R Teaching staff counter potential bias and discrimination by:
a. considering and treating all children with respect
b. initiating activities, discussions and teaching practices that build positive self-identity and teach the valuing of differences
c. intervening when children tease or reject others
d. providing materials, models and visual images of adult roles, differing abilities, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds that counter stereotypical limitations
e. avoiding stereotypes in language references

Program Standard 1: Relationships	
Creating Caring Environments	

1.1	Teaching staff work in partnership with families to:
	   a. establish and maintain regular ongoing, two-way communication
	   b. create a positive, welcoming program environment that is contextually appropriate

1.2R	**Teaching staff counter potential bias and discrimination by:**
	   a. considering and treating all children with respect
	   b. initiating activities, discussions and teaching practices that build positive self-identity and teach the valuing of differences
	   c. intervening when children tease or reject others
	   d. providing materials, models and visual images of adult roles, differing abilities, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds that counter stereotypical limitations
	   e. avoiding stereotypes in language references

1.3R	**Teaching staff follow written positive child guidance policies which:**
	   a. prohibit the use of physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion
	   b. address how disruptive and unsafe behaviors in children are handled
	   c. limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary practices

Responsive Teaching	

1.4	Teaching staff evaluate and change their responses to children based on individual needs. Teaching staff vary their interactions to be sensitive and responsive to:
	   a. differing abilities
	   b. temperaments
	   c. activity levels
	   d. cognitive development
	   e. social development

1.5	Teaching staff frequently talk with children and listen to children with attention and respect. They:
	   a. respond to children's questions and requests
	   b. use strategies to communicate effectively and build relationships with every child
	   c. help children increase conversational exchanges through meaningful conversations with each child

1.6	Teaching staff will focus on supporting children's appropriate behavior by:
	   a. teaching the child social, communication, and emotional regulation skills
	   b. using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies
	   c. providing guidance that is consistent with the child's level of development

Supporting Positive Relationships	

1.7	Teaching staff intentionally support children as they practice social skills and build friendships by helping them:
	   a. enter into play
	   b. sustain play
	   c. enhance play

1.8	Teaching staff assist children in resolving conflicts by helping them:
	   a. recognize and label their own and other's feelings
	   b. employ strategies to manage feelings
	   c. describe problems
	   d. try alternative solutions

1.9	Teaching staff help children manage their behavior by guiding and supporting children to:
	   a. persist when frustrated
	   b. play cooperatively with other children
	   c. use language to communicate needs
	   d. learn turn taking
	   e. gain control of physical impulses
	   f. express negative emotions in ways that do not harm others or themselves
	   g. use problem-solving techniques
	   h. learn about self and others
	   i. understand others may have different thoughts and opinions than their own

	Program Standard 2: Family and Community Connections
	Family Partnerships
2.1R	**Program staff use a variety of formal and informal strategies and routines (including conversations) to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure; their preferred child-rearing practices; and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds.**

2.2	The program provides information to families on volunteer opportunities including but not limited to:
	   a. how to be involved in their child's learning environment or program
	   b. options for participating in learning experiences
	   c. opportunities that align with the family's interests and skills

2.3	Program staff routinely communicate with the families of preschoolers about each child's progress and growth, individual activities and shared caregiving issues.
2.4	The program addresses family concerns and outlines the steps families can take to ask questions, raise concerns or provide feedback on an ongoing basis.
2.5	Program staff collaborate with families to prepare for and manage their children's transitions between programs, including special education programs. Staff provide information to families that can assist in advocating for and promoting a successful transition for their child.
2.6	Families are provided opportunities to share information used for making decisions related to ongoing program improvement.
	Community
2.7	Program staff provide access to a current list of child and family support services available in the community to support families' efforts to connect with resources (e.g., health, mental health, oral health, nutrition, child welfare, parenting programs, early intervention/special education screening assessment services, and basic needs such as housing and child care subsidies). Resources should be contextually appropriate for enrolled families, based on the pattern of needs observed among families, and in response to families' requests.
2.8	Program staff develop partnerships and professional relationships with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community that further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of the children and families they serve.
2.9	The program routinely shares information about local child-centered events with families.
2.10	Program staff use knowledge of the families and communities served to adapt the curriculum, environment and materials to provide varied learning experiences for children.

