

Celebrating
20 years of
accreditation!



APPLE ACCREDITATION

STANDARDS MANUAL 2019





Dear Owners, Directors, and Education Specialists,

Welcome to FACCM and APPLE Accreditation! We are thrilled to welcome you to our family of preschool owners, directors, teachers, industry leaders, and advocates. We thank you for voluntarily taking the initiative to improve the quality of your preschool from top to bottom; or in this case...from the stem to the core of an APPLE!

As we celebrate APPLE's 20th year in 2019, APPLE Accreditation remains committed to professional excellence and serves to enhance the quality of early learning in Florida and throughout the nation. APPLE Accreditation is proudly the number one accrediting body in the State of Florida.

APPLE Accreditation is devoted to helping schools reach their true potential. Through information sharing, a streamlined and concise manual, ongoing professional development, on-site and online trainings, a dedicated APPLE support team, and coming soon – a resource manual, we assist preschool programs in achieving their goal of becoming APPLE accredited.

Many of our preschools go through an invigorating process as they take an in-depth look at their schools, how they set up the classrooms, how the teachers interact with children, the daily processes that when done properly, create a healthy, safe, and secure learning environment where the whole child can bloom and grow.

Over the next several months, your school will embark on a journey. This process begins with a self-study where you will address each standard and subsequent indicator as it applies to your program, followed by an announced on-site verification visit where you will have an opportunity to provide any needed clarification, and lastly, a final determination will be reached by the APPLE Commission – a peer group of early learning providers.

Upon successful completion of this enlightened journey, your center will receive an accreditation certificate that you and your staff can be proud of and the early learning community and parents alike can trust. APPLE Accreditation shows your commitment to quality. We encourage you to advertise your achievement. Accreditation is your key to the future of your school.

On behalf of the FACCM Board of Directors and the FACCM and APPLE Team, we thank you for your commitment to excellence and to improving the lives of the children we serve...one-school at a time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lee Bell

FACCM Executive Director



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Introduction

Since 1999, APPLE has been recognizing Early Learning Centers that have achieved a level of quality programming by meeting best practice program standards. APPLE Accreditation is a voluntary and self-directed process of continuous quality improvement. The goal of APPLE is to provide the necessary tools to Centers in order to assist them in implementing and maintaining quality early childhood education practices to benefit the children and families they serve. Many states provide additional incentives to encourage accreditation; however, the most important incentive is that by meeting accreditation standards, Centers have the opportunity to improve the health and safety of the children, improve learning outcomes through teacher interactions and research-based curriculum, and improve communication between staff, parents, and the community.

To begin the accreditation process, the Center should establish a clearly defined mission with a dedicated team that will collaboratively work through the accreditation process. The Center should also be prepared with the necessary resources to make changes to achieve and sustain accreditation.

The first step is to access the appropriate APPLE application form by following one of the links below:

[APPLE Standard Application](#)

[ADVANCED APPLE Application](#)

[National APPLE Accreditation](#)

Once the form is completed, payment should be sent in one of these three ways.

- Mailed:
Florida Association for Child Care Management
1095 Military Trail #8619, Jupiter, FL, 33468
- Faxed: [954-767-4701](tel:954-767-4701).
- [Online payment](#)

Note: Before proceeding, please be aware of the following requirements:

- Early Learning Centers located in the State of Florida:
 - APPLE Accreditation is a member benefit of FACCM and the Center must be a member in good standing of FACCM to participate in APPLE Accreditation at every stage of the accreditation process. Application forms can be accessed by following one of the links below:

[FACCM Membership Application](#)

[FACCM Renewal Application](#)

- If the Center serves school-age children at any time during the year, all Indicators for this age group must be addressed. The verification visit will include a review of the school-age program. In order for the program to receive the APPLE Accreditation, both the pre-school and school-age programs must be compliant with the APPLE Indicators. In that case, the Center will earn the School-Age Unit

Endorsement (SAUCE) in addition to the APPLE Accreditation. However, if the school-age program does not meet the APPLE Indicators, the APPLE Accreditation will not be awarded.

Once the applications and the non-refundable fees are processed, the clock begins. An APPLE ID and password will be sent via email to access the Members Area of the FACCM website. The APPLE Manual, the Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist and instructions as well as other useful documents can be found in the Members Area. Centers may proceed at their own pace with up to 18 months to assemble and submit their portfolio.

Note: This time frame does not pertain to re-accrediting Centers. Please follow the link below to find information on reaccreditation.

[Re-accreditation Instructions](#)

Under certain circumstances an extension may be granted. The APPLE Program Office provides guidance and technical assistance at every step. On-site technical assistance is also available for a nominal fee. Our goal is for every child to have access to a quality early childhood educational program.

The APPLE Manual contains the Indicators that must be in place in order to earn accreditation. Through the self-evaluation process, the Center reflects on ways to implement quality improvements that will be documented and submitted as evidence that the APPLE Indicators are met. A description of what the verifier will observe during the verification phase of the accreditation process is included under "Onsite Evidence".

Timeline

The following timeline and process applies to applicants that choose the standard accreditation process. An explanation of the Advanced APPLE process can be found by following this link.

[Advanced APPLE Process](#)

Compiling and Submitting the Portfolio

The Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist is the guide to successfully compiling the portfolio. Follow the link below to access that document.

[Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist](#)

Additionally, an online course is available to assist in the compilation of the portfolio. Below is the link to this helpful online course.

[Successfully Compiling the Portfolio to meet APPLE Standards](#)

APPLE provides the tools to enable the Center to check the current status, due dates and access all available resources by logging into the Members Area to ensure that the Center is on pace.

[Members Area Login Page](#)

The Center will create an electronic copy of the portfolio in PDF format that includes all required documentation. The Center is required to keep an identical paper copy onsite or have immediate access to an electronic copy for the verifier's reference, if needed, as well as for the Center's records for the term of the accreditation period.

- Each item in the Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist should be addressed. All documentation listed in the Evidence section of the portfolio must be submitted. If an item is not included, or not applicable, a statement to that effect along with an explanation is required. Failure to submit required documentation may result in a "resubmit". A resubmission will delay the process and a fee may be applied.
- All submitted materials must be in a professional presentation format that is organized and legible.

- All attachments/enclosures must be titled and placed in the same order as listed in the Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist. Failure to organize the Portfolio in the same order may result in a resubmit.
- Required appendices/forms must also be included.
- Additional instructions for electronic submission and recommended file naming procedures is available on the instruction page for the Portfolio Self-Evaluation Checklist.

[Quick Link to Instructions](#)

- The verification fee must be paid when the electronic copy of the portfolio is submitted to the APPLE Program Office.

[Quick Link to Payment](#)

Portfolio Review

Once the portfolio is submitted, it will be reviewed by the APPLE Program Office within 120 days. There are two (2) potential outcomes:

- If the portfolio passes, the Center moves to the verification stage. This means that the portfolio has substantially met the APPLE requirements with a 90% or higher score. A courtesy email will be sent detailing any points which were not credited during the portfolio review. The next step will be the assignment of a verifier who will visit the Center to ensure that all observable “Indicators” are met.
- If the portfolio does not pass, the Center will have the opportunity to resubmit. This means that there is incomplete or missing documentation. The Center will be emailed a list of the missing or incomplete criteria and the Center will be provided with time to submit the remaining documents to raise the score to 90% or higher, along with the appropriate resubmission fee. In the event of a “resubmit”, the entire portfolio must be revisited and resubmitted. Additional documentation may be required. For example, new employees would have to be added to the employee documentation section, new licenses or certificates might need to be submitted etc.

Verification Visit

Once the portfolio is approved and the Center is notified that it has been moved to the verification stage, the following will occur:

- The verifier will visit the Center within the three (3) month period following the portfolio’s approval.
- As a final step in preparation for the verification visit, it is strongly suggested that the Center complete a mock verification visit using the verification checklist, which will be emailed following approval of the portfolio.
- The Center will receive an email with a Data Collection Sheet. The Center will be permitted to block out a maximum of two (2) dates per month during which a visit will not take place, provided the form is completed and returned within the allotted three days.
- The ability to block out dates is only possible in the initial three (3) month period. If a re-verification visit is required, the Center will not have an opportunity to block out dates, nor will they receive advance notice of the visit. If there are extenuating circumstances, contact the APPLE Program Director via email at diana.layton@faccm.org.
- Once those dates are determined, the Center will be given a three (3) week window during which the verifier will plan to visit. A courtesy prior day notice of the visit will be provided via email.

The job of the verifier is to verify that the documentation submitted is reflective of what actually takes place at the Center on the day of the visit. The verifier will check for general safety and cleanliness of the facility both inside and out. The verifier will observe the schedule, the classroom management, the teacher student interactions and the literacy experiences as well as other criteria indicated in the APPLE manual.

Note: If the portfolio reviewers had questions about any of the items in the portfolio submitted, the verifier will request to see those specific items. As previously stated a copy of the portfolio in either paper form or in electronic format must be readily accessible. Additionally, the verifier will monitor the employee health records as well as the personnel records of any employee hired after the portfolio was submitted for compliance.

The Center should plan for a full day of observation. If the Center's enrollment is currently over 150 children, two verifiers may conduct the visit, or one verifier may conduct the visit over two or more days, depending on the availability of verifiers and the size of the Center. Centers electing to follow the advanced path should expect a verifier to be onsite up to two days to allow sufficient time for the portfolio review.

The completed parent and staff survey summary sheets as well as the completed surveys must be available for the verifier. Copies of the surveys in English and Spanish, instructions for administering the surveys, the summary sheets, and the Director response forms will be in the Members Area by clicking on the link below.

[Staff Survey Form](#)

Parent Surveys: These are to be distributed to parents when the Center receives notice from the APPLE Program Office that the Center has been moved to the verification phase. A parent from the Center should be selected to be responsible for the collection of the parent surveys. After the surveys have been collected, the Director will then complete the Parent Survey Summary Form and have it available for the verifier along with the original survey forms.

[Parent Survey Summary Form](#)

Staff Surveys: Each staff member must receive a copy of the survey. Staff should be instructed to complete the survey alone and NOT to discuss the survey with the other staff members. A method should be created so that each staff member can return his/her own survey anonymously prior to the verification visit. The Director will complete the Staff Survey Summary and the Director response to Staff Survey forms (link below) and will submit to the verifier, along with the original surveys, at the time of the visit.

[Staff Survey Summary](#)

When the verification is complete:

- The verifier will review the verification with the Center Director or the individual designated as the Center Representative during the "Exit Review," which takes place at the end of the visit.
- The Center Director or Representative will have the opportunity to provide responses and comments during the "Exit Review".
- Both the verifier and the Center Representative will e-sign the exit review form. A copy of the verifier observations will be emailed to the Center following the Commission's decision.
- The verifier will then submit all verification materials to the APPLE Program Office.
- All submitted materials will be reviewed by the APPLE Commission within sixty (60) days

Verifier Evaluation

The Center Director or Representative should complete the Verifier Evaluation Form online within three (3) days of the visit. The link to this form will be emailed to the Center prior to the visit. The Verifier Evaluation Form serves to inform the APPLE Program Office about the onsite visit and the expertise of the verifier. Verifier Evaluation Forms are reviewed by the APPLE Program Office and the feedback is used to evaluate verifier performance and maintain quality.

APPLE Commission Review

All verifier materials are reviewed within 60 days and may be compared with the portfolio submission by the APPLE Commissioners. Members of the APPLE Commission will determine the status of the Center's accreditation. The Commissioners have the following options:

- Recommendation for accreditation
- Probation for renewing Centers
- Provisional for new Centers
- Deferral (which will require a second verification visit) or;
- Denial with no re-verification option

The APPLE Program Director will notify the Center of the Commission's decision within thirty (30) days of the Commission's decision. The APPLE Program Office will process the APPLE Accreditation certificate and send a hard copy as well as an email within the following thirty (30) days.

