

1. Teaching & Learning

Daily activities and interactions within early learning and development programs are indicators that a program is providing an environment and experiences that are safe, healthy and stimulating for children. This includes offering both indoor and outdoor activities to support varied learning experiences. To ensure that young children's experiences are developmentally appropriate, applicants are expected to incorporate a comprehensive curriculum and child assessment system that are aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to Three and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Age Three to Five. Providing necessary adaptations to a child's experience and environment allows all children, including those with special needs, to learn, grow and develop.

1A. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Program demonstrates commitment to quality improvement of classroom environment by completing a self-assessment of classroom quality

AND

Verification of classroom quality by state-approved assessor

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PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

ERS¹ average overall score: 3.25-4.5 with no classroom below 3.0; CQIP² developed to address any subscale below 4.5 and/or any classroom overall score below 4.0; verified by scores submitted from state approved assessor
OR
CLASS³ Emotional Support and Classroom Organization average score: 4.0-5.0 with no classroom below 3.0; CQIP² developed to address scores below 4.0; verified by on-site assessment by state-approved assessor

HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

[See Head Start Silver Standards](#)

¹ Environment Rating Scale

² Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

³ Classroom Assessment Scoring System (for ages 3–5 only)

1. Teaching & Learning

1B. CURRICULUM

Program implements a curriculum that is aligned with the IELG⁵/IELDS⁶ with at least 50% of teaching staff receiving training on the identified curriculum

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PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

In compliance with
Preschool for All grant
requirements at the Gold
Circle of Quality

HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

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1. Teaching & Learning

1C. INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

Program demonstrates developmentally appropriate instructional practices as verified by state approved assessor

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PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

ERS¹ average score: 4.0 on “Interactions” and “Language Reasoning/ Listening and Talking” subscales; CQIP² developed to address any classroom with less than 3.0 on these subscales; verified by scores submitted from state-approved assessor

OR

CLASS³ Instructional Support average score: above a 2.5 with a CQIP² developed for classrooms with less than a 2.0 score on this subscale; verified by on-site assessment by state-approved assessor

HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

[See Head Start Silver Standards](#)

¹ Environment Rating Scale

² Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

³ Classroom Assessment Scoring System (for ages 3–5 only)

1. Teaching & Learning

1D. CHILD SCREENING

Program has policies and procedures in place to ensure that all children (birth-5 years) are screened at least annually for the purpose of identifying special needs and parents are provided screening results and information on where they can go for additional evaluation and services

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PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

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1. Teaching & Learning

1E. CHILD ASSESSMENT

Program chooses aligned child assessment tool

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1. Teaching & Learning

1F. INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Program has policies and procedures in place for supporting inclusion of children with special needs
AND —

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-
approved training on inclusion of children with special needs

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PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

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2. Family & Community Engagement

Engaging and building strong partnerships with families fosters a child's learning and development both in and out of the child's home. That's why it is critical to involve families in authentic opportunities to promote quality experiences and environments for children. There are four hallmarks for effective family and community engagement: regular, effective two-way communications; opportunities for families to get to know one another; education about child growth and development; and making connections to available community resources. Helping families navigate transitions also provides meaningful support to children so that they can continue to succeed as they progress in their learning, growth and development.

2A. FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Program implements at least five family supports (see list in PAS⁷ item #17) and two parent-staff conferences per year

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2. Family & Community Engagement

2B. TRANSITIONS

Program implements policies and practices to provide general information about transitions and engages families in discussions and/or activities addressing child and family transitions

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3. Leadership & Management

Research has demonstrated that strong leadership and management practices make a tangible difference in the quality of care and education provided. This is accomplished by incorporating high-quality administrative practices, regularly assessing overall program operations and establishing program goals to continually improve the quality of the program. Careful attention to staff-to-child ratios and the size of the groups within classrooms are additional critical factors to ensure the program maintains a high quality environment where all children can balance individual attention with group activities and social development. The program also recognizes the diversity of families and children by ensuring that all policies and practices are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

3A. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Program demonstrates commitment to quality improvement of administrative practices

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3. Leadership & Management

3B. GROUP SIZE AND STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

Program meets State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards

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3C. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Program develops and implements Continuous Quality Improvement
Plan using self-assessment results

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3. Leadership & Management

3D. LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Program completes a self-assessment of its Linguistically and Culturally appropriate policies and practices, using a recommended tool

AND

Creates a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan based on assessment results

AND

Children are encouraged to use their home language in play and learning experiences and, wherever possible, program communicates with families in their home language

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4. Qualifications & Continuing Education

High-quality programs are directed by administrators who have the formal education and professional preparedness to manage the program and lead all staff in providing the most up-to-date practices for educational development. Staff that work with children are also expected to have appropriate education and professional training to engage with children and families in their assigned age groups.

4A. DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

Gateways Illinois Director Credential Level I or higher

OR

Illinois Principal Endorsement

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4B. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

At least 30% of teaching staff have a minimum of a Gateways ECE Credential Level 3

AND

30% of teaching staff in infant-toddler classrooms have a Gateways Infant Toddler Credential Level 2

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4. Qualifications & Continuing Education

4C. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Program has individualized, written staff development plans developed for all classroom staff
AND —————
Minimum of 20 hours of professional development per year

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