EARLY ACHIEVERS

Washington's Quality Recognition and Improvement System
Quality Standards and Criteria

Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Early Achievers Quality Standards and Criteria

The Early Achievers Quality Standards provide a common set of best practices to recognize, support, and improve the quality of early learning settings. They are the basis for facility quality levels. Quality recognition specialists award recognition points for each standard area during a quality recognition cycle. The five Quality Standard areas are:

- Learning Environment
- Child Outcomes
- Interactions and Curriculum
- Family Engagement and Partnerships
- Professional Development and Training

Early learning programs earn points in several ways. All programs must complete a Program Profile and submit two short Video Highlights per classroom to earn a Quality Level 3 or higher. The points earned in each standard determine specialization areas. Those areas highlight a program's strengths.

This document lists the Quality Standards in each area, the criteria for those standards, and the number of points possible for each Quality Standard. Work with your coach and use this document as a guide to quality recognition in Washington State.

Early Achievers Quality Standards: An Overview

Quality Level 1

Licensing or Certification
This includes child care centers and family home child care, as well as military, tribal, Head Start, and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) programs. Early learning programs must register in MERIT to participate in Early Achievers.

Quality Level 2

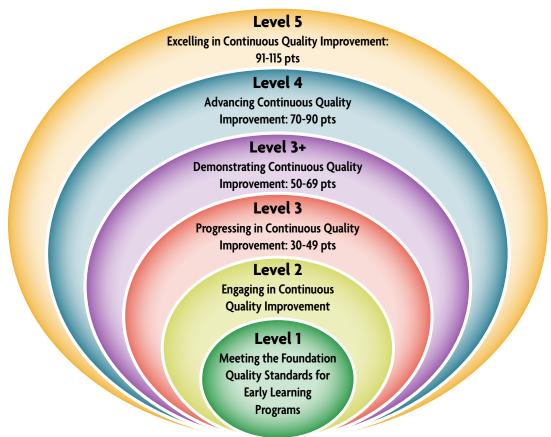**Professional Growth and Program Management**
Quality Level 2 is designed to help early learning programs understand and prepare for successful participation in Early Achievers. To complete Quality Level 2, programs complete a Program Profile earning 20 points.

Quality Levels 3-5

Evaluation and Recognition
Early learning programs that choose to pursue the Quality Levels 3-5 will earn points by submitting Video Highlights through a Quality Level Request. Final quality levels are determined by the number of points earned in the Quality Standard areas.

Level 5
Excelling in Continuous Quality Improvement:
91-115 pts

Level 4
Advancing Continuous Quality
Improvement: 70-90 pts

Level 3+
Demonstrating Continuous Quality
Improvement: 50-69 pts

Level 3
Progressing in Continuous Quality
Improvement: 30-49 pts

Level 2
Engaging in Continuous
Quality Improvement

Level 1
Meeting the Foundation
Quality Standards for
Early Learning
Programs

Early Achievers Quality Standard Areas

Learning Environment

55 POINTS

Participants are awarded recognition points as they complete the components below. Recognition Components:

- Program Profile – 20 points
- Video Highlights – 5 points per video cycle (up to 30 points)
- School-Age Video – 5 points

Child Outcomes

20 POINTS

- Screen children to spot developmental milestones and possible concerns.
- Provide ongoing assessment to learn about each child's strengths and needs and individualize instruction.
- Share information about children's growth and progress with families to promote school readiness.

Interactions and Curriculum

10 POINTS

- Implement a curriculum that aligns with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines.
- Provide staff supports for improvement in curriculum and teacher-child interactions.

Family Engagement and Partnerships

10 POINTS

- Partner with families to determine perception of child strengths and needs.
- Develop a Plan of Action, based on the research-based Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.

Professional Development and Training

10 POINTS

Early learning program and teaching staff have verified state Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificates or credentials, associates, bachelor's, or master's degrees in ECE or DCYF-approved degree documented in MERIT.