If it is determined that a Center's environment poses a **potential** threat to the health and/or safety of the children, the Center may be given a Probationary/Provisional Accreditation. In the event a Center receives Probation or Provisional Accreditation status, the Center may be given the task of submitting an action plan for improvement that may require staff participation in specific online training that must be completed with documentation submitted to the APPLE Program Office within a prescribed period of time. There is a fee for the online training. In some cases, a verifier will make an unannounced visit to verify compliance with the Indicators in question. If an unannounced visit is deemed necessary, an additional fee will be required. The verifier will file a report with the APPLE Program office and a final determination on the status will be made. The Commissioners may decide to remove the Center from Probation or Provisional status or extend the status for up to an additional three (3) months. An additional fee will be assessed if the status is extended beyond the original three (3) month period.

In the event of a deferral, the Center will be provided up to three (3) months to resubmit the necessary items and make changes or improvements. Within the allotted time frame the Center must request a re-verification visit in writing once it is prepared to receive a second visit. There will be a second verification fee assessed and the APPLE Program Office will schedule the unannounced visit as soon as practical.

Note: On a Center's first deferral on-site technical assistance and/or training is offered for a nominal fee to assist the Center to achieve accreditation. If the Center is deferred a second time the Center is denied.

An automatic deferral occurs when a Center:

- Fails to complete background screening for all employees or employs individuals whose background screening results preclude them from working with young children
- Provides inaccurate or fraudulent submissions
- Leaves a child unattended; fails to properly account for the children in care
- Fails to maintain substantial compliance with child care licensing demonstrating repeated serious violations

Appeals

If an applicant wishes to appeal a deferral, it will have ten (10) days from the date of the notice to submit in writing a detailed request for the APPLE Governing Board to review the decision. The APPLE Program Director will present the appeal requests to the Governing Board within 14 days of receipt. The Board will then have thirty (30) days from the date the appeal is presented to make a decision. The Governing Board may uphold, overturn, or modify the Commission's decision.

In the event of a denial, an applicant has the right to appeal the denial of accreditation within 30 days of receiving notice. If the denial is emailed, the clock starts at the time the email was delivered. If the denial is mailed, the clock begins five days from the date the APPLE staff documents its mailing. If an applicant wishes to appeal, it must submit a certified detailed letter to the APPLE Director outlining the objections. The APPLE Program Director will submit the appeal to the APPLE Governing Board, and the Board will have 30 days to make a decision.

The Governing Board will review the written evidence in the case of a denial or deferral and has the authority to authorize the APPLE Program Director to contact the applicant, verifier, or others to obtain additional evidence. Once a decision is rendered, the decision is final.

Following is a list of reasons an applicant may appeal the Commission's decision:

- Bias on the part of the verifier
- Verifier's inability to follow the proper procedures
- Other reasonable objections based on the Exit Report

Annual Update Requirement

All APPLE Accredited Programs must complete the Annual Update Report and submit it to the APPLE office by the last day of the month of the Center's anniversary date along with licensing inspections for the last two years, including administrative actions as a result of non-compliance. For instance, if your Accreditation anniversary date is June 15, the Annual Update Report must be submitted no later than June 30th. If a report is not submitted by the due date, the center will be notified that is not in compliance with APPLE requirements, which may result in the revocation of the accreditation status. Any report received after the last day of the month will be assessed a late fee.

Annual Report Form

- Annual Reports are due the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year of a 3-year accreditation
- Annual Reports are due the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year of a 5-year accreditation
- During the second year of a three (3) year and the fourth year of a five (5) year accreditation both the annual and the reaccreditation payments are due.

To check due dates and to submit annual updates please log into the Members Area.

Re-accreditation

A Center's initial APPLE Accreditation is valid for three (3) years with subsequent reaccreditation terms valid for five (5) years, provided there is no lapse in coverage. Centers may initiate the APPLE re-accreditation process 18 months prior to accreditation expiration date. Centers that have initiated the APPLE re-accreditation process must submit a new, completed portfolio to the APPLE Program Office not less than twelve (12) months, but no more than eighteen (18) months, before the end of the reaccreditation term. The portfolio will be reviewed and the verification visit will be scheduled following the same procedures as an initial submission.

Note: It is critical to keep in mind the dates and timing for re-accreditation. The Center may not want to take the full time allotted to submit the portfolio in case doing so could lead to a lapse in accreditation. It is important to take into consideration the possibility that the re-accreditation process might not be completed prior to the expiration date of the existing accreditation. A delay might occur if further documentation is requested during the portfolio review or if the Commission decision results in a deferral that requires a second verification visit. In either case, if a lapse should occur, the Center would only be granted a three (3) year accreditation period rather than a five (5) year re-accreditation period. Because of all the variables involved in the process, APPLE cannot guarantee that there will not be a lapse in accreditation

Advanced APPLE

If the portfolio is not submitted 12 months prior to the accreditation expiration date, the Center will have the option of selecting Advanced APPLE by submitting all additional fees in an effort to avoid a lapse in accreditation. This option will only be available up to the fifth (5th) month prior to the accreditation expiration date.

Advanced APPLE is an accelerated process with shorter timelines. Advanced APPLE can be selected by Centers applying for first time accreditation as well as re-accreditation.

A description of the instances where it might be a good choice is available under the Advanced APPLE process in the Members Area. The link to this information is listed below.

[Advanced APPLE Process](#)

Communications

Communication from the APPLE office is sent via email. Please ensure that the owner's **and** director's email addresses are up to date at all times.

Centers may check status, due dates and download all forms at any time by logging into the Members Area of the website. FACCM membership must be maintained and current in order to access the Members Area.

New Location or Change of Ownership

In these situations, it is important to follow the policy and guidelines for APPLE Accreditation Amendment found by following the link below:

[Information on New Location or Change of Ownership](#)

Policies

Other important policies are available in the Members Area of the website including: Toxins, Attendance & Supervision, Confidentiality, Employee Records, Re-accreditation, Non-Compliance and Revocation. All submitted materials become the property of FACCM, Inc. and will not be returned. Your intellectual property rights are protected.

Disclaimer

When the decision is made to pursue early childhood program accreditation, it is a commitment on the part of the program to a standard of quality that is above the minimum requirement. For Owners and Directors engaged in the field of early education, the expectation is for professionalism. The expectations for the documentation submitted for review and the verification visit are that they present an accurate and truthful representation of the nature and extent of the program's operating policies and day-to-day operation.

- The APPLE Program Office reserves the right to make unannounced visits to APPLE accredited centers for the purpose of ensuring compliance with APPLE criteria throughout the accreditation period. APPLE has the authority to revoke APPLE accreditation if, during the period of accreditation, the Center's quality is determined to be non-compliant to a degree which would have caused the Center to not become accredited had the same situations or conditions existed at the time of accreditation.

- The APPLE Program Office will notify the appropriate local and state agencies if APPLE accreditation is revoked. These entities may include DOH, DCF, OEL, local ELC, or local licensing authorities.
- The APPLE Program Office will cooperate with all government and non-profit entities that have a vested interest in assuring that a Center maintains quality standards. The APPLE Program Office will provide requested information to these entities when requested as a result of an inquiry or investigation.
- APPLE is open to all Early Learning Centers in the United States of America that meet the criteria.
- For Centers located in the State of Florida, APPLE accreditation is considered a benefit of membership in the Florida Association for Child Care Management (FACCM) and FACCM membership must be maintained throughout every phase of accreditation and during the period of accreditation.
- FACCM reserves the right to refuse or revoke membership in the FACCM organization due to unprofessional conduct.

Thank you for choosing APPLE Accreditation. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to speak to an APPLE Team member, please call us at 1.877.634.9874.



1.0 STANDARD: ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

The program has effective policies and procedures in place to carry out the organization's mission. Its leaders set goals, articulate a vision, and chart its course for the benefit of the population it serves.

1.1 INDICATOR: LICENSE¹

The Center has been in operation under the current ownership for a period of one year or more. Where required, the Center is licensed by the state or local agency in whose jurisdiction the Center is located. The license is current and the Center, if in Florida, is eligible for Gold Seal designation, pursuant to DCF guidelines². The license is not suspended or otherwise restricted. If the Center is exempt from licensing³, the Center meets all the criteria in the APPLE Policy regarding Child Care Licensing Exempt Centers and exhibits that its standards meet or exceed those required by the local licensing authority.

Link: [Licensing Exempt Policy](#)

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Documentation that the Center has been in operation by the current owner for a period of one year or more
- If exempt from licensing, a statement to that effect from the state or county in which the Center is located
- Inspection reports from DCF or other licensing authority for the twelve-month period prior to the Portfolio submission date including any complaints and enforcement actions
 - If reports contain violations, documentation to demonstrate how violation was corrected and strategies to prevent future violations

¹ DCF Rule 402.306

² DCF Rule 402.281

³ DCF Rule 402.316



- Inspection reports⁴ for the twelve-month period prior to the Portfolio submission date from the following entities, if applicable or a statement if not subject to inspection
 - Federal, state, or local agencies providing funding or oversight for at-risk, special needs, special programs (VPK) or income eligible populations (School Readiness, Head Start etc.)
- Written records of self-inspections, if the Center is not subject to regulatory inspections

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The license is posted in a conspicuous place.⁵
- Inspection reports are posted.
- The verifier will conduct an On-site review of inspections received after Portfolio submission.

1.2 INDICATOR: INSURANCE

In order to protect the organization from losses due to events that might occur during the normal course of operations, the Center has insurance coverage currently in place for Student Accident, Workers Compensation, Vehicles, and Liability that meets or exceeds statutory limits. The Center consults with an insurance professional to periodically review and evaluate its ongoing business insurance needs.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- All current certificate of insurance or a copy of the current declaration page of each policy showing coverage limits and dates of coverage that are current at the time of the Portfolio submission
- A statement that explains the Center's procedure for periodic review of insurance needs

⁴ DCF Rule 402.311

⁵ DCF Rule 402.3125



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The verifier will check that the dates of coverage are current at the time of the validation visit.

1.3 INDICATOR: GOVERNANCE

The Center has an organizational structure in place that has developed a framework of systems and processes to manage both the programmatic and financial aspects of the organization. Its strategic plan includes a statement of its strengths and weaknesses along with both current and long-range goals for programmatic growth, professional development, ongoing self-assessment. The plan reflects the population the Center serves and develops its definition of quality early childhood education.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE:

Copies of the following:

- The organizational structure of the Center, in the form of a chart or a policy, including the roles and responsibilities of each staff member and any other individual involved with the program (include the individuals responsible for staff training, curricular aspects, parent involvement etc.)
- The strategic plan, as described above, with specific timelines for each goal
- The Center's financial control policies that are consistent with accepted business practices
- A statement that organizational records are kept On-site at all times and are renewed when applicable
- A statement that describes the use of any technology-based management systems for accounting or student information
- The organization's budget with periodic examination of budget to actual in order to adjust accordingly
- The year-end profit and loss statement
- A statement that identifies the person responsible for the financial aspects of the organization along with any other specialized consultants who support the programs goals
- The organization's corporate annual report
- The organization's business tax license, if applicable
- The Center's mission statement
- A description of the population the Center serves along with its unique characteristics
- The Center's definition of quality in a statement of 100 to 300 words

ON-SITE EVIDENCE:

The verifier reserves the right to review these documents on site during the validation visit.



1.4 INDICATOR: RATIO⁶ AND GROUP SIZE

In order to provide a quality educational experience and attend to the needs of each individual child, the Center adheres to small staff to child ratios and limits group sizes. Each teacher is assigned to a specific group of children for the majority of the day. Each group occupies a specific classroom or well-defined space that is only shared, where appropriate, with one other group, preventing intermingling of children from other groups within a larger room. Reasonable efforts are made to maintain continuity of teacher assignments throughout the school day as well as the school year in order to promote healthy levels of bonding and attachment between the children and their teachers.

The following ratios reflect the opportunity for frequent contact between teachers and children, appropriate supervision, the facilitation of learning, and responsiveness to children's health and safety needs. These ratios are maintained throughout the program day, including nap periods.

