Rationale for MA QRIS Draft Standards, August 2017

public Preschool

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| STANDARD 1: CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE | | | |
| Criterion | | | Rationale |
| 1A. Curriculum: Program uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum that supports children in all learning domains. | | | **National Association for the Education of Young Children** (NAEYC) Position Statement, 2009: In high quality early childhood programs, teachers implement developmentally appropriate curriculum to help young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant. Because children learn more where this is a well-planned and implemented curriculum, it is important for every school and early childhood program to have its curriculum in written form. Teachers use the curriculum and their knowledge of children’s interests in planning relevant, engaging learning experiences, and they keep the curriculum in mind in their interactions with children throughout the day.  As **MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)** notes: Students need to acquire wide-ranging knowledge of the world learned through a well-balanced curriculum. Students need daily activities in which they develop language skills, mathematical understanding and fluency, understanding of experimentation and observation in science, creative experience in visual and performing arts, and the ability to interact with the community in a variety of ways. The pre-K–5 standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including English Language Arts, social studies, science, mathematics, the arts, and comprehensive health. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program implements developmentally appropriate curriculum that addresses multiple domains of children’s development |
| Level 2 | Program plans and integrates intentional play throughout all curriculum areas |
| Level 3 | Program implements research-based curriculum that addresses the multiple domains of children’s development and aligns with the MA Curriculum Frameworks and Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences |
| Level 3 | Program plans daily opportunities for children to develop a variety of play skills, including sensory-motor, dramatic, constructive, complex, and investigative play |
| Level 4/5 | Curriculum is responsive to all children; Curriculum incorporates background knowledge gained at home, in the community, and within the culture |

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| 1B. Assessment: Program uses observation and documentation practices to assess children in the program. | | | **Shonkoff & Meisels,** 1996**:** Developmental outcomes for young children with delays and disabilities are improved with early identification and intervention. **Squires et al.**: 70-80% of children with developmental disabilities can be correctly identified using a standardized, valid, reliable tool.  **According to MA DESE**: A good testing system reflects high expectations for all students and measures student learning. Assessments can help identify areas where students have mastered a certain area or skill, where students need more help, and where educators might need to adjust their lesson plans, materials, or approach in order for students to meet the standards. |
| Indicator | Level 2a | Program uses informal and formal evidence-based methods of screening and assessment |
| Level 2b | Program shares screening data with families |
| Level 3 | Educator teams implement a comprehensive assessment strategy that includes ongoing informal and formal evidence-based assessments and common interim assessments (i.e. benchmarks) |
| Level 4/5 | Program uses a variety of ongoing informal and formal assessments that align with goals and objectives; Program uses assessment tools and strategies that are responsive to the diverse cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs of children; Program’s assessment practices are embedded within daily classroom activities |

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| 1C. Instructional Practice: Program uses strategies to engage and meet goals for diverse learners. | | | **NAEYC and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education’s (NAECS/SDE) (2003**): A primary purpose of assessing children or classrooms is to improve the quality of early childhood care and education by identifying where more support, professional development, or funding is needed; and by providing classroom personnel tools to track children’s growth and adjust instruction. Also according to the NAEYC, to be effective, teachers must using a variety of methods—such as observation, examination of children’s work, individual child assessments, talking with families, and making adjustments to promote each child’s individual development and learning as fully as possible.  **According to MA DESE**: Educators should organize and analyze results from assessments to determine progress toward intended outcomes. Educators should frequently use these findings to adjust practice, identify and/or implement appropriate differentiated interventions, and provide enhancements for individuals and groups of students and appropriate modifications of lessons and units. Additionally, educators should use appropriate practices, including tiered instruction and scaffolds, to accommodate differences in learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness, including those of students with disabilities and English learners. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program identifies patterns in assessment data to inform curriculum |
| Level 3 | Program demonstrates use of assessment data to differentiate instruction |
| Level 4/5 | Program develops continuous individual learning goals for all children that are informed by formative assessment process; Program shares data regarding children’s development to ensure smooth transitions between program and Early Intervention and/or public school |