Accreditation

10 POINTS

- Submit an Accreditation Recognition Request.
- Submit as evidence a current certification or other documentation that states the facility is fully accredited by an agency that meets the Early Achievers accreditation requirements.
- Accreditation must be valid on the date that the Accreditation request is submitted.

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Updated April 2021

Learning Environment

	MEASURE	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Program Profile	Complete interviews or surveys with the program director or FCC owner, lead teaching staff (including Expanded Learning Opportunities) and families.	20
	Video Highlights	Each classroom session submits a video from one of the Early Learning and Development Guideline areas.	5
		Each classroom session submits a video from one of the Early Learning and Development Guideline areas that they have not already submitted.	5
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		Each classroom session submits a video from one of the Early Learning and Development Guideline areas that they have not already submitted.	5
		Submit one video for each classroom or session with school age children enrolled from the Expanded Learning Opportunities video categories.	5
		LEARNING ENVIRONMENT TOTAL POINTS	**55**

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Child Outcomes

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
SCREENING	**Screening 1** A policy ensures all children birth through kindergarten entry are screened with a valid and reliable developmental screening tool.	The policy includes: • The name of the valid developmental screening tool. • Procedures on how children will be screened within 45 calendar days after they first attend the program.	1
		The policy includes: Re-screening will occur annually.	1
		The policy includes: How the provider will attempt to screen in the child's home language.	1
	Screening 2 Results of a valid screening are shared with families.	The policy includes: How screening results will be shared with all families.	1
		The policy includes: How screening results will be shared with families in their home language.	2
ONGOING ASSESSMENT	**Ongoing Assessment 1** A policy ensures that all children birth through kindergarten entry receive formal assessment or informal observation and documentation at least three times per year (e.g., child portfolio or work sampling assessments).	The policy includes: • The name(s) of the formal assessment and the type of child observation and documentation used. • Assessment procedures, including how often they are conducted.	2
	Ongoing Assessment 2 Ongoing informal observation and documentation is on file for all children.	The policy includes: Ongoing informal observation and documentation is conducted for all children who have attended the program for at least 90 calendar days.	2
	Ongoing Assessment 3 Facility uses a formal assessment tool that aligns with WaKIDS.	The formal assessment tool used is the WaKIDS assessment OR a completed WaKIDS alignment tool is on file for any formal assessment used in the program.	2
	Ongoing Assessment 4 WaKIDS or aligned formal assessment tool is on file for all children.	The policy includes: WaKIDS or an aligned formal assessment is conducted for all children who have attended the program for at least 90 days; dates must be included.	2

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Child Outcomes (Continued)

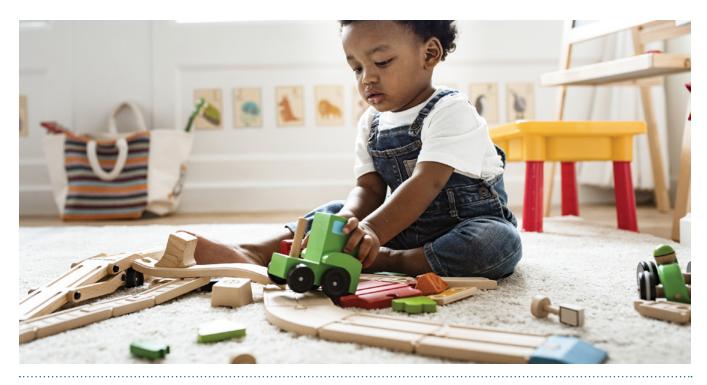|	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
ONGOING ASSESSMENT	**Ongoing Assessment 5** At least one lead teacher or FCC lead teacher per classroom is trained and reliable on WaKIDS or aligned formal assessment tool.	At least one lead teacher per classroom is trained and reliable on WaKIDS or an aligned formal assessment tool. If no formal training is required or accessible for the assessment tool, then evidence of at least four hours of general training in assessment is required.	1
	Ongoing Assessment 6 Share child assessment or observation information with family.	The policy includes: How children's formal assessment results or informal observation and documentation are shared with their families at least two times per year.	1
		The policy includes: How children's formal assessment results or informal observation and documentation are shared with their families at least three times per year.	2
INDIVIDUALIZATION	**Individualization 1** Policy personalizes instruction for all children.	The policy includes: How goals will be developed for all children based on formal assessment results and informal observation and documentation.	1
		The policy includes: How programs will partner with families to develop individual goals for their children. (For example, program leaders may conduct written questionnaires or hold meetings with families to learn about a child's strengths and needs.)	1
		CHILD OUTCOMES TOTAL POINTS	**20**