Program Standard 3: Curricula

Essential Characteristics

3.1	The curriculum:
	  a. is guided by a scope and sequence that includes plans and materials based on developmental progressions
	  b. is developmentally appropriate, research- or evidence-based, and utilizes child-directed play
	  c. encompasses all areas of development
	  d. guides teaching staff's intentional implementation of learning opportunities consistent with the program's goals and objectives

3.2	The curriculum guides teaching staff to incorporate specific content, concepts, and activities which:
	  a. foster development in the following domains:
	    I. social-emotional
	    II. physical
	    III. language
	    IV. cognitive
	  b. integrate key areas of content including:
	    I. literacy
	    II. mathematics
	    III. science
	    IV. technology
	    V. creative expression and the arts
	    VI. health and safety
	    VII. social studies

3.3	The curriculum is implemented in a contextually appropriate manner which reflects responsiveness to:
	  a. family home values and beliefs
	  b. children's experiences
	  c. languages

3.4	The curriculum guides the development of the learning environment to provide children with materials to study and explore, which reflect a variety of family structures representative of society, including age, language, gender, and abilities.
	
	Materials and equipment:
	  a. encourage and allow for exploration, experimentation and discovery
	  b. offer a broad variety to promote interaction and independent use
	  c. are rotated to reflect changing curriculum, new interests and skill levels
	  d. accommodate children's individual needs and abilities

3.5	The curriculum guides the development of a balanced daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and responsive to individual needs of the children. The written schedule is posted and:
	  a. incorporates child-initiated activities
	  b. includes both indoor and outdoor experiences
	  c. provides time and support for transitions
	  d. is responsive to the need for rest and activity

3.6	The schedule is incorporated into daily routines and conversations with children. It provides for learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days and incorporates time for:
	  a. child-directed play
	  b. creative expression
	  c. large-group
	  d. small-group

3.7	For preschool age children in a program that operates for more than 6 hours per day:
	  a. A program must implement an intentional, age appropriate approach to accommodate children's need to nap or rest.
	  b. Programs provide a regular time every day at which children are encouraged but not forced to rest or nap.
	  c. Programs provide alternative quiet learning activities for children who do not need or want to rest or nap.
	  d. During nap time, one teaching staff member may be replaced by a staff member or trained volunteer who does not meet the required teaching qualifications.

3.8	Children are offered opportunities to decide what the class will do together (e.g., unit of study, interest areas, which book to read or song to sing as a group) and teaching staff incorporate the interests of children throughout daily activities and routines leading to children feeling accepted and developing a sense of belonging in the classroom community.
Developmental Domains	
3.9R	**Children have varied opportunities to develop a sense of competence and positive attitudes toward learning, such as persistence, engagement, curiosity, and mastery.**

3.10R	**Children have varied opportunities to develop competence in verbal and nonverbal communication by:**
	    a. **responding to questions**
	    b. **communicating needs, thoughts and experiences**
	    c. **describing things and events**

3.11	Children develop vocabulary through varied opportunities which may include:
	    a. conversations
	    b. experiences
	    c. books

3.12	Children are provided varied opportunities and materials that support fine-motor development to acquire:
	    a. hand strength
	    b. grasp
	    c. eye-hand coordination
	    d. finger dexterity and control
	    e. bi-lateral coordination

3.13	Children have varied opportunities and are provided equipment to engage in large motor experiences which:
	    a. stimulate a variety of skills
	    b. enhance sensory-motor integration
	    c. develop controlled movement
	    d. enable children with varying abilities to have large-motor experiences similar to those of their peers
	    e. range from familiar to new and challenging
	    f. help them learn physical games with rules and structure

Content Areas	

3.14R	**Children have varied opportunities to develop phonological awareness by:**
	    a. **playing with the sounds of language**
	    b. **learning letters and the sounds they represent**
	    c. **recognizing and producing words which have the same beginning or ending sounds**
	    d. **self-initiated efforts to write letters that represent the sounds of words are supported**