Age	Ratio	Group Size Maximum
Infants*	1:3-4	6-8
Toddlers- Ones**	1:3-5	6-10
Two year olds***	1:6-7	12-14
Three year olds***	1:7-9	14-18
Four year olds***	1:9-11	18-20
Five year olds***	1:9-11	18-20

⁶ DCF Rule 402.305 (4) (a)



N.B. If jurisdictional regulatory agencies have more restrictive requirements, those rules will prevail.

*When one or more infants is included in any group, the governing ratio requirement will drop to the infant ratio level.⁷

**When one or more toddler-ones is included in any group, the governing ratio will drop to the toddler-ones ratio level.

*** When groups contain only twos, threes, fours, and fives (and there are no infants or toddler-ones present), the age of the majority of the children will determine the ratio required.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

A listing of each group of children that shows the ages of children in the group, lists the names of teachers assigned to that group, the designated space within the Center the group occupies, the current staff to child ratio, and the maximum staff to child ratio that will be maintained. You may create your own form or use this example form.

Link: [APPLE Ratio/Group Example Form](#):

- A narrative to show how staff is responsible for an assigned group of children⁸
- A statement that describes the Center's provisions for substitutes, when necessary, to reach and maintain daily staff-child ratio requirements at all times

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

During the initial tour, the Verifier will ask the Director to state the Center's governing ratios and to describe group size considerations. Classes remain within APPLE ratios without constant shifting and regrouping.

1.5 INDICATOR: LICENSE CAPACITY

License capacity is the maximum number of children that can be cared for by the Center at any given time. The State of Florida requirement for indoor space is the 35 square feet per child. It is based

⁷ Facility Handbook 2.3.1 (a)

⁸ Facility Handbook 2.4.1 (b)



on the amount of space available for children’s use throughout the day.⁹ It excludes toilet areas, closets, offices, areas under large immovable equipment or built-in items. Hallways, office space, and kitchens are also excluded in the space available for children.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- The floor plan of the building or a sketch of the floor plan that indicates
 - dimensions or square footage of the useable space within the building
 - areas labeled with the name and ages of the group that uses the space
- A written explanation if the facility is not required to comply with a capacity calculated by 35 square feet per child, whether the number is above or below this multiplier.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

There are 35 square feet of indoor useable space for children or greater if required by local licensing with clear pathways for walking around the building and the classrooms.

1.6 INDICATOR: STAFFING SCHEDULES

The staffing pattern allows for consistency, continuity throughout the day, and accountability for the safety and well-being of each child.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A schedule for each classroom that shows which staff members are responsible for each group throughout the day
- A narrative that summarizes all staff assignments and hours
- A schedule in the form of a chart including the ages of the children, ratios, and group sizes (number of children) throughout the day. **If a local licensing authority requires more stringent ratios than APPLE, then those ratios will apply.*

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No On-site evidence required.

⁹ DCF Rule 402.305 (6) (a)



2.0 STANDARD: HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of children is of paramount importance. The Center is a safe and healthy place for children to learn and grow. The program supports the healthy development of all the children it serves while protecting them and the Center staff from any form of illness and injury.

2.1 INDICATOR: ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Teachers maintain accurate attendance records that are continuously updated in real time throughout the day as children join and leave the class/group¹⁰.

Link: [APPLE Attendance Policy](#)

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A completed attendance sheet or tracking form used
- A narrative that explains how teachers track children's daily attendance to ensure accurate classroom/group rosters are maintained throughout the day

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers have attendance records that are recorded accurately by child care personnel documenting the time as each child enters and exits the program with them at all times when working with children.
- Attendance is always recorded using name to face recognition and periodically checked throughout the day, including field trips.
- Headcounts match the number of children listed on attendance records at all times.
- When a class transitions from one place to another as a whole group, the teacher can accurately account for all the children who are present in the group.
- Attendance records are noted when a child leaves the existing group for an activity elsewhere in the Center i.e. therapist, dance, karate, visit to another classroom, etc.

¹⁰ Facility Handbook 7.5



- When there is a teaching change such as when a teacher goes on break or leaves for the day, accurate attendance records are passed to the new teacher.
- Children are within sight and hearing of the teacher(s) at all times¹¹.
- There is a system in place for children's arrival and departure from the Center to be noted by the parent/guardian signature on a daily basis as children arrive and depart either at the front desk or in the classroom¹².

2.2 INDICATOR: CHILD SECURITY

There are security measures in place to safeguard children at all times.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following

- A statement that explains how a person is authorized to pick up a child from the Center and how such persons are identified upon arrival at the Center¹³
- A copy of the form used to indicate the names of those authorized to pick up a child¹⁴
- A policy that states that parents are notified in advance of the field trip destination, time of departure, anticipated time of arrival, and time of return. Signed, written permission for individual field trips or blanket written permission is kept on file for each child taking part in a field trip¹⁵

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Access doors are monitored.
- There is always someone at the front desk or the Center has an electronic access system that allows only authorized persons to enter the building.
- Children are dismissed from the Center to authorized individuals.
- Children's movement within the building is monitored appropriately.

¹¹ FAC 65c-22.001(5)(b)

¹² Facility Handbook 7.5 (B)

¹³ Facility Handbook 2.4.1 (E)

¹⁴ Facility Handbook 7.3 (B)

¹⁵ Facility Handbook 2.7 (A)(C)



2.3 INDICATOR: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The center has procedures in place for emergency health and safety precautions. Staff is trained to implement them¹⁶, when necessary, and skills are refreshed regularly.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Policies or evidence in parent or staff handbook:
 - Severe storms/tornado warnings¹⁷
 - Missing child¹⁸
 - Emergency medical situations
 - Suspicious individuals or cars in the vicinity
 - Bomb threats
 - Civil disturbances
 - Armed intruders
 - Lockdowns and evacuations
 - Potential parental custody disputes/abduction threats
 - Attempts by unauthorized individuals to pick up a child
 - Substance impairment of caregiver on center premises
- Child Abuse/neglect reporting procedure
- Evidence that staff orientation includes emergency procedures
- Evidence that emergency procedures are reviewed at least annually at staff meetings
- A statement of the policy describing the designated evacuation site that would be used, if needed, and the process to get the children there safely
- A statement designating the person/persons who is/are responsible for health and safety issues

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- A log of fire, emergency evacuation, and lockdown drills are posted that indicate that fire drills are conducted at least on a monthly basis at varied times of the day, and includes information

¹⁶ DCF Rule 402.305 (7)(a)

¹⁷ Facility Handbook 3.8.5 (A)

¹⁸ Facility Handbook 3.8.7 (A)



about the date, time, number of children evacuated, number of staff, and the time it took to evacuate the building¹⁹. This also includes information about lockdown drills.

- Emergency exit maps are posted in each classroom.
- Emergency plans are posted in each classroom.
- Emergency phone numbers are posted.
 - Fire Department
 - Utility company hotline numbers- electric, water, gas, phone
 - CDC- Center for Disease Control
- The verifier will observe the manner in which unusual incidents, if any, are addressed.

2.4 INDICATOR: CPR AND FIRST AID

The Center is responsible for providing first aid and CPR that is adequate for the immediate treatment of injuries and illnesses, and seeks medical assistance in an emergency without delay.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A statement of the Center's requirement for staff to have training in Infant and Child CPR and First-Aid training including managing blocked airways and rescue breathing that meets or exceeds the following minimum requirements:
 - Lead Teachers have current training
 - 90% of the entire staff has current training
 - At least one person with current training is On-site at all times
 - At least one person with current training accompanies a group off-site for any activity²⁰
- All current training certificates of completion earned by all teachers in the areas of CPR and First Aid

¹⁹ Facility Handbook 3.8.4 (C)

²⁰ Facility Handbook 4.2.4 (B)



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The center has at least one fully stocked first aid kit on the premises and one with each group that is off-site- one per vehicle²¹.
- The first aid kits include the following items²²:
 - Bandages
 - Gauze pads
 - Gauze rolls
 - Scissors
 - Tweezers
 - Soap
 - Gloves
 - Wet wipes
 - Ace bandage
 - First Aid guide

2.5 INDICATOR: BUILDING SAFETY

The building is kept in good repair at all times. Attention is given to ongoing maintenance to ensure the well-being of all who use the facilities. Regulatory agency inspections are current and in compliance, or self-inspections are conducted.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Documentation that the building has been assessed for lead, radon, radiation, asbestos, fiberglass or any other hazard, if warranted from assessment, evidence of the program's steps to remediate or contain exposure to adults and children²³.
- A statement of policies and procedures for protecting children and adults from hazards such as air pollution, lead, asbestos, per public health requirements.

²¹ Facility Handbook 6.2 (A) (B)

²² Facility Handbook 6.2 (C)

²³ Facility Handbook 3.1 (F)



- Documentation certifying building materials are non-toxic and no lead paint has been used. If program is housed in a building that was built prior to 1984, OR proof that the building was built after 1984.
- All relevant inspection/monitoring reports for the twelve (12) month period prior to the Portfolio submission date from the following, if applicable:
 - Health Department, or a statement if not subject to inspection
 - Outside agencies- examples included Fire Department²⁴ or a statement if not subject to inspection
 - Written documentation of regular, periodic self-inspections, if not subject to inspection

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Evidence that staff takes steps to correct or avoid unsafe conditions.
- No smoking signs.
- A log, of the following, with dates listed for the twelve-month period prior to the Portfolio submission:
 - Annual service of fire alarms and tagging of extinguishers
 - monthly testing of smoke detectors, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors
 - battery replacements
- All indoor areas are free from trash, sharp or hazardous items, and are in clean condition, well-lit and well-ventilated.
- Walls, floors, furnishings, and equipment are in good repair with no sharp edges, splinters, protruding or rusty nails, or missing parts.
- All electrical outlets are covered or GFI outlets are installed.
- Bathrooms have barriers to prevent entry by unattended infants and toddlers to 2-years-old.
- Electrical cords are secured in a safe manner throughout the facility.
- All areas of the facility are clean and welcoming with good traffic flow.
- Exit doors are kept clear from any obstructions at all times. They are clearly marked in English as well as any other language of the Center's primary population.
- Stairways, if applicable, are well-lit and equipped with handrails.
- Windows and doors that are left open for ventilation are fitted with screens that are in good repair to prevent insects from entering the building.
- There is no evidence of mold in the building.

²⁴ DCF Rule 402.305 (b)



2.6 INDICATOR: TOXIC ELEMENTS

Guidelines are in place to ensure that the Center protects children from exposure to toxins by storing all hazardous or potentially dangerous elements in a secure location.²⁵

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Evidence that new staff orientation includes training on the procedures for storing toxins

Link: [APPLE Toxin Policy](#)

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Cleaning materials, paint, detergents, aerosol cans, health and beauty aids, and other toxic materials are stored in their original labeled containers and used according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Any item, including any listed above, that bears the notation "keep out of reach of children" is stored in a cabinet that either has a lock or a secured child-proof mechanism that is engaged.
- Toxic products may not be placed in cabinets above areas used for food preparation unless they are in impermeable bins.
- Teachers' handbags and other personal items are in locked cabinets or in a locked room where the children do not have access.
- All art supplies that are accessible to the children are non-toxic.
- Only the following items with low toxicity levels may remain unlocked but MUST be stored 5 feet or higher above the ground for easy access for frequent use:
 - Bleach water in a spray bottle
 - Diaper Cream
 - Sunscreen
 - Air Freshener
 - Insect Repellent (not bug spray)
 - Hand Sanitizer
 - First Aid Kit
 - Wipes

²⁵ Facility Handbook 3.2 (A) (B)



2.7 INDICATOR: MEDICATIONS AND ILLNESS

The Center ensures maximum safety when medication prescribed by a health care professional is administered to children with caregiver authorization by program staff during the time a child is in care.²⁶ Protecting the health of all students and staff is a priority for the Center.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE:

Copies of the following:

- A statement that describes the policy and procedure used for administering medication that includes
 - Identifying one staff member to be responsible for this task
 - The method for accepting medications – coordinating the drop off and pick up of the medication
 - The method of storing, labeling, and scheduling doses to be administered following the requirement to keep medication in a locked area
 - The system for documentation and follow up
- A written policy for the authorization of medication (both prescription and over-the-counter) to children, which includes informing parents that:
 - Medication authorization must have designated times – not “As needed”
 - The Center reserves the right to decline to administer medication that appears to pose a potential harm to the child
 - The Center may reserve the right to decline to administer non-traditional medications
 - Parents/Guardians must replace expiring or depleted medications in a timely manner

Samples of the Parental Medication Consent Forms, the Parental Medication Discontinuation or Modification Consent Form, and the Medication Log are available in the members only section of the website. The Parental Medication Consent Forms and Medication Logs are two separate documents and must both be maintained in an updated and current at all times at the center.