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Interactions and Curriculum

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
CURRICULUM	**Curriculum 1** Curriculum used in each classroom and age group aligns with WA Early Learning Guidelines or is on the list of aligned curricula.	The curriculum for each classroom and age group is either on the list of aligned curricula or aligns to the Washington State Early Learning Guidelines using the curricular alignment tool (CAT).	2
	Curriculum 2 At least one lead teacher or FCC lead teacher per classroom is trained in the program curriculum.	At least one lead teacher or FCC lead teacher per classroom has training on the curriculum they are using. That training meets the requirements of the specific curriculum. If no formal training is required or accessible, then the lead teacher must have evidence of at least a four-hour training on the curriculum. The evidence may include a training certificate or dated sign-in sheet from the training session.	2
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	**Instructional Leadership 1** Early learning program leaders provide annual job-embedded professional development for lead teaching staff to improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions	Early learning program leaders provide annual job-embedded professional development (JEPD) for lead teaching staff to improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions. JEPD strategies must be grounded in day-to-day teaching practices. The teachers must assess and find solutions as part of a constant improvement process. This training may occur shortly before, during, or after the practice takes place. JEPD can include mentoring, one-on-one support, in-service trainings with follow-up support for enactment, peer learning groups, or feedback from an observation. Family child care licensees who do not supervise the staff may partner with other providers in their area for JEPD. Evidence must include teachers' names and dates. Only proof from the last calendar year is considered.	1
	Instructional Leadership 2 Early learning program leaders provide job-embedded professional development for lead teaching staff at least three times a year. This training will improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions.	On-site early learning program leaders provide annual job-embedded professional development (JEPD) for at least one lead teaching staff member per classroom at least three times a year. This training will improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions. Family child care licensees who do not supervise the staff may partner with other providers in their area for JEPD. Evidence must include teachers' names and dates. Only proof from the last calendar year is considered.	1
	Instructional Leadership 3 Early learning program leaders provide monthly job-embedded professional development for the lead teaching staff to improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions.	On-site early learning program leaders provide monthly job-embedded professional development (JEPD) for at least one lead teacher per classroom to improve curriculum and teacher-child interactions. Family child care licensees who do not supervise the staff may partner with other providers in their area for JEPD. Evidence must include teacher names and dates. Only proof from the last calendar year is considered.	1

Interactions and Curriculum (Continued)

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
PREVENTING SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION	**Preventing Suspension and Expulsion 1** A policy supports children with challenging behavior and developmental needs through family partnership, staff training, and consultation.	The policy includes how staff work with families to create and enact a behavior support plan for children whose challenging behaviors persist.	1
	Preventing Suspension and Expulsion 2 The staff has annual training to support positive social and emotional development, reducing challenging behaviors and trauma-informed care.	The policy includes the procedures for annual staff training to support positive social and emotional development, reducing challenging behaviors and trauma informed care.	1
	Preventing Suspension and Expulsion 3 The staff can consult with a mental health consultant, coach or other professional for behavioral or developmental concerns.	The policy includes plans to contact a mental health consultant, coach, or other professional for behavioral or developmental concerns.	1
		INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM TOTAL POINTS	**10**