3.15R	**Children have varied opportunities to:**
	    a. **access various types of books including adaptive books, storybooks, factual books, books with rhymes, alphabet books and wordless books**
	    b. **explore books on their own and have places that are conducive to the quiet enjoyment of books**
	    c. **have books read to them in an engaging manner at least twice a day in full-day programs and at least once daily in half-day programs**
	    d. **be read the same book on repeated occasions**
	    e. **be read to regularly in individualized ways including one-on-one or in small groups of two to six children**
	    f. **engage in conversations that help them understand the content of the book**
	
	Teaching staff provide children with opportunities to:
	    g. **identify the parts of books and differentiate print from pictures**
	    h. **ask and answer literal and inferential questions about books**
	    i. **retell and reenact events in storybooks**
	    j. **link books to other aspects of the curriculum**

3.16	Children have varied opportunities to become familiar with and understand the purpose of print by:
	    a. labeling items belonging to a child with his or her name
	    b. using print to describe rules and routines
	labeling materials throughout the classroom
	recognizing print and connecting it to spoken word with adult support

3.17	Children are provided multiple and varied opportunities to write which include:
	    a. writing materials and activities in all learning centers
	    b. support to write on their own with access to the alphabet at eye level
	    c. access to printed words around topics of current interest, environmental print and names of the children
	    d. daily opportunities to write their own name with appropriate scaffolding
	    e. supporting the developmental stages of writing
	    f. daily opportunities to write words and messages or dictate their ideas
	    g. teaching staff model functional use of writing
	    h. discussing ways in which writing is used in daily life

3.18R	**Children are provided learning opportunities and materials to build an understanding of foundational math skills and practices related to:**
	    a. number sense, counting and subitizing
	    b. recognizing, creating and extending patterns
	    c. beginning operations (joining and separating sets)
	    d. measurement
	    e. geometry and attributes

3.19	Children are provided varied opportunities to think, question and reason while engaging in scientific practices including:
	    a. observation
	    b. prediction
	    c. collecting data
	    d. analyzing results
	    e. drawing and inferring conclusions
	    f. representing information

3.20	Children are provided varied opportunities and materials to learn key content and principles of science such as:
	    a. the difference between living and non-living things
	    b. life cycles of various organisms
	    c. earth and sky
	    d. structure and property of matter
	    e. behavior of materials

3.21	Children have opportunities to access and use technology tools individually and collaboratively to:
	    a. explore and inquire
	    b. integrate and enrich the curriculum
	    c. extend learning within the classroom

3.22	Children are provided many and varied open-ended, process-oriented opportunities and materials to express themselves creatively through:
	    a. music
	    b. drama
	    c. dance
	    d. two- and three-dimensional art

3.23	Children are provided with varied opportunities and materials that encourage good health practices such as:
	    a. serving and feeding themselves
	    b. rest
	    c. good nutrition
	    d. exercise
	    e. hand washing
	    f. tooth brushing

	Program Standard 4: Teaching Practices	

	Planning and Organization
4.1R	**Child-initiated play is intentionally planned and implemented each day.**
4.2	Teaching staff use their knowledge of children's social relationships, interests, ideas and skills to tailor learning opportunities for individuals and groups.
4.3	Teaching staff organize space and select materials in all content and developmental areas to stimulate: a. exploration b. experimentation c. discovery d. conceptual learning
4.4	Teaching staff work to prevent challenging or disruptive behaviors at the universal level through: a. environmental design b. schedules that meet the needs and abilities of children c. effective transitions d. engaging activities e. implement classroom expectations and rules in a manner that is consistent and predictable
4.5	Teaching staff anticipate and take steps to address challenging behavior of individual children by: a. using positive behavior support strategies b. assessing the function of the child's behavior c. convening families and other early childhood professionals to develop individualized plans to address behavior
	Instructional Strategies
4.6R	**Teaching staff help children:** **a. identify and use prior knowledge** **b. express their ideas** **c. build on the meaning of their experiences** **d. reinforce learning** **e. extend current understandings**
4.7	Teaching staff help all children, especially dual language learners, understand spoken language by using: a. pictures and labels b. familiar objects c. body language d. physical cues
4.8	Teaching staff support the development and maintenance of children's home language and English language acquisition.
4.9	Teaching staff scaffold children's learning to increase executive functioning skills and independence through: a. offering encouragement b. making themselves available to children c. using demonstrations d. intentionally arranging the equipment e. modifying routines, procedures and the schedule f. making activities more or less difficult as children refine skills or gain new skills and knowledge
4.10	Teaching staff guide and support children as they learn to participate in daily cleanup and maintenance of the learning environment.
4.11	Teaching staff promote children's engagement and learning by: a. responding to their need for and interest in practicing emerging skills b. guiding them in acquiring specific skills and explicitly teaching those skills c. enhancing and expanding activities that children choose to engage in repeatedly d. teaching self-help skills in meaningful and achievable parts