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| STANDARD 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS | | | |
| Criterion | | | Rationale |
| 2A. Learning Environment: Program demonstrates a safe and healthy environment that fosters learning, exploration, and play. | | | Child care quality has been a consistent positive predictor of children’s cognitive and language skills in large, multisite studies and smaller local studies (**Howes et al.,** 2008**; Lamb,** 1998**; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network,** 2006**; Peisner-Feinberg et al.,** 2001**; Vandell,** 2004) and a consistent predictor of children's social skills (**NICHD Early Child Care Research Network**, 2006; **Peisner-Feinberg et al**., 2001; **Vandel**l, 2004). |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Environment Rating Scales (ERS) technical assistance consultation |
| Level 3 | ERS reliable rater visit and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) technical assistance consultation |
| Level 4/5 | ERS and CLASS reliable rater visit |
| STANDARD 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS | | | |
| Criterion | | | Rationale |
| 2B. Interactions: Program implements strategies that promote high-quality interactions. | | | More effective teacher-child interactions and the social emotional climate of the classroom have been found to be significant predictors of children’s academic gains in language and literacy; and have been associated with higher scores in vocabulary and math, and key skills for children entering kindergarten (**Burchinal et. al.,** 2010**; Howes, et. al.,** 2008**; Mashburn et. al.,** 2008).  Additionally, both the ERS and the CLASS have been extensively field tested and researched. Studies have found the measures to be reliable, valid and significant predictors of children's outcomes (**Clifford, Reszka & Rossbach,** 2010; **Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre,** 2008**; Burchinal, Howes, Pinata, Bryant, Early, Clifford, et al.,** 2008**; Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer, Barbarin, Bryant, et al.,** 2008**; Peisner-Feinburg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan,Yazejian,** 2001**; Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team,** 1995**; Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling,** 1994). |
| Indicator | Level 2 | ERS technical assistance consultation |
| Level 3 | ERS reliable rater visit and CLASS technical assistance consultation |
| Level 4/5 | ERS and CLASS reliable rater visit |

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| STANDARD 3: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | | | |
| Criterion | | | Rationale |
| 3A. Family Engagement: Program communicates and partners with families. | | | **NAEYC**’s Early Childhood Program Standards and Criteria, Standard 7, “Families,” states, “The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child’s family to foster children’s development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.” The criteria for family engagement are organized in 3 areas: A. Knowing and Understanding the Program’s Families, B. Sharing Information between Staff and Families, and C. Nurturing Families as Advocates for Their Children. Substantial research underscores the importance of family involvement in ECE and ties family involvement with positive outcomes for young children and their school readiness (**Harvard Family Research Project**, 2006; **Jeynes**, 2005; **Sheridan et al**, 2003).  Additionally, research on family engagement has underscored the importance of family engagement in ECE as a critical starting point to family-school relationship and children’s transition to Kindergarten (**Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta**, 2000; **Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler**, 2004; **Weiss et al.,** 2009).  **MA DESE** notes Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice that include: Family and Community Engagement standards which promote the learning and growth of all students through effective partnerships with families, caregivers, community members, and organizations. This includes: (a) Engagement indicator: Welcomes and encourages every family to become active participants in the classroom and school community; b) Collaboration indicator: Collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school; c) Communication indicator: Engages in regular, two-way, and culturally proficient communication with families about student learning and performance. |
| Indicator | Level 2a | Program Administration Scale (PAS) score of 3 on Family Communications Item |
| Level 2b | Program implements survey to determine how program can better support families |
| Level 3a | PAS score of 4 on Family Communications Item |
| Level 3b | Program implements evidence-based family engagement assessment |
| Level 4/5 | PAS score of 5 on Family Communications Item; Program demonstrates individualized family support plans; Program provides parent/teacher conferences; Program encourages families to engage in enrichment activities that connect curriculum to home; Program invites family participation in program decision-making |
| STANDARD 3: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | | | |
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| 3B. Community Engagement: Program collaborates with community organizations to support children and families. | | | **Zero to Three** defines referrals as ensuring that young children and their families are connected to services that match their identified interests and needs. This involves referral and follow-up to ensure linkages to needed services, and efforts to support families if they are unable to receive additional services due to eligibility requirements or capacity issues. As research has noted, many parents, particularly young and/or first time parents, look to early childhood education teachers for advice and guidance and additional supports, even though they may not actively seek them (**Olson & Hyson**, 2005).  As noted by the **NAEYC**, early childhood professionals should provide appropriate information and referrals to community services and follow up to ensure that services have been provided (**NAEYC,** 1996, 2005). Families’ access to health care, housing, income support, and other social services may help protect children from abuse and neglect. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program develops partnerships with agencies and organizations in the community to provide information/referrals to children and families |
| Level 3 | Program provides individualized referrals for community-based resources to families and provides informal follow-up with families |
| Level 4/5 | Program participates in community-based comprehensive service councils; Program establishes strategic partnerships with community organizations, community members, and business to increase access to community resources for families; Program coordinates transition activities for incoming preschool children and their families |