[Medication Administration Form](#)

[Medication Authorization Modification Form](#)

²⁶ Facility Handbook 6.5



- A statement that the Center does not administer medication, if applicable
- A statement that the Center makes contact with local health authorities, at least annually, to keep current on relevant health information and to obtain advice when there are outbreaks of communicable disease.
- Evidence that the Center has access to a health/medical consultant who observes and reviews the Center's health practices and written policies related to:
 - The care and exclusion of ill children to ensure the promotion of good health and the prevention of infection and injury
 - The physical, social-emotional, nutritional, and oral health of the children served

ON-SITE EVIDENCE:

- Medications are placed in locked cabinets or medication boxes out of the reach of all children unless they must be refrigerated. If refrigeration is necessary, the medication must be inaccessible and kept on a shelf out of the reach of all children.
- Prescription medication is stored in its original container, has a current date, and bears the name of the child who is receiving the medication.
- The verifier will observe the administration of medication On-site and the provisions made to care for or exclude ill children, when applicable, to determine if appropriate procedures are followed.
- The verifier reserves the right to view a consent form or log of a child observed taking medicine.

2.8 INDICATOR: CLEANLINESS

The Center has policies and practices in place to keep all areas clean, well-maintained, and regularly disinfected in order to help ensure that children, staff, and families stay healthy.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A statement that explains the Center's procedures for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing the facility, using non-toxic supplies on a daily or weekly basis, or when visibly soiled including:
 - Toys and shelves
 - Mouthed toys are washed and set aside immediately for proper cleaning
 - Bathrooms- including potty seats after each use, toilet seats, handles, bowls, doorknobs or cubicle handles
 - Diaper changing tables are sanitized after each use



- Equipment
- Dining areas
- General classroom areas
- Floors and other surfaces
- More frequent sanitizing when children in care exhibit signs of illness
- A description about the procedures in place for cleaning sinks between uses if used for both food preparation and other purposes such as cleaning, bathing children, or removing fecal matter²⁷
- Completed cleaning logs that capture self-inspections of classrooms, bathrooms, and other Center areas
- A copy of executed cleaning contract, if applicable
- A statement of the center's policy regarding use of Universal Precautions

[OSHA: Safety Universal Precautions](#)

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Premises are free of clutter, dirt, and debris.
- Floors and surfaces are clean.
- Bleach and water solution in labeled spray bottle, diluted according to the CDC guidelines, may be used if kept out of reach of children, which is determined to be at least 5 feet above the ground.
- Bathrooms areas are cleaned and sanitized daily and are odor free.²⁸
- Diaper areas are cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Trash cans used for diaper disposal are hands free. They must be either foot or sensor-operated, emptied, cleaned, and sanitized daily.
- Potty seats are cleaned and sanitized after each child's use.²⁹
- Sinks are used appropriately as per procedures listed above.
- Carpeting is clean without trip hazards.
- Vents are clean, temperature is appropriate, and there is adequate ventilation.

²⁷ Facility Handbook 3.9.4 (A) (B)

²⁸ Facility Handbook 3.7 (I)

²⁹ Facility Handbook 3.6.1



2.9 INDICATOR: NAPS/REST

The Center sets up napping areas and schedules to best meet the needs of the children in the classroom. This includes a quiet, calming environment to help promote rest and help soothe children to sleep.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A statement that describes the procedures for washing and storing bedding in a sanitary manner, including practice for handling dirty linen, and the frequency of laundering is weekly, at least³⁰
- A statement that children do not share mats or cribs unless bedding is changed, and that individual bedding is identified with names or numbers
- Information provided to parents regarding Nap/rest procedures including
 - Laundering of linens
 - BACK to sleep policy
 - Restrictions of bottles, toys, mobiles, bumpers in cribs
- Procedures for supervision of sleeping children, especially when engaged with children who are awake

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

Infants

- There are cribs in the infant area. No items hang over the cribs.
- Cribs meet regulations and are inspected to ensure security. No drop-side cribs are used.³¹
- Infants only sleep in cribs – not in car seats, bouncy seats, or exersaucers, etc.
- Cribs are at least 18 inches apart unless there is a solid divider between them.
- Infants are placed on their backs while sleeping, unless the parent provides a written note from a licensed medical practitioner to the contrary. Once laid down, infants may assume any comfortable position once they can turn themselves over.³²
- Infants do not have pillows, toys, bumpers or any other items in the crib.
- Children do not have bottles while in a crib or bed.

³⁰ Facility Handbook 3.6.1

³¹ Facility Handbook 3.6.3

³² Facility Handbook 3.6.4 (A) (C)



- Teachers frequently check on children while asleep in cribs.

Older Children

- When children are sleeping there is at least 18 inches between mats unless there is a solid divider between them.
- Children sleep on cots or on mats that are at least two inches thick.
- Mats and cots are all in good repair and free of tears or worn edges.
- Bedding and linens shall not be stored in the bathroom unless stored in cabinets.

2.10 INDICATOR: PERSONAL HYGIENE

Hygiene practices followed by staff, children, and others who have access to the center play an important role in maintaining a healthy and safe environment. Universal precautions are practiced at all times.³³

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Copy of center's policy on handwashing and diaper-changing; which includes a description of the required procedure for each.

[APPLE Handwashing Policy](#)

[APPLE Diapering Policy](#)

³³ Facility Handbook 3.10.1 (A)



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Children and adults both wash their hands when engaging in the following activities:
 - Arrival
 - After using the toilet
 - After diapering
 - After handling bodily fluids
 - After playing in fluid play areas
 - Before meals and snacks
- Children wash either independently, with periodic monitoring, or with staff assistance, as needed.
- Adults wash hands when engaging in the following activities:
 - Before and After feeding a child or handling food
 - Before administering medication
 - After assisting a child with toileting
 - After handling garbage or cleaning
- Signs are posted at all sinks that illustrate proper hand washing sequence in an age appropriate manner.
- Signs are posted at all diaper changing areas that illustrate proper diaper-changing sequence.
- Staff check diapers regularly and change soiled or wet diapers/clothing immediately.
- Disposable gloves are used when diapering, and when handling blood or other potential contaminants.
- Diaper-changing areas are located away from food preparation areas.
- All supplies needed are at hand in the diapering area
 - The diaper
 - Wipes
 - Ointment or cream, as needed
 - Plastic bag for disposal of diaper
 - Change of clothes, if needed and plastic bag for soiled clothes
 - Gloves
- All items are disposed of properly.
- Changing table is sanitized before next child is changed.
- Before walking on surfaces that infants use specifically for play, adults and children remove, replace, or cover with clean foot coverings any shoes they have worn outside that play area. If children or staff are barefoot in such areas, their feet are visibly clean.



2.11 INDICATOR: FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

The Center has procedures in place for in-house food handling, storage, and protection. Children's nutritional needs are met either when provided by the program or brought from home.³⁴

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- Proof of Food Service Handling training for personnel serving food
- USDA food service monitoring/inspection reports within the twelve (12) months prior to Portfolio submission, if applicable
 - Otherwise, if Center serves food, whether catered in or prepared On-site, proof that twice per year a registered dietitian or nutritionist evaluates the menus for nutritional content, portion sizes, and all aspects of food safety
 - Proof of compliance or corrections made as a result of recommendations
 - Or, a statement that the Center does not provide meals or snacks
- A statement that describes the procedure to avoid foods that may be choking hazards
 - The following foods are not offered to children younger than four (4) years of age:
 - Hot dogs
 - Grapes
 - Nuts
 - Popcorn
 - Raw peas
 - Hard pretzels
 - Spoonfuls of peanut butter
 - Chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole
 - Staff cuts foods before serving into pieces no larger than ¼ square for infants and ½ square for toddlers/2 year olds according to each child's chewing and swallowing capacity, whether served by the Center or brought from home
- A copy of the schedule for meal times for each age group showing that meals and snacks are at least two hours apart, but not more than three hours apart; infant feedings on demand
- Evidence that explains that teaching staff who are familiar with the infant feed him or her whenever the infant seems hungry, feeding is not used in lieu of other forms of comfort
- An explanation of the policy provided to parents regarding the storage of meals brought from outside/home as well as the right to refuse to serve inappropriate items that
 - Lack freshness

³⁴ Facility Handbook 3.9



- Fail to meet nutritional and/or food safety guidelines
- Are not age-appropriate
- A statement of policy with regard to feeding of infants and toddlers
 - Serving of milk
 - Infants younger than 12 months are not served cow's milk
 - Children 12 months to 24 months only will receive whole milk
 - Older children receive 2% or skim milk
 - Coordination to meet developmental nutrition needs
 - No solid foods in bottles without medical instructions
 - No solid foods to infants younger than six months unless recommended in writing on file by health care provider
 - Only 100% fruit juices – limited to 4 ounces daily
 - Staff offer young children fluids from a cup when families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready
- Policy regarding storage of all foods, including partially used food products according to USDA guidelines and the procedure to check for freshness before serving.
- A statement that any food brought from home that is intended to be shared must be either whole fruit or commercially prepared item sealed and packaged in its original container.
- A statement that indicates that the Center encourages and supports breastfeeding by:
 - Accepting and serving expressed milk for feedings according to food safety standards for handling and storing
 - Providing place for mothers to come to the facility to breastfeed
 - Ensuring that breast milk is gently mixed, not shaken, to preserve its special infection-fighting and nutritional components
- If well water is used, documentation that verifies that health authority determines the water is safe for consumption OR statement that well water is not used
- Sample of Parent Allergen Advisory Form that parent signs and submits to the Center to advise the Center of any food or environmental allergies from which their child may suffer along with the specific food or environmental items which may contribute to or trigger the child's allergies, including detailed information regarding the medical remedies that must be administered in the event that such an allergic reaction is triggered
- Procedures used to track children's food allergies with parent consent

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Current Health Department food service certification is posted.
- Areas where food is prepared or served are clean and organized.
- All foods and infant formula are stored and served at appropriate temperatures.
- Liquids and foods that are hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit are kept out of reach of children.



- Infant formula, breast milk, or infant food may not be warmed in a microwave, but warmed in 120-degree hot water for a maximum of five minutes.
- Clean drinking water is available to children throughout the day.
- All food, including food brought from outside/home is labeled with name and date and stored in a safe, sanitary manner according to USDA guidelines.
- Formula or breast milk is discarded after one hour if not refrigerated.
- Infants who cannot hold their bottles are fed by adults, bottles are never propped. Bottles are clearly labeled with the child's name. Children are not fed out of glass containers.
- Infants and toddlers (to age two) do not have bottles while in a crib or bed and do not eat from propped bottles at any time. They also do not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking.
- The Center supplements food brought from home, if necessary.
- Menus are posted and made available to parents, if the Center serves meals.
- Menus are kept on file for inspectors or accreditation verification
- Lists detailing the allergies of each individual child are prominently posted, with parent consent, in the classrooms and kitchen along with instructions regarding the treatment of any allergic reaction.
- Children and adults wash hands before meal times.
- Tables are sanitized before eating.
- Trash cans are covered and hands free.
- Children are served their meals on plates with utensils and napkins.

2.12 INDICATOR: PLAYGROUND SAFETY

The Center has policies and procedures in place to ensure that the playground is accessible, and safe for the children it serves. The playground is designed to prevent injury and is well-maintained.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: [Handbook for Playground Safety](#)

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A sketch, drawing, or clear aerial photo of the outdoor play area with actual dimensions
- A statement that describes how the Center ensures 75 square feet of playground space per child, when in use
- A statement that describes the Center's policy to protect children from health concerns including overexposure to sun, heat, cold, and inclement weather as well as air pollution such as smog or automobile exhausts.