Program Standard 5: Assessment	
Assessment Plan	

5.1	The written assessment plan includes:
	    a. conditions under which children will be assessed using ongoing, authentic observations in their natural environment
	    b. how familiar adults will observe and assess each child's interests, strengths and needs
	    c. purposes for assessment
	    d. timelines associated with assessments
	    e. procedures for keeping child records confidential

5.2	The written assessment plan addresses annual screenings to evaluate child development, including a child's language, cognition, gross motor, fine motor and social-emotional development.
	
	Information shared with families includes:
	    a. all relevant data
	    b. documentation and explanation of the concern
	    c. potential next steps
	    d. information for diagnostic evaluation or treatment

5.3	The written assessment plan describes how the program annually utilizes assessment results of children's development and learning to inform overall program or provider improvements.
Assessment Implementation	

5.4	Programs use a variety of assessment methods that are:
	    a. valid and reliable
	    b. meaningful and accurate
	    c. used in settings familiar to the children
	    d. contextually appropriate and informed by families
	    e. sensitive to children's abilities and home language

5.5	The program provides families opportunities to take an active role in the assessment of their child's development and learning through:
	    a. communication of assessment information to families
	    b. multiple and on-going opportunities for families to share observations from home to be included in the assessment process
	    c. ongoing family involvement in planning and implementing assessments to inform educational goals

5.6	Educators, families, other program/provider staff or specialized consultants have worked as a team to develop and implement individualized care or learning plans. This process may include:
	    a. formal and informal assessment methods
	    b. using positive behavior support strategies
	    c. assessing function of the child's behavior
	    d. creating a plan for progress monitoring
	    e. determining eligibility for special education services

5.7R	**The program uses an ongoing assessment process to evaluate all areas of children's development and learning. The assessment results are used at least weekly by teaching teams to:**
	    a. identify children's interests and needs
	    b. adapt instructional practices, the curriculum and the environment
	    c. adjust teaching practices to inform classroom instruction for large groups, small groups and individual children

	Program Standard 6: Learning Environments
	Environmental Design
6.1R	**There is a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per child in each of the primary indoor activity areas and at least 75 square feet of outdoor gross motor environment play space for each child playing at any time.**
6.2R	**Facilities meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements. Accessibility includes but is not limited to access to buildings, toilets, sinks, drinking fountains, outdoor play space, and all classroom and therapy areas**
6.3R	**Fully equipped first-aid kits are readily available and maintained for each group of children. Teaching staff take at least one kit to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.**
6.4	The indoor and outdoor environments are designed so teaching staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times. In semiprivate areas, it is always possible for both children and adults to be observed by an adult from outside the area.

6.5R	**A variety of age and developmentally appropriate materials are rotated as preschoolers' skill level changes over time and are available indoors and outdoors for children throughout the day. This equipment includes:**
	  a. **dramatic play equipment**
	  b. **sensory materials**
	  c. **materials which support curriculum goals and objectives in all developmental domains and content areas**
	  d. **gross motor equipment for activities**

6.6	There are adequate learning materials in all environments:
	  a. to facilitate focused individual play or play with peers
	  b. to engage each child in activities that meet individual interests
	  c. for children with disabilities and those who need individual accommodations to provide equitable access

	Indoor Learning
6.7R	**The indoor learning environment is designed to protect children and adults from hazards, including but not limited to sufficient lighting, electrical shock, burns or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep program staff and children from tripping or slipping.**