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| STANDARD 4: PROFESSIONAL CULTURE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | | | |
| Criterion | | | Rationale |
| 4A. Professional Culture: Program policies encourage a professional work environment and program sustainability. | | | As noted by the **NAEYC**, programs should regularly engage in evaluation to determine the extent to which programs' expected standards of quality are being met. Additionally, program evaluation provides insight into professional development and resources needed to connect classroom practices with early learning standards and program goals. The NAEYC advocates for multiple sources to be used as part of an effective evaluation system including: a review program data, child demographic data, and information about staff qualifications, administrative practices, and classroom quality assessments. Directors should engage in program evaluation guided by program goals and using varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet: expected standards of quality, program supervision policies and procedures, and curriculum goals.  **MA DESE** collects educator evaluation data on an annual basis. Evaluation data should be used to: promote growth and development amongst leaders and teachers, emphasize student learning, recognize excellence in teaching, promote professionalism, and enhance teaching practice. |
| Indicator | Level 2a | Program administrator makes occasional, unannounced visits to the classroom and provides feedback and support to improve educator practice |
| Level 2b | Program administrator supports educators to develop meaningful and measurable professional goals |
| Level 3a | Program administrator makes regular, unannounced visits to the classroom and provides targeted feedback and support to improve educator practice |
| Level 3b | Program administrator works with educators to attain meaningful and measurable professional goals |
| Level 4/5 | Program administrator makes multiple unannounced visits to preschool classrooms every week and provides targeted, constructive feedback and support to improve educator practice |

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| 4B. Professional Development: Program uses quality supports and professional development to increase knowledge and competency. | | | Teacher observation is an important step in identifying changes to teacher practice (**Gall and Acheson,** 2011**; Joyce and Showers,** 2002). Evidence-based feedback from observations has been found to be particularly salient in helping teachers reflect on what worked, what did not work, and what they might modify. This is an important element in the teacher change process (**Malu**, 2015; **Gall and Acheson,** 2011; **Joyce and Showers,** 2002).  **MA DESE** defines High Quality Professional Development (HQPD) as: A set of coherent learning experiences that is systematic, purposeful, and structured over a sustained period of time with the goal of improving teacher practice and student outcomes. The evaluation process of educators should highlight an individual educator’s needs for professional development while providing schools and districts with data that they can use in planning professional development. As MA DESE notes, evaluation of teacher needs and practice includes the observations and artifacts of professional practice, including unannounced observations of practice of any duration. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to ERS technical assistance consultation and internal observations |
| Level 3 | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to ERS reliable rater visit, CLASS technical assistance consultation, and internal observations |
| Level 4 | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to feedback from ERS/CLASS reliable rater visit and internal observations |
| Level 5 | Program gives quality support and professional development to programs at Levels 1-4 to promote their advancement in QRIS |

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| 4C. Reflective Practice: Program engages in process of continuous quality improvement. | | | The primary benefit of reflective practice for teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style, and ultimately, greater effectiveness as a teacher (**Ferraro,** 2000).  Other specific benefits noted in current literature include the validation of a teacher's ideals, beneficial challenges to tradition, the recognition of teaching as artistry, and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice (**Ferraro,** 2000**; Freidus,** 1997**; Wilhelm, Coward, & Hume,** 1996**; Uzat,** 1998).  Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a process to ensure programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children and families they serve. CQI is a cyclical, data-driven process. A CQI environment is one in which data is collected and used to makes positive changes – even when things are going well – rather than waiting for something to go wrong and then fixing it. (**BUILD**, 2013).  As **NAEYC** notes, continuous quality improvement is one of the main focuses of accreditation. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 2 Continuous Quality Improvement Plan |
| Level 3 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 3 Continuous Quality Improvement Plan |
| Level 4/5 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 4/5 Continuous Quality Improvement Plans |

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