- A statement that parents are required to provide their children with at least one change of clothing suitable for daily outdoor play to protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, as appropriate
- An explanation of how supervision ensures that teachers can see all children
- A sample of the facility's daily safety checklist indicating the individual responsible for the inspection. The checklist includes inspection of all pieces of equipment as well as any other potentially hazardous areas for:
 - Protruding, rusting, or loose fastenings
 - Broken or unsafe components on toys or equipment
 - Adequate ground cover that serves as sufficient cushioning in fall zones
 - Biting or stinging insects or rodent infestations
 - Security and safety of fencing and gates
 - Accessibility of drinking water
 - Absence of any standing water
 - Absence of litter in the environment
- Documentation that the surfacing under fall zones is regularly inspected for sufficient cushioning and surface is repaired, replaced, or replenished as needed
- An explanation as to how sandboxes are maintained in a sanitary manner, including drainage, cleaning, and replacement
- Documentation that explains how the facilities are kept free from harmful animals, insects, pests, and poisonous plants, including procedures for pest control when children are not at the facility, and the use of Integrated Pest Management-using the least hazardous means to control pests and unwanted plants
- A statement that the play areas are entirely smoke free at all times
- A statement that describes the supervision in place to prevent drowning accidents when children have access to water in tubs, pails and water tables

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- First aid supplies are available on the playground.
- Supervision is appropriate and teachers are positioned to see all children.
- Outdoor play equipment is of safe design and in good repair.
 - Anchored equipment is more than four feet away from hard surfaces, fences, or other pieces of equipment.
 - Elevated equipment is surrounded by resilient safety surface of acceptable depth in the fall zone and there are barriers to prevent children from falling.
 - Equipment is free of sharp edges, protruding parts, weaknesses, and flaws in construction.
- A secure fence, at least four feet high, surrounds the playground, preventing access to streets and other dangers.
- Gates in the fence are secured in a safe manner and all edges are safe and secure and child-proofed.



- Pools or any bodies of water on the premises are enclosed by a fence at least four feet high and secured by child-proofed gates.
- There is shade over a minimum of twenty –five percent (25%) of the playground area.
- Children have access to drinking water, available in a clean and sanitary manner, while on the playground.
- Age-appropriate playground rules are stated in a positive manner.
- Playground rules are posted on each playground in appropriate locations and enforced.
- The verifier will document any areas of concern.

2.13 INDICATOR: TRANSPORTATION

The Center staff members have the knowledge and skills to provide adequately for the safety of young children while being transported in Center vehicles.³⁵

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of the following:

- A statement that sets forth rules for drivers
 - No smoking is allowed in vehicles
 - Vehicles must be locked at all times when not in use when there is no adult immediately adjacent to the vehicle
 - Cellular telephone or similar devices may not be used at any time- the only exception, when vehicle is clearly off the road and out of traffic, is to contact Center in the case of any emergency or to arrange the services emergency personnel
 - Means to insure the safety of all children as passengers and pedestrians
 - Supervision of all children being transported
 - Procedures for children with disabilities, if applicable
- Evidence of a regular maintenance schedule
 - Latest annual vehicle inspection report(s) showing all systems are in good order
 - Maintenance log kept up to date
- A sample of a completed drivers' transportation log form and policy for its use at pick up and drop off that includes the name of each child, the time each child entered the vehicle and time exited vehicle. Log includes a place to document any unusual incidents – behavioral, medical, emergency issues

³⁵ DCF Rule 402.305 (10)



- License, background screening, driving records, annual physical examinations and training of all driving personnel³⁶
- Proof that staff that drive the vehicles have taken training in safely transporting young children and how to handle emergencies while in the vehicle

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- All vehicles are equipped with age-appropriate child restraints or approved child safety seats.³⁷
- If required by local regulatory agency, van alarms must be installed.
- Bus logs are satisfactorily completed. Driver does not sign the log until a physical check of the entire vehicle is performed and alarm, if required, is engaged.
- A second person inspects the vehicle to certify that no child remains inside, reviews list of names, and then countersigns bus log.
- A complete first-aid kit is on board every vehicle in use.
- Verifier will review the last 6 months of transportation logs.
- Driving records for all drivers are maintained On-site.
- Emergency information for each child is available on each vehicle.

³⁶ Facility Handbook 2.5.1 (A)(B)

³⁷ Facility Handbook 2.5.5



3.0 STANDARD: STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development is the sum total of the policies, procedures, methods, and programs that assists the program in creating a faculty of qualified individuals who possess the knowledge of their responsibilities, have acquired or will develop the required skill competencies necessary to meet program philosophy and goals, and who prepare themselves personally and professional for advancement within the profession.

3.1 INDICATOR: PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The center has policies in place with regard to hiring practices, communicating the terms of employment, staff orientation that meet all federal, state, and regulatory requirements, and staff retention.³⁸

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- The Center's recruitment policy that includes requirements for:
 - Interviewing all staff
 - Checking references and verification of employment
 - Background screening at required level and clearance prior to interaction with children for all employees and volunteers
 - Maintaining required records for all employees in secured location to assure confidentiality
- Samples of all forms used in the hiring process
- Sample of 10 interview questions to assess the candidates understanding of early childhood principles
- The Center's orientation plan for both new employees and volunteers³⁹ including
 - Review of employee handbook upon hiring prior to interacting with children
 - Requirements during the probationary period

³⁸ DCF Rule 402.305.(2) (a)(e)

³⁹ Facility Handbook 4.0



- Director assessment during probationary period of each new employee's mental (temperament) and physical health as well as ability to work effectively in program with young children
- Job descriptions
- Training on relevant policies and procedures⁴⁰
 - Personal hygiene – diapering, toileting, hand washing
 - Health and safety
 - All childcare personnel, including substitutes and volunteers, who work at the facility with infants have completed the Safe Sleep Practice, Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma training within 30 days of employment⁴¹
 - Fire extinguisher training within first 30 days of employment⁴²
 - Toxins
 - Emergency Drills
 - Acceptable guidance and classroom management
 - Abuse and Neglect Reporting
 - Instructional duties with observation of experienced teachers
 - Assessment of child progress
- The forms used to document the orientation process including:
 - Individual training log
- Specific information based on age group
- The Center's policy on communication concerns, including those of employees themselves or those expressed to staff by others, including parents

[Online APPLE Communication Course](#)

- The Center's employee staff retention plan which addresses:
 - Working conditions, breaks away from children
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Opportunities for salary increases, incentives, or other non-monetary benefits
- The employee handbook, which includes information regarding the following items:
 - Program philosophy and mission
 - Rights, Responsibilities
 - Staff benefits
 - Operational rules and regulations
 - Confidentiality guidelines
 - Non-discrimination policy

⁴⁰ Facility Handbook 4.2.1

⁴¹ Facility Handbook 4.2.3

⁴² Facility Handbook 4.2.5



- Drug Free Workplace policy
- Communication between
 - Staff and Administration
 - Parents
 - Members of the community
 - Description of the probationary period
 - Training requirements and staff meetings
 - Performance requirements

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

The verifier reserves the right to request a review of any document listed above.

3.2 INDICATOR: QUALIFICATIONS

All staff members possess the appropriate qualifications to serve in their assigned capacities and meet the required standards to be eligible to work with children. All diplomas or degrees earned outside the US must be translated and evaluated for US equivalencies. The definitions used below are as follows:

Lead Teacher

Education Required: Must meet one of the following:

- An Associate's degree, or higher, in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Social Work, Nursing, or other child-related field of study, OR
- An Associate's degree, or higher, in a subject area not listed above – “out of field” – with 3 college level courses (9 credits) in Early Childhood/Child Development, OR
- A current FCCPC (Florida Child Care Professional Credential), OR
- A current National CDA (Child Development Associate) credential, OR
- A current equivalency-based credential
- A combination of coursework and experience including a high school diploma or GED, a minimum of four (4) college level courses in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, and a minimum of three (3) years' experience working in a child care program serving children ages 0 -5.

Experience Required:

- Two years' experience working with young children in a professional setting with a degree or early childhood credential as described above; three years' experience if requirement is met with a combination of coursework and experience.

Age Requirement:



- Minimum age requirement is 21 years of age

Additional Requirements:

- In Florida
 - A current Staff Credential designation⁴³ listed on DCF childcare transcript OR
 - Completion of the Florida Department of Education approved Child Care Introductory Training within required time frame
 - Training in appropriate 5- hour state-approved online literacy course
 - 10- hour DCF Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Infants coursework for all staff permanently assigned to work with infants, if applicable
- Outside of Florida, programs must follow local/state requirements
- Current certification in Infant and Child CPR and First Aid, including blocked airways and rescue breathing

Assistant Teacher/Teacher Assistant

Education Required:

- High School diploma or GED, or higher
- In Florida
 - Completion of the Florida Department of Education approved Child Care Introductory Training within required timeframe
 - Appropriate 5- hour state-approved online literacy course
 - 10-hour DCF Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Infants coursework for all staff permanently assigned to work with infants
- Outside of Florida, programs must follow local/state requirements

Age Requirement:

- Minimum age requirement is 18 years of age

Director/Administrator

Education Required:

- An Associate's degree, or higher, in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Social Work, Nursing, or other child-related field of study, OR
- An Associate's degree, or higher, in a subject area not listed above – “out of field” – with 4 college level courses (12 credits) in Early Childhood/Child Development, OR
- A current FCCPC (Florida Child Care Professional Credential), OR
- A current National CDA (Child Development Associate) credential, OR

⁴³ Facility Handbook 4.6 (B)



- A current equivalency-based credential

Experience Required:

- Two years' experience working with young children in a professional setting

Age Requirement:

- Minimum age requirement is 21 years of age

Additional Requirements:

- A current Administrator/Director Credential
- Current certification in Infant and Child CPR and First Aid

Early Childhood Specialist

- A Bachelor's degree, or higher, in Early Childhood Education/Child Development or related field and three years of full-time teaching experience with young children

Food Preparer

- Documented training in food preparation safety or have completed a Food Handler course.

Van or Bus Driver

- Must be 21 years old
- Documented training in transporting children safely
- A driving record demonstrating the individual is qualified and suitable to transport children – possesses CDL license, as required by law
- Physically able to transport children

Volunteers

- Must be at least 16 years old

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies to document the following requirements:

- Completed revised APPLE form Appendix 1 – listing all employees currently employed using a unique employee number assigned to each record that is submitted to maintain privacy of personal information indicating
 - Position
 - Age group assigned
 - Highest relevant diploma



- Completion of minimum state training requirements
- Dates of Level 2 background screening (within previous five years) for all employees and any adults that have contact with children.
- Hire date and years of work experience in formal early childhood setting
- Number of professional development training hours for the period from July 1 to June 30 of **prior year**
- Employee documents to support Appendix 1 and other requirements for each employee
 - Highest diploma
 - High school or GED
 - Current CDA
 - Associates or Bachelors Diploma – if out of field degrees, attach transcripts to verify 9 credit hours in ECE/CD
 - Background screening with current date – VECHS screening is not acceptable
 - Clearinghouse report⁴⁴
 - Clearance by a sexual predator check for all staff prior to interacting with children
 - Certificate of professional development training showing 24 clock hours, 2.4 CEUs, or 1 college course in child care-related topics
 - Resume or employment application for all employees, including non-instructional staff
 - Confirmation that references were checked, and experience was verified for all employees.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The director is at least 21 years of age.
- Educational credentials and experience to meet APPLE requirements.
- Administrator credential that is valid and accepted in the state.
- All employees and volunteers counted in meeting the ratios have been background screened to include local, state and federal background checks.
- Personnel whose screening results are not on file are not left alone with children.
- Teachers are at least 21 years of age.
- Educational credentials and experience to meet APPLE requirements for lead teacher or assistant teacher.
- All teachers possess high school diploma, GED, or higher.
- Health records of all staff members will be reviewed on the premises of the Center due to HIPPA confidentiality requirements.