6.8	The indoor learning environment is designed, furnished and arranged to:
	  a. align with principles for universal design
	  b. provide learning centers with clear boundaries that are supplied with materials organized in a manner to support children's play and learning
	  c. accommodate children individually, in small groups and in a large group
	  d. provide semiprivate areas where children can play or work alone or with a friend
	  e. provide children with disabilities full access (making adaptations as necessary) to move freely from one area to another without assistance or disturbing other children's work and play

	Outdoor Learning

6.9R	**Program staff provide for an outdoor play area that is protected by a fence that:**
	  a. **is fully enclosed**
	  b. **has childproof gates**
	  c. **is at least four feet in height**
	  d. **prevents entry to bodies of water, traffic, or other such dangers**

6.10R	**The outdoor play area protects children from:**
	  a. **injury from falls**
	  b. **catch points, sharp points, and protruding hardware**
	  c. **entrapment**
	  d. **tripping hazards**
	  e. **excessive wind and direct sunlight**

6.11	Outdoor learning environments are designed and arranged to include:
	    a. equipment that is age and developmentally appropriate, located in clearly defined spaces
	    b. semiprivate areas where children can play alone or with a friend
	    c. opportunities for motor experiences such as running, climbing, balancing, riding, jumping, crawling, scooting, or swinging
	    d. activities such as dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, or art activities
	    e. three or more natural materials such as grass, sand, rocks, non-poisonous plants, trees and variations in ground elevation, to promote exploration of the natural environment
	    f. accommodations so children with disabilities have opportunities to fully participate in the outdoor curriculum and activities

Program Standard 7: Health & Safety	
Policies and Practices	

7.1	The program maintains current health records for each child:
	  a. The program must follow the requirements for enrollment related to immunizations established by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. [IAC 641-7]
	  b. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for immunizations for which parents are using an allowable exemption.
	  c. The program must follow the requirements for exclusions related to immunizations established by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. [IAC 641-7.3]
	
	Child health records are kept current by updating as needed, but at least annually, and include:
	  d. current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency
	  e. results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results
	  f. current emergency contact information for each child that is kept up to date by a specified method during the year
	  g. names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child
	  h. instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes)

7.2R	**Teaching staff supervise all children by sight and sound at all times. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight (e.g., those who can use the toilet independently, who are in the library area, or who are napping).**
7.3R	**At least one staff member with current pediatric CPR and pediatric first-aid training is always present with each class of children.**

7.4	The program or provider works with families in developing care plans for children who require specialized medical care or who have special dietary, medical or cultural feeding needs. This at minimum includes how:
	  a. an appropriately trained staff member is always present when children who require specialized medical care are in attendance
	  b. for each child with special health care needs, food allergies or special nutrition needs, the child's health provider gives the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care
	  c. for children with special feeding needs, program staff keep a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes and provide families with that information
	  d. staff are informed of and trained on medical care and/or special feeding needs
	  e. programs are held accountable to following established plans
	  f. families are provided necessary information to know that their child's needs are being met
	  g. families of a child with food allergies or special health needs are asked to give consent for posting information about that child's allergy or health needs
	  h. food allergy and/or health information is posted in a confidential and accessible area, if consent is given, in the food preparation area and in the areas of the facility the child uses

7.5	Safeguards are used with all medications for children:
	  a. Staff administer both prescription and over-the-counter medications to a child only if the child's record documents that the parent or legal guardian has given the program written permission.
	  b. The child's record includes instructions from the prescribing licensed health provider who has prescribed or recommended the medication for that child.
	  c. Any administrator or teaching staff who administers medication has:
	    i. specific training
	    ii. a written performance evaluation updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the six right practices of medication administration Teaching staff who are required to administer special medical procedures have demonstrated to a health professional that they are competent in the procedures and are guided in writing about how to perform the procedure by the prescribing health care provider.
	  d. Medications are labeled with the child's first and last names, the date that either the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider, the name of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.