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Family Engagement and Partnerships

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES	**Strengthening and Supporting Families 1** The family engagement action plan template records goals for supporting families based on Strengthening Families or an equivalent self-assessment.	Goals are recorded on the family engagement action plan and dated within the last calendar year. The date that the action plan was created must be recorded.	2
	Strengthening and Supporting Families 2 Document progress on the family engagement action plan goals.	Proof of progress toward goals from the family engagement action plan are on file. Dates must be included. Examples of proof may include: • An invitation to a family event for a goal to increase family involvement. • A copy of a newsletter in multiple languages for a goal to increase communication in home languages. • A phone tree to connect families.	2
	Strengthening and Supporting Families 3 Show evidence of completed goals from the family engagement action plan.	Proof of reflection on completed goals from the family engagement action plan are on file. Examples of proof may include: • Reflection on how the family event went and its effect on family involvement. • Parent feedback on the multi-lingual newsletter and next steps. • A reflection on how the phone tree is working and next steps to improve the phone tree process.	2
TRANSITIONS	**Transitions 1** Proof of a **policy** is in place for all applicable transitions.	The written policy or plan details how the early learning program supports children through the following transitions: • Transition into the early learning program. • Transitions within the early learning program (between classes, if applicable).	2
	Transitions 2 Proof of policy is in place for transition to kindergarten or new program.	The policy includes: How families are supported as their child transitions to a new program or kindergarten. This includes informing them about the new program or kindergarten registration or orientation activities in the local community.	2
	FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS TOTAL POINTS		**10**

Early Achievers Quality Standards

Professional Development and Training

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
CENTER STAFF	The center director or program supervisor has eligible education verified in MERIT. The number of points earned is based on the highest education level achieved by a Director, Assistant Director or Program Supervisor.	Director or Program Supervisor has met one of the following criteria: • 1 point: ECE state certificate or equivalent • 2 points: AA in ECE or related field* • 3 points: BA in ECE or related field* • 4 points: MA or higher in ECE or related field*	4
	The center's lead and assistant teachers have eligible education verified in MERIT. The number of points earned is based on the average number of points earned by the 25% of teaching staff with the highest educational levels.	The final score will be determined by the average number of points earned by the top 25% of teaching staff (lead and assistant teachers). • 2 points: Initial certificate or equivalent • 3 points: Short certificate or equivalent • 4 points: State certificate or equivalent • 5 points: AA in ECE or equivalent* • 6 points: BA or higher in ECE or related field*	6
		PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING CENTER STAFF TOTAL POINTS	**10**

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
FAMILY CHILD CARE	The family child care educator or primary worker has eligible education verified in MERIT. The number of points earned is based on the highest level of education achieved by a Family Child Care Licensee, Provider, Owner, or Primary Worker.	Family Child Care Primary Worker has met one of the following criteria: • 2 points: Initial certificate or equivalent • 3 points: Short certificate or equivalent • 4 points: State certificate or equivalent • 6 points: AA in ECE or related field* • 8 points: BA in ECE or related field* • 10 points: MA or higher in ECE or related Field*	10
		PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FAMILY CHILD CARE TOTAL POINTS	**10**

* Degrees that are not in the field of ECE and are not paired with an approved Montessori credential will be counted at the education level below that of a degree in ECE. For example, an MA in an unrelated field will be considered the equivalent of a BA in ECE, while an AA in an unrelated field would be the equivalent of a State Certificate. An MA in an unrelated field with an approved Montessori credential would be considered an equivalent of a MA in ECE.

Accreditation (Optional)

	STANDARD	STANDARD CRITERIA	POINTS
ACCREDITATION	The program is fully accredited by a recognized agency.	The program has current accreditation by an agency that is formally recognized by Early Achievers (for example, current accreditation certificate on file).	10
		ACCREDITATION TOTAL POINTS	**10**