⁴⁴ Facility Handbook 5.1 (A)(D) (E) (H)



- Physical examination by licensed medical professional within two years or Tuberculosis (TB) test within previous two years will be reviewed, if employee meets the requirements for TB screening
- The verifier reserves the right to request any document and to review the documents listed above for new employees hired after the Portfolio was submitted.

3.3 INDICATOR: EVALUATION

The Center has a performance review procedure to measure teachers' growth, support their development and to assess their involvement in the program philosophy and mission. The evaluation tool identifies areas of strengths and also reflects on areas for professional growth. The process provides the employee with the opportunity to respond to a self-assessment and to set professional development goals. Periodically, staff is asked to provide feedback on the performance of supervisors and administrators and parents are requested to provide input on the program in order to assure continuous quality improvement in all aspects of the program. Feedback from staff and family survey results are used in the decision-making process to improve the program.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Policies relating to the purpose and frequency of Staff evaluations that include a minimum of:
 - A review at the conclusion of the new employee probationary period
 - Annual evaluations thereafter
 - Staff self-evaluation
- A sample of a completed Center's Staff Evaluation form or Performance Review form which includes:
 - A space for date and signature of the reviewer as well as the employee being evaluated
 - Evidence that a classroom observation was conducted- with date and time indicated
 - A space for employee input
 - A section that describes individualized professional development goals that are updated on an ongoing basis, at least annually
- A sample of a completed staff self-assessment form
- Forms used to request feedback from staff about the performance of their supervisor(s) and satisfaction with the program
- Action plan developed in response to both staff and parent survey recommendations that are used in the decision-making process to improve the program



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

The verifier reserves the right to request a review of any of the documents listed above.

3.4 INDICATOR: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Center encourages professional development and provides opportunities for all staff to increase their skills and understanding of child development, working with families, the latest research findings and their application. Other relevant topics include behavior management, inclusion, medication administration, child abuse reporting and compliance, health, safety, and nutrition, child development, evaluation, literacy, instructional strategies and methodologies, parent involvement, communication, and cultural diversity.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A statement that describes how the center provides support and incentives for each staff member in setting and reaching his/her individual professional goals
- Instructions to staff regarding professional development requirements
 - First year of employment
 - Completion of state mandated course work
 - Other topics specific to age and needs of assigned class
 - Annual training
 - 24 hours of job-related professional development
 - Calendar cycle is July 1 through June 30 of each year
- A list of training opportunities available in recent months that was shared with staff (including dates, times, and locations of training)
- Documentation of how the Center contributes to staff professional development
 - Paid time off
 - Scholarships
 - Reimbursement
 - Access to online trainings etc.
- Completed list of professional resources available, which may include links to websites.

[APPLE Staff Resource Inventory Form](#)



- Statement that staff is encouraged to join a professional early childhood organization. Find out more about SEEDS membership here: [SEEDS – a professional early childhood educators' organization](#)

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The staff has access to professional resources including books, journals, curriculum guides, magazines, videos, online resources, and other appropriate and accessible materials that are:
 - Appropriate for educational level of staff
 - Suitable for use with ages and ability levels of children
 - Current, based on recent research and best practices
 - Pertain to all developmental domains
 - Language and Communication
 - Social and Emotional Development
 - Physical Development
 - Approaches to Learning
 - Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
 - Creative Expression
- Resources are available in areas where staff has access to them
- The verifier may ask to see the resource area and the resources indicated on list provided.

3.5 INDICATOR: STAFF MEMBERS WORK COOPERATIVELY

Staff members plan and work with others as a team in order for the Center to operate effectively. Effective teams support the achievement of common goals for improving the quality of the services provided. Staff is dedicated and take pride in their work. Positive, respectful, supportive staff relationships and collaboration are crucial in creating an environment where children feel safe, secure and happy. Teamwork is also essential for building positive relationships with families.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Statement that is provided to each staff member outlining the standards listed above
- Evidence that staff have the opportunity to plan together to share ideas and resources – schedules, memos, policy statements



- Policies relating to the appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality
- Agendas and sign in sheets for six staff meetings that took place within the twelve- month period prior to the Portfolio submission

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

The Verifier will look for teachers working together in a cooperative manner throughout the day.



4.0 STANDARD: RELATIONSHIPS

Positive interactions between families, staff, and children create a rich early childhood environment and serve as models for the children to develop positive relationships with other people, which are important protective factors for young children to succeed.

4.1 INDICATOR: DEVELOPING WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS

It is important to create an environment that is conducive to learning and maximizing student social and academic growth. A feeling of belonging is critical to every child's well-being.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers arrange the environment to facilitate positive interactions and the opportunity to build relationships with and among children.
- Teachers allow children freedom of movement throughout the day.
- The classroom is filled with the sound of children engaged in playful exploration using positive social skills.
- Teachers and children use “inside voices” to interact with each other
- Teachers practice active listening. Their voices do not dominate the classroom.

4.2 INDICATOR: CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Many of the basic goals of parenting are common across all cultures and classes, with differences only in emphasis or the means of attaining these goals. It is important to recognize that all children come to school with promise. Parents can share their own cultural heritage with children or with staff in a variety of ways, and can also be involved in helping to solve problems stemming from differences.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

There is no portfolio evidence required for this indicator.



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the children they teach, their families, and the social, linguistic, and cultural context in which the children live.
- Materials and displays in the classroom do not depict stereotypes and reflect a variety of cultures, races, genders, ages, and abilities.
- Art, music, dramatic play, and dance experiences are presented in ways that reflect cultural diversity.
- Books and posters include portrayals of real people.
- Photographs of children and children's families are displayed in the classroom, at eye level wherever possible.

4.3 INDICATOR: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Caring, responsive, and attentive teachers will foster children's social-emotional competence and growth by providing them with opportunities to learn and practice age-appropriate skills.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers are sensitive to the social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs of each individual child, and adjust their interactions based on the differing abilities, age-levels, temperaments, and activity/arousal levels of the children, including infants and toddlers.
- Teachers are sensitive to the degree to which children wish to participate.
- Teachers encourage and recognize children's work and accomplishments.
- Teachers are responsive to individual children's needs, make eye contact with children, use caregiving routines to positively interact with individual children.
- Teachers and children are respectful of each other.
- Teachers address children using their names.
- Teachers listen and encourage children to talk about feelings, getting along, and good citizenship.
- Teachers comfort and help children who are crying or distressed due to surface injuries such as scrapes, abrasions, or cuts that occur on site. Teachers also wipe children's noses and tie shoelaces, when necessary.
- Children are treated respectfully during diapering and toileting process.



4.4 INDICATOR: BEHAVIORS AND GUIDANCE

When teachers build relationships with children, there is a positive impact on children's behavior. As children learn in the context of caring relationships with adults, they will become more skilled at building positive relationships with other children.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

- A written description of how challenging behaviors are handled in an age-appropriate manner, keeping the nature and frequency of the incidents in perspective
- A statement of the Center's discipline policy⁴⁵ that clearly prohibits the following as a means of controlling a problem behavior
 - Withholding food or drink
 - Toileting
 - Physical punishment
 - Belittling or ridicule and any other form of emotional abuse
- A protocol to ensure the safety of all children in the event of dangerous behaviors

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers develop positive relationships with children when they
 - Have primary responsibility for a group of children, which facilitates bonding and develops trust
 - Use appropriate tone of voice to gain children's attention
 - Have clear behavior expectations
 - Provide clarity for all rules
 - Proactively encourage positive behaviors and discourage misbehavior in a consistent manner
 - Anticipate problems and plan solutions in advance
 - Stop hurtful behaviors immediately
 - Deal with disruption quickly, appropriately, and efficiently to
 - Refocus and resume activities
 - Are watchful of the entire class and stop hurtful behaviors
 - Remind children of the rules
 - Guide children, including infants and toddlers, gently when mistaken behaviors occur

⁴⁵ DCF Rule 402.305 (12) (a)



- Give children opportunities to calm themselves and assist them in making appropriate choices to return to class activities
- Guide children by
 - Redirection
 - Limit setting
 - Conflict resolution and other positive guidance techniques
 - Affirmation of positive behaviors
 - Use of engaging activities and effective transitions

4.5 INDICATOR: MEAL TIMES

Mealtime is an extremely valuable learning opportunity for children in many domains. When meals are served in a relaxed, social atmosphere, it is an important time to encourage communication and self-help skills.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Meals are a pleasant time and children are not rushed.
- Teachers sit with children and converse naturally while they are eating.
- Teachers model good table manners and good nutrition.
- Teachers encourage self-sufficiency in children during meal times, attending to those children who need assistance.
- Teachers in infant rooms use meal times to interact positively with individual children.

4.6 INDICATOR: NON-DISCRIMINATION

In order to create an ideal environment for the healthy development of children, there is an obligation to respect and celebrate the diversity of employees and families served. Employees treat families, children, and each other with respect, maintaining a discrimination and harassment-free atmosphere.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

A policy that states the Center includes children with special needs and makes accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

[Link to ADA](#)

- The Center's non-discrimination policy for children, parents, and staff on the basis of sex, age, religion, national origin, color, race, marital status, physical or mental disability, or veteran status

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

There is no on-site evidence required for this indicator.



5.0 STANDARD: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The Curriculum defines not only the goals for learning and development in every domain for each particular age group, but also the instructional strategies, activities, and materials that are planned to meet those goals. Curriculum choice and components may be regulated by local, regional, or state requirements.

5.1 INDICATOR: DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

A curriculum may be purchased, or it may be self-developed, providing it is appropriate to the age and developmental level of the group and is inclusive of the elements mentioned below. A list of themes for the school year does not meet this definition.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- The curriculum outline for each group that includes
 - Experiences in all developmental domains
 - Cultural and linguistic sensitivity
 - Preparation of the environment to allow children time for active, hands-on experiences with real objects
 - Appropriate materials and activities
 - Positive guidance techniques to give children opportunities for character development and social skills
 - Meaningful interactions between teachers and students
 - Opportunities for literacy, language development, and cognitive development that are integrated into the program day through songs, stories books and games, not taught in isolation or by drill
 - Activities to promote daily large and small muscle development
 - Provisions for children to express their curiosity, their artistic ability, and their creativity
- Evidence that the curriculum is research-based, reflecting new theories and best practices in early childhood

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.



5.2 INDICATOR: LESSON PLANNING AND INSTRUCTION

The lesson plan addresses all domains of development and includes experiences to meet state performance standards. It is based on the framework of the curriculum and meets the developmental level of the children in the class. Yet, teachers recognize when a “teachable moment” appears and change or adapt plans according to the children’s interests and needs. A broad range of teaching strategies are employed to scaffold children’s understanding and expand their understanding using a variety of approaches/modalities in order to adjust challenges so that prior knowledge is reinforced, and children acquire new skills.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A completed weekly lesson plan in English for each age-group that is dated and written in ink or typed, that includes activities for:⁴⁶
 - Circle time/large group, such as
 - Expressive and receptive language skills
 - Social skills
 - Cognitive development
 - Small group activities, such as
 - Math readiness
 - Science
 - Cooking and nutrition
 - Creative expression and artistic representation
 - Music and movement
 - Language, literacy, reading readiness, writing readiness
 - Dramatic play and representation
 - Outdoor experiences, such as
 - Experiencing nature
 - Spontaneous, social play
 - Gross motor development
 - Exploration and discovery
 - Lesson plan includes

⁴⁶ Facility Handbook 2.6 (A) (C) (D)



- Activities in which children acquire specific skills through explicit instruction
- Sufficient information about activities and materials needed that a substitute can follow
- Notations of any changes, observations, or teacher reflections made during the week
- The names of books to be read
- One week's worth of plans, if daily plans are written
- Statement that indicates that lesson plans are reviewed weekly by Director/administration

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Current lesson plans are dated and posted in each classroom.
- Plan addresses all domains of development and includes activities to meet state performance standards
- Teachers are prepared in advance with books, materials, supplies and activities.
- Teachers enable students to be as independent as possible and actively encourage children to contribute to classroom plans and decisions.
- The needs and interests of infants are used to influence schedules, routines, and learning experiences.
- Infants who show interest or pleasure in an activity are encouraged and supported in prolonging that activity.
- Children's interest in and curiosity about the world are identified in order to plan new content and appropriate experiences.
- Self-help activities that promote competency and mastery are provided.
- Verifier will look for evidence that plans are being followed and include the items above.
- Verifier may ask to see the previous six weeks' worth of lesson plans.