	e. The procedures and protocols related to medication receipt, storage, waste and minimization are followed to include all medications being properly secured.
7.6R	**The program follows these practices regarding environmental safety:** a. **current fire certificate on file** b. **fire extinguishers are serviced and tagged** c. **fire alarms are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually** d. **measurement of radon concentrations as applicable** e. **fully working carbon monoxide detectors are installed on each floor and tagged and serviced annually** f. **smoke detectors, fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly and a written log of battery changes and testing dates is maintained and available**
7.7R	**The facility and outdoor play areas are entirely smoke free. No smoking or vaping is permitted in the presence of children.**
7.8	The program uses pest management strategies to remove visible pests (e.g., cockroaches, rodents, ants, and stinging insects) and eliminate conditions that promote pest infestations. Pesticides are only used as a last resort and applications occur when children are not present.
	Maintaining Healthy Environments
7.9	The program follows these practices regarding handwashing: a. Guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed. b. Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene, are taught handwashing procedures and are periodically monitored. c. Handwashing is required by all staff, volunteers and children when handwashing reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others. d. Staff assist children with handwashing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance.
7.10	Recommended procedures for standard precautions and the routine frequency of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting all surfaces in the facility are followed and include the following: a. Regular cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting schedules must be established and implemented. b. When strong odors occur in the air, they are controlled using ventilation (not air freshening sprays or diffusers). c. Scented products and aromatherapy are not used in any learning environments. d. Surfaces that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of a material that can be sanitized. e. Programs follow all OSHA requirements. f. Staff use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or of openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and reduce the spread of infectious disease. g. When spills of bodily fluids occur, staff immediately clean and sanitize the affected area. h. After cleaning, staff follow recommended sanitization procedures. i. Staff clean rugs, carpeting and other soft materials or furnishings by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning. j. Staff dispose of contaminated materials and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container. k. If a child has mouthed an object with saliva or other body secretion or excretion, the object is set aside for washing in a labeled bin or in another location created for that purpose. l. Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or removing smeared fecal material.
7.11	Program staff provide information to families in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and that the families should implement at home. The program collaborates with local health authorities and, at least annually: a. makes contact to keep current on relevant health information b. maintains communication and obtains guidance when outbreaks of communicable disease occur
7.12	To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, the program ensures: a. Children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth in cold weather. b. Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun, they wear sun-protective clothing, applied skin protection, or both. Applied skin protection will be either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that is applied to exposed skin per the manufacturer's label and only with written parental permission.

	c. When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents, staff apply insect repellent per the manufacturer's label no more than once a day and only with written parental permission.
7.13	Programs must take the following precautions for communal water play: a. fresh potable water is used b. children must wash their hands before and after water play c. children are not allowed to drink the water d. children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play e. when the activity period is completed with a class of children, the water is drained
7.14	For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the program makes sure that: a. Steps for diapering and incontinence as outlined for student health services in Iowa are followed. b. For children who require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. c. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering. d. Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every two hours when children are awake and when children awaken from rest. e. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled. f. Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility. g. Each changing area is separated by a partial wall or at least three feet from other areas that children use and is used exclusively for one designated group of children. The program may use an underclothing changing area designated for this purpose. h. At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child when being changed on an elevated surface. i. Changing procedures are posted in the changing area and followed. j. The changing procedures are used to evaluate teaching staff who change diapers. k. Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding. l. Diaper changing areas must be easily cleanable and should be in good repair with no tears. m. Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). n. Containers are kept closed and are not accessible to children. o. Staff members whose primary function is preparing food do not change diapers until their food preparation duties are completed for the day.
**Nutrition**
7.15	Clean sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day including during prolonged heat exposure.
7.16	If the program provides food for meals and snacks (whether catered or prepared on-site), the food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.
7.17	The program serves meals and snacks at regularly established times. Meals and snacks are at least two hours apart but not more than three hours apart.
7.18	The program takes steps to ensure food safety in its provision of meals and snacks: a. Program staff discards foods with expired dates. b. The program documents compliance and any corrections that it has made according to the recommendations of the program's health consultant, nutrition consultant, or a sanitarian that reflect consideration of federal and other applicable food safety standards. c. The program does not use plastic or polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers, plates, bags or wraps when microwaving children's food or beverages. d. In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.
7.19	The program: a. prepares written menus b. posts menus where families can see them c. provides copies of menus to families

	d. keeps menus on file for review as needed
7.20	Staff take steps to ensure the safety of food brought from home to include: a. working with families to ensure foods meet the USDA's CACFP food guidelines b. providing food to supplement, if necessary c. making sure food requiring refrigeration stays cold until served d. ensuring food for sharing among the children are either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers e. labeling food or beverages for individual children with the child's name and date
7.21	Staff do not offer children younger than four years these foods: hotdogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas or hard pretzels; chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Staff cut foods into pieces no larger than ½ inch square for toddlers/twos, according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability.

	Program Standard 8: Professionalism
	Staff Qualifications
8.1R	Teachers hold an Iowa teaching license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) and must hold an early childhood endorsement that reflects their current teaching assignment.

8.2R	Assistant teachers/teacher aides (staff who implement program activities under direct supervision) have a high school diploma or GED and:
	    a. 25% of assistant teachers/teacher aides have at least a paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration, Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or equivalent
	    b. 100% of assistant teachers/teacher aides who do not meet the above qualifications:
	          i. are enrolled in a program leading to a paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration or CDA
	                AND
	          ii. are actively participating and demonstrating progress toward the paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration or CDA
	
	College-level course work is from regionally accredited institutions of higher education and may include distance learning or online coursework.
	
	If there is only one assistant teacher/teacher aide, then either of the requirements can be met.

8.3	All teaching staff are evaluated by an appropriate supervisor and improve performance based on ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. Performance feedback is used to develop an annual individualized professional development plan between staff and supervisor.
	Professional Learning

8.4	Before working alone with children and on an annual basis, all teaching staff are provided an orientation or updates to the program that address the fundamental aspects of program operation including:
	    a. program philosophy, values and goals
	    b. expectations for ethical conduct
	    c. health, safety and emergency procedures
	    d. individual needs of children they will be teaching
	    e. accepted guidance and classroom management techniques
	    f. daily activities and routines of the program
	    g. Iowa Early Learning Standards
	    h. program curriculum and assessment
	    i. child abuse and neglect reporting procedures
	    j. program policies and procedures
	    k. Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Criteria
	    l. regulatory requirements
	    m. identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect

8.5	All teaching staff have coursework or professional development specific to early childhood which may include training in:
	    a. the Iowa Early Learning Standards
	    b. the program's curriculum and learning approaches
	    c. how to use the program's assessment procedures for child progress and program quality
	    d. child development or developmentally appropriate practice
	
	Programs are encouraged to consider joint and collaborative training opportunities with neighboring early childhood programs and other community service agencies.

8.6	Teaching staff are offered continuous job-embedded coaching either within the program by pairing newer staff with those who are more seasoned, or through outside supports.

Program Standard 9: Leadership and Management

Administrator Qualifications

9.1R	The program administrator has the educational qualifications and personal commitment required to serve as the program's operational and pedagogical leader. This criterion can be met in one of four ways:
	
	   a. The administrator holds a current Iowa administrative license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE).
	
	   b. The administrator:
	      i. has at least a baccalaureate degree
	         AND
	      ii. has at least 9 credit-bearing hours of specialized college-level course work in administration, leadership and management (which can be in school administration, business management, communication, technology, early childhood management or administration, or some combination of these areas)
	         AND
	      iii. has at least 24 credit-bearing hours of specialized college-level course work in early childhood education, child development, elementary education or early childhood special education that encompasses child development and children's learning from birth through kindergarten; family and community relationships; the practices of observing, documenting and assessing young children; teaching and learning processes; and professional practices and development.
	
	   c. The administrator documents that a plan is in place to meet the above qualifications within five years.
	
	   d. The administrator can provide documentation of having achieved a combination of relevant formal education and experience as specified in the table titled Alternative Pathways to Achieve Educational Qualifications as a Program Administrator.

9.2	The program has a designated program administrator with the educational qualifications detailed in criterion 9.1R.
	
	When a program has a total enrollment of fewer than 60 full-time equivalent (FTE) children, employs fewer than eight FTE staff, or both:
	
	   a. The program may have a part-time administrator or an administrator who fulfills a dual role (e.g. teacher administrator).
	
	   OR
	
	   b. In multi-site programs, the sites may share an off-site administrator.
	