5.3 INDICATOR: LITERACY: PLANNING

The Center provides children with multiple and varied opportunities to integrate listening, speaking, early reading, and writing into all aspects of the early childhood classroom, utilizing words, pictures, familiar objects, body language and physical cues. Accreditation In A Box Literacy courses are available at <http://www.faccm.org/the-core>.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:



- Evidence that lesson plans include age and developmentally appropriate exposure to planned early literacy experiences that foster
 - Language Development
 - Print and book knowledge
 - Phonological awareness
 - Letter knowledge
 - Written Expression
 - The motivation to read

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

5.4 INDICATOR: LITERACY: READING ALOUD

The object of reading aloud is to expand knowledge and to build a love of reading. It is not just to finish the book. It is widely accepted that reading aloud is the single most important researched activity leading to language development and promotes early literacy skills.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Infants and young toddlers are read to individually, sitting close or on the teacher's lap.
- For toddlers and older, teachers read to whole groups and often read in small groups or to individual children as well.
- Teachers read with expression, placing emphasis on the sounds of language.
- Teachers take breaks during reading to ask the children questions to stimulate their thinking and invite problem solving.
- Teachers encourage questioning and discussion about the content of books that are read.



5.5 INDICATOR: LITERACY: PRINT RICH ENVIRONMENT

The ultimate goal of a print-rich environment is for children to explore the written world, exposed to a host of different materials geared at reading and writing. Not only are the materials readily available for children to access as they wish, but their use is encouraged on an organic level, through lessons and play, conveying ideas and concepts in a meaningful way.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers provide a developmentally print rich environment by
 - Using picture to convey ideas and concepts to Infants
 - Showing toddlers pictures with names and labels to provide visual cues and to illustrate routines
 - Arranging multiple examples of meaningful print models throughout the classroom for children two and older, including
 - Books, magazines, and puzzles and other materials that support emergent alphabetic skills
 - Materials to give children the opportunity to write about their ideas and observations in a variety of learning centers – blocks, dramatic play, science
 - Props- menus, maps, directions, assembly instructions
 - Labels and documentation on children’s projects
 - Signs
 - Word cards
 - Word walls
 - Calendars
 - Setting up a welcoming reading corner with books on accessible shelves with picture books with simple words that preschoolers can identify by context
- Teachers share information with parents about the activities the children are engaged in while in school and suggest ways to support early literacy at home. To enhance this, teachers may send home activities such as
 - Backpacks with books or writing supplies
 - Library books
 - Teddy Bear and journals



5.6 INDICATOR: LITERACY: EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Expressive language is the use of words, sentences, gestures and writing to convey meaning and messages to others. It is important because it enables children to express their wants and needs, thoughts and ideas, give a point of view, develop their use of language in writing and engage in successful interactions with others.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers provide one to one attention and respond to infants' verbalizations and value all children's attempts to express themselves through verbal and non-verbal communication
- Activities and props support children's expressive language
 - Puppets
 - Telephones
 - Digital recorders
 - Show and Tell, etc.
- Teachers encourage the expressive language of older children by
 - Asking open-ended questions that require longer answers
 - Being patient with children as they struggle to find the right words
 - Broadening children's language by restating and expending their vocabulary
 - Explaining their actions and describing them to the children
 - Creating opportunities throughout the day for children to use spoken language by engaging in conversations with other children and with the teacher
- There is evidence, for children age two and above, of teacher created charts, graphs, and dictation that capture the children's expressive language.

5.7 INDICATOR: LITERACY: EMERGENT WRITING

Emergent writing begins with offering children a range of fine motor activities that will have a profound positive impact on their writing skills. As young children begin to imitate the act of writing, it is important to encourage them to record their thoughts and actions with drawing and symbolic marking.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Children have a variety of opportunities for emergent writing exploration and expression
- There are safe age-appropriate materials that foster emergent writing skills appropriate to the children's age and ability level that are accessible to children, such as
 - Infants: Squeeze toys, rattles, picking up cheerios
 - Toddlers: Clay and play dough, basters, large tweezers
 - Two and older: markers, pencils, crayons, stubby crayons, chalk, magnetic letters, stamps, tweezers, tongs, paint brushes, finger paints, scissors, and hole punchers
- There is an ample supply of age-appropriate writing surfaces, such as
 - Paper in various size, color, texture
 - Chalkboards
 - Dry erase boards
 - Windows and mirrors
 - Sensory materials – sand, grains, clay, mud
- Teachers model writing. Example: "I will write that down so that I remember."
- Teachers encourage children's emergent writing by providing activities and opportunities for inventive writing such as
 - Creating to do lists
 - Labeling their creations
 - Making cards for Valentine's Day
 - Writing letters
 - Creating shopping lists
 - Classroom or individual bookmaking - pictures, drawings, writing
 - The alphabet and samples of printed words
 - Writing materials are available in at least two areas of the classroom.



6.0 STANDARD: CHILD COMPETENCIES

The Center utilizes best practice methods to observe and assess the developmental, social-emotional, creative, and cognitive competencies of the children in order to provide an appropriate environment that meets both individual and group needs.

6.1 INDICATOR: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Observation is a vital component in the assessment process. It provides educators, parents, and families with critical information about a child's development and growth. A formal screening and assessment process can identify children who may need additional support and determine if there is a need for intervention or support services and assist in planning individualized instruction for a child or for a group of children who are at the same stage of development. Formal parent teacher conferences are scheduled at least twice per year.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

- A statement of the methods by which the Center communicates with parents about their child's development, health, behavior, or other issues respecting home languages whenever possible
- Samples of
 - Parent-teacher conference forms
 - Phone call notes
 - Anecdotal records
- Written description of the Center's policies and procedures for screening, assessment or other measurement of student progress including
 - Frequency of usage
 - Population assessed
 - Details about the roles of test administrators
 - Scoring process
 - Method and identity of staff member who share information with parents
 - Using results to inform classroom instruction and to meet children's needs
- Two completed examples of the observation and/or assessment tool(s) currently in use
- The name and edition number of any commercially available assessment instrument currently in use at the Center
- The form used by parents to give permission for assessment of their children

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.



6.2 INDICATOR: REFERRALS WHEN APPROPRIATE

The Center has ongoing communication with a child's parents as concerns arise about a child's developmental, behavioral, or emotional growth. When there is reason to believe that a student needs some intervention the sooner the concern is identified, the sooner the child can get support. The Center encourages families to advocate to obtain needed services.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- The policy that is in place that describes the steps taken when making a referral
- A form used when providing written communication with parents about concerns related to a child's development or behavior
- A list of contact information for resources in the community, including access to annual health and developmental screenings, early intervention services as well as local agencies that provide counseling or assistance to families

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

6.3 INDICATOR: PROVIDING FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES

Teachers are knowledgeable of children's abilities. They take children's varying learning styles and developmental levels into account when planning instruction and are aware of and responsive to children who need assistance. Children with disabilities are included with appropriate accommodations to support their learning. Planned activities, and materials engage all children and address their specific interests.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Specific plans that guide how the individual needs and goals of the children are met
- Sample of a completed individual progress note
- Individual goals set for children by outside agencies, if applicable



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Children receive individual attention and are not always just addressed as a group.
- Teachers encourage and assist children, but do not complete tasks for them.
- Teachers modify strategies and materials to enhance individual children's learning.
- The verifier will observe and document whether this standard is practiced in the classrooms.

6.4 INDICATOR: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Character development activities serve to build in each child a positive sense of self as the basic core of positive mental health and motivation for learning. Teaching children to rely on strong principles and ethics to make decisions and guide their behavior, prepares them to accomplish their goals, interact successfully with others, and succeed in life.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A written statement that describes the character development program in place and how it is implemented in classroom in an age-appropriate manner

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Classroom activities that build character development include opportunities to develop
 - Social Skills
 - Self-confidence
 - Self-image
 - Positive character traits
 - Relationship building
 - Cooperation
 - Respect for differences
 - Protective factors against victimization and bullying
- Age appropriate rules are clearly presented in a meaningful way
 - Pictures
 - Rhymes
 - Songs
 - Job charts, etc.



- There is evidence of opportunities for children to take responsibility, according to their ability, to give children a sense of self-reliance.
- The verifier will observe whether age-appropriate class rules are displayed in each classroom.



7.0 STANDARD: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Quality instruction is the result of a well-designed classroom environment, both indoor and outdoor, with meaningful spaces, materials, furnishings, equipment, and displays together with orderly routines and expectations.

7.1 INDICATOR: ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN- INDOORS

The environment helps the children interact, learn, and avoid unproductive activities, such as running and getting in each other's way. When the environment is well-designed, the children are productively engaged, and the teachers have time to interact, observe, and challenge the children.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The facility's room arrangements/physical layout locates diaper changing areas and toilets near sinks to facilitate handwashing.
- Toilets, drinking water facilities, and hand-washing facilities are within 40 feet of the indoor areas that children use. The hand-washing sinks are accessible to staff and children.
- The space and floor plan within each classroom or group area provides for ease of movement within and between areas.
- There are spaces with sufficient room for both large and small group activities, without crowding, as well as spaces where children can retreat individually, yet still be within sound and sight of an adult.
- The environment is soothing, not overly loud.
- Recorded music played is appropriate, planned, and used to support learning activities.
- Soft background music is used a naptime and occasionally at other times.
- Children have a labeled space to keep their personal belongings, artwork, and other items.
- Indoor large motor equipment meets national safety standards to eliminate injury hazards and supervision is equal to that provided outdoors.



7.2 INDICATOR: ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN - OUTDOORS

The outdoor area provides the children with an opportunity to play in the natural environment in order to learn and explore. Well-planned outdoor play spaces stimulate children's imaginations and engage their sense of curiosity as they explore their physical surroundings and learn in ways beyond what they can experience indoors.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The playground provides an area where children can run.
- Children have opportunities to play in the natural environment.
- The outdoor area provides space and equipment for a variety of gross motor activities including climbing, swinging, sliding, rolling, jumping, throwing, catching etc.
- The outdoor area provides opportunities for quiet play, books, blocks, manipulatives, and dramatic play. It is a natural place for science activities, art, sand and water exploration.
- Children have access to riding equipment.
- The outdoor area includes different surfaces: cement, grass, sand, etc.
- A variety of toys, equipment, and activities is available for different age groups.
- Safety is a prime concern for staff especially on the playground where children engage their whole bodies in challenging activities.

7.3 INDICATOR: FURNISHINGS

The age level of the children in the classroom guides the type and the amount of furnishings and equipment in use. The furniture is placed to insure the comfort and safety of all children. All items are stable, well-designed, and properly secured where necessary.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- There are enough appropriate-sized tables and chairs with backs in the classroom area to accommodate the classroom activities.
 - Most children's legs fit under the table comfortably.
 - Table tops are at a height where most children can rest elbows on the surface.
 - Most children's feet touch the floor when sitting in the chairs.
 - When infants and toddlers are in high chairs, their feet are supported
 - Shelving and storage allow children independent access to materials.
 - Tall shelves are securely anchored to prevent tipping.
 - Sinks and toilets are sized appropriately for young children's independent use or there are stable steps for children to access the sinks and toilets.
 - All furnishings and equipment are sized appropriately for children using the items.
- The classroom has soft furniture appropriate for the age group of the children using the room. Examples are:
 - Carpeting, area rugs, mats
 - Bean bags
 - Pillows, cushions
- Adults have a comfortable place to sit, hold, and feed infants. Staff place rocking chairs and glider chairs in locations that will avoid injury to children who may be on the floor.