	When a program has a total enrollment of 60 or more FTE children and employs eight or more FTE staff:
	
	   c. The program has a full-time administrator.
	
	   OR
	
	   d. In multi-site programs, individual facilities have on-site a full-time administrator or full-time manager under the direct supervision of an individual who meets the qualifications outlined for the program administrator.

9.3	The professional development plan for administrators and leaders has been developed to include annual training which may include the following:
	   a. current early childhood evidence-based or best practices
	   b. leadership development (adult learning, conducting performance evaluations, adhering to personnel policies)
	   c. fiscal management (budgeting, software training, payroll)

Staff Infrastructure

9.4	Hiring procedures ensure all employees who come in contact with children in the program or who have responsibility for children meet state and federal requirements.

9.5	Upon hire, the program provides written personnel policies that outline and define employee:
	   a. qualifications and specialized training required of staff and volunteer position
	   b. roles and responsibilities

	c. salary and benefits packages d. resignation, termination and grievance procedures
9.6	The program has written policies outlining staff breaks: a. Staff receive a minimum of a 15-minute break after 4 hours of working directly with children. b. Staff may request immediate breaks for brief periods of a few minutes when unable to perform their duties safely and appropriately.
9.7	The program has a written policy outlining weekly planning time for teaching staff to include: a. a minimum of 60 minutes for collaborative planning during which staff are not supervising children b. review of assessment data, instructional planning and making environmental changes to support individual needs and learning goals c. accessing curricular resources for planning activities
**Program Infrastructure**
9.8	The program has written policies to promote wellness and safeguard the health and safety of children and adults. Procedures are in place that address: a. steps to reduce occupational hazards such as infectious diseases (e.g. exposure of pregnant staff to CMV (cytomegalovirus), chicken pox), injuries (e.g. back strain, falls), environmental exposure (e.g. indoor air pollution, noise stress) b. management plans and reporting requirements for staff and children with illness, including medication administration, and inclusion/exclusion c. supervision of children in instances when teaching staff are assigned to specific areas that are near equipment where injury could occur d. the providing of space, supervision and comfort for a child waiting for pick-up due to illness e. the providing of adequate nutrition for children and adults f. sleeping and napping arrangements g. sanitation and hygiene, including food handling and feeding h. maintenance of the facility and equipment i. prohibition of smoking, firearms and other significant hazards that pose risks to children and adults j. providing of referrals for staff to resources that support them in wellness, prevention and treatment of depression, and stress management
9.9R	**The program has written procedures addressing the maintenance of developmentally appropriate staff-child ratios within group size to facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activities among children. Staff-child ratios within group size are maintained during all hours of operation, including:** a. **indoor time** b. **outdoor time** c. **during field trips**
9.10R	**The program has a written policy and procedures in place for child abuse and neglect which comply with applicable federal, state and local laws.** **Required policies include:** a. **Staff report all suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect by families, staff, volunteers or others to the appropriate local agencies.** b. **Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious.** c. **Procedures to be followed if a staff member is accused of abuse or neglect of a child in the program protect the rights of the accused staff member as well as protect the children in the program.**
9.11	Written procedures in the staff handbook address all aspects of the arrival, departure and transportation of children. The procedures: a. facilitate family-staff interaction b. ensure that all children transported during the program day are accounted for before, during and after transport c. ensure the safety of all children as pedestrians and as passengers d. address specific procedures for children with disabilities e. address special/unusual circumstances at arrival and departure

9.12	The program has written and posted disaster preparedness and emergency evacuation policies and procedures. The procedures:
	
	    a. designate an appropriate person to assume authority and take action in an emergency when the administrator is not on site
	    b. designate how and when to either shelter-in-place or evacuate and specify a location for the evacuation
	    c. include plans for handling lost or missing children, security threats, utility failure and natural disasters
	    d. include arrangements for emergency transport and escort from the program
	    e. require documentation of monthly practice of evacuation procedures with yearly practice of other emergency procedures

9.13	The program has a written policy outlining expectations of confidentiality regarding information about enrolled children and their families. The policy addresses how the content of the child's file is immediately available to:
	    a. administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records
	    b. the child's parents or legal guardian
	    c. regulatory authorities upon request