7.4 INDICATOR: MATERIALS AND DISPLAYS

Children's learning is enhanced when the materials they use are varied and age-appropriate. Sufficient appropriate materials foster the opportunities for discovery and exploration needed for learning to occur. Teachers create display space that documents and encourages learning and skill development.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A written description of the Center's plan for rotating classroom materials and for adding new items to spark children's interest and curiosity for each age group.

[Appendix 4a for Infants](#)

[Appendix 4b for Preschoolers](#)

[Appendix 4c for School-Age](#)



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The classroom setting is inviting and organized.
- Materials, equipment, and supplies are attractively displayed, accessible, and in good condition.
- Materials and supplies for infants and toddlers differ from those used by preschoolers and include opportunities for fine and gross motor development, discovering cause and effect and simple problem-solving,
- Teachers inventory and assure that there are enough appropriate materials and supplies for the children and that there are sufficient choices.
- Children's artwork is displayed throughout the classroom and facility, at eye level wherever possible.
- Displays reflect current learning topics, seasonal displays, or children's recent interests.
- Most items are labeled with words **and/or** pictures, as appropriate to the age of the children.
- Classroom items are rotated to stimulate new thinking patterns and sustain children's interest.
- Teachers understand the intended purpose of all items and how they are used to enhance and scaffold children's individual and peer learning offering experiences in key principles in the cognitive domain including
 - Math
 - Building understanding of numbers;
 - Recognizing number names;
 - Understanding the relationship of numbers to object quantities and to symbols;
 - Using numerical symbols
 - Explore operations on quantities, such as adding, subtraction, and dividing into equal and unequal subsets.
 - Science
 - Exploring the natural world- animate and inanimate objects
 - Experimenting with objects, liquids, solids
 - Understanding the importance of protecting the local environment
- The verifier will refer to Appendix 4a, b, and c to document whether the materials are available, rotated, and easily accessible.

7.5 INDICATOR: BOOKS

Books are the number one educational tool and young children are fascinated by the colors and textures of a book. Excellent reading habits begin in the early years. Introducing children to books promotes early literacy and supports a love of language and reading. Access to a well-planned, comfortable book area in the classroom contributes to the promotion of critical thinking skills and enhances creative and social development.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

- An explanation of the Center's procedures regarding books:
 - Rotating books to maintain children's interest in reading
 - Replacing or repairing old and damaged books
 - Procuring new books
- Directions to staff that the book area is never used for disciplinary actions of any kind
- A written statement that explains the Center's use of public library facilities

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- There is evidence that books are used in the course of learning.
- A wide variety of children's books are available, appropriate, accessible, and in good repair. Books may be made by teachers and children.
 - Infants and Toddlers have durable books available.
 - There are at least two of the following types of books for each group of young children
 - Picture books
 - Story books
 - Wordless books
 - Rhyming books
 - In addition to the variety listed above, Preschoolers have the following:
 - Books that support alphabetic and phonemic awareness
 - Books that support instructional activities and curricular themes
 - A selection of each of the following types of age-appropriate books in the classroom about
 - Real people – including individuals who are multicultural, of varying abilities, and are non-stereotypical
 - Real animals
 - Nature
 - The Arts
 - Math
 - Science
 - Health and wellness
 - Other genres – fact, fiction, poetry
- In addition to the book area, there are relevant books in at least two other areas.
- Books are attractively displayed on low shelves throughout the classroom.



7.6 INDICATOR: SCHEDULE

Classroom schedules are developed to help children establish routines that promote independence and security and also allow for flexibility. The order of the day is predictable.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

- Daily schedules appropriate for the specific age group for each classroom, including infants, in the Center that include opportunities for
 - a balance of age-appropriate teacher and child-directed activities
 - active and quiet activities
 - fine and gross motor activities
 - large and small group and independent activities
 - activities that offer choices and allow for spontaneity
 - a minimum of thirty (30) minutes of playground time for all classrooms each morning and 30 minutes each afternoon with inclement weather alternatives for similar activities
 - Reading time is scheduled daily for all children, including infants
- A statement that daily TV or video time is not scheduled. Occasional use for educational programs suitable for the developmental level of the children is permissible.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- A daily schedule, written in ink or typed, is posted in each classroom, including infants and toddlers, that reflects a consistent daily routine
- The schedule is posted so that it can be viewed by parents
- The schedule includes pictures for children who cannot yet read.
- Infants' schedules are based on the child's individual, unique needs.
- The majority of class time is spent in positive interaction with small groups of children as well as individual children to scaffold their learning.
- Children are not expected to wait for extended periods of time without an intentional activity.
- There is a minimum number of transitions and regrouping throughout the day

7.7 INDICATOR: TRANSITIONS

Transitions are powerful tools to guide children gently through the day and help them move between activities and spaces with ease. Efficient and consistent transitions increase time for learning and reduce interruptions as well as challenging behaviors.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Transitions are conducted smoothly in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- In preparation for transitions, choices are offered to children as they complete activities.
- Teachers give transition warnings, using various prompts, including songs.
- The children respond to transitions in a manner that indicates that it is a customary procedure for the class.

7.8 INDICATOR: CLASSROOM CLEANLINESS AND SAFETY

The classrooms are clean and in good repair. Procedures are in place to keep the areas free of any potential safety hazards.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Policy on classroom or visiting pets/animals⁴⁷ or a statement if classroom pets and visiting animals are not permitted or a statement if your center does not allow visiting pets.
 - Documentation that animals are fully immunized, if applicable
 - Suitability for contact with children
 - Staff supervision between children and animals
 - Instruction on safe behaviors in proximity to animals
 - Consideration of children's pet allergies
 - Restrictions on reptiles

⁴⁷ Facility Handbook 3.1 (C)



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- Teachers assure that the classroom is organized and in good repair. Windows, tables, mirrors etc. are cleaned regularly.
- Old tape is removed from displays and equipment.
- Staples, push pins, and thumbtacks are not used.
- Broken equipment is repaired or discarded.
- All classroom items are clean and in good repair.
- Classrooms are not cluttered, and items hung from the ceiling are secured so there is no falling hazard.
- Teachers guard against choke hazards, removing them from reach of infants/toddlers/twos, especially when children are engaged in activities using glitter or other small objects.
- Teachers are extra vigilant when children are engaged in certain activities which are inherently riskier.
- Diaper bags are stored safely in the classroom. Infants' belongings are kept organized and accessible.
- Walkers are not used in infant or toddler rooms.



8.0 STANDARD: FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

There is a positive correlation between family involvement in their child's education and children's achievement. It nurtures cognitive and emotional resilience. This benefit starts early. Respect for family traditions and cultures is essential to assure that parents, caregivers, and their extended families feel welcome and honored by all program staff. Strong two-way communication fosters family partnerships that provide opportunities for networking and community collaboration.

8.1 INDICATOR: ENROLLMENT

The enrollment process provides parents/caregivers with information about the Center and communicates its policies and practices in writing and in conversations during the initial orientation period and beyond. It also includes an opportunity for parents to share important information about the child with the Center.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

A copy of the Center's Parent Handbook or other written documentation that includes all of the following:

- A statement of the Center's mission statement and philosophy and how they are reflected in the learning environment
- Information regarding the new student/parent orientation process
- A clear statement of the Center's open-door policy
- Information about tuition fees, attendance, and vacations
- Explanation of the requirements for children to be signed in and out with time and date by a responsible, unimpaired, authorized adult, along with a detail of the security measures in place
- Explanation of Center's requirement to report suspected abuse and neglect
- The Center's guidance and discipline policy that clearly states that guidance will be developmentally appropriate and respectful, that it is not tied to food or toileting and that corporal punishment is not permitted
- Expectations for children's behavior and guidelines for dis-enrollment
- Information on hours and days of operation, holidays, closings
- An outline of the Center's policy on sick child attendance limitations
- Guidelines for food and nutrition
- The Center's non-discrimination policy for children, parents, and staff on the basis of sex, age, religion, national origin, color, race, marital status, physical or mental disability, or veteran status



- Policy that states the Center includes children with special needs and makes accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act
- A copy of the Center's Registration form that include, at a minimum
 - Child's name and date of birth
 - Complete contact information of parent/caregiver with current, accessible phone numbers where calls and texts can be received in a timely manner
 - Written emergency contact names and numbers of those who may pick up child
 - Documentation of the child's health history, including
 - Up-to-date immunization records
 - Physical examination reports within the previous two years
 - Notification of any allergies, health issues, extenuating home/family circumstances, and developmental concerns
 - Confirmation or signature page(s) to document that parents have received written notice of all policies⁴⁸
 - Statement that describes how informational records regarding children and families are kept in strict confidence

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

8.2 INDICATOR: ENVIRONMENT

There is an atmosphere of trust and respect between staff and families at all times. Children and families feel welcome in the program. Spaces are inviting and cheerful, staff is cordial, patient and helpful.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

No portfolio evidence is required for this indicator.

⁴⁸ Facility Handbook 7.3 (A) (B) (C) (D)



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The verifier will observe the interactions between staff and families throughout the verification visit.
- There are areas designated for parent information or parent resource throughout the Center that are easily accessible.
- There is an area to hold either formal or informal meetings with parents that provides some privacy from other parents and children.

8.3 INDICATOR: COMMUNICATION

Parents and staff have opportunities for ongoing interaction and communication. Information is shared between the Center and parents concerning their child's health, needs, fears, and habits. Additionally, the Center shares general information on matters relating to child development, children's health, nutrition, developmentally and individually appropriate activities, current research on best practices, legislative matters, and any other information that will make parents better-informed.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

Policy regarding methods used to ensure ongoing communication between teacher and parents to share goals, expectations, and also for problem solving and conflict resolution including how daily communication is handled.

- Statement that describes how parents are notified when child appears ill and how that is documented
- Samples of daily information shared with parents of all infants through two-year old children regarding the child's day, eating, toileting etc. as age appropriate
- Examples of a variety of ways information is made available to parents such as
 - Informal notes to go home with students' belongings or other means of delivery
 - Notices posted in the Center
 - Flyers
 - Brochures
 - Emails, texts
 - Social media – websites, Facebook, Instagram etc.
- Information given to parents about the importance of reading to their child daily
- Statement that describes how informational materials are distributed to parents whether school wide, class-wide, or under individual circumstances



- Policy describing how complete records for children are updated annually including: names, addresses, and phone numbers of parents or guardians; emergency contact information; medical treatment authorizations; medical histories; developmental histories; immunization records; progress reports; parent conference reports; transportation permissions; injury and illness logs; and medication administration logs.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

The verifier will:

- Observe and document parent and staff interactions throughout the day
- Note presence of notices, flyers, brochures etc.

8.4 INDICATOR: PARTICIPATION

The Center staff develop strategies to positively engage parents in the program by offering opportunities for participation that are geared to their interests, schedules, and other obligations on their time.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A statement that describes the guidelines for parent involvement and volunteers
- Examples of suggested ways parents can be engaged or documentation of prior engagement such as
 - Collecting materials
 - Facilitating or attending special events
 - Participating in “career day”
 - Assisting on field trips
 - Reading to the class
 - Sharing family cultures
- Documentation of six (6) separate occasions with dates during the 12-month period prior to the Portfolio submission date that illustrate that parents were engaged with the program, including



- Recorded dates/times
- Relationships of family members involved
- Photos and/or written description of the occasion
- Documentation of regularly held formal, planned parent meetings/events – including the most recent flyer or other method of invitation, description of event, and sign in forms

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

8.5 INDICATOR: DIVERSITY

The Center staff is sensitive to the individual differences among the children and families the program serves. All families and children are embraced, respected, and welcome in the Center. Family diversity is celebrated.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Statement regarding the Center's awareness of cultural, religious, family structure, and lifestyle differences among the children enrolled
- Information provided to parents regarding teaching tolerance, invitations to parents to share their culture with the children in an age-appropriate manner, holiday events, music, food, dress, language etc.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

8.6 INDICATOR: PARENT FEEDBACK

In order to assess how well the Center is meeting the needs of parents, their satisfaction is formally assessed at least annually.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A general questionnaire OR
- Brief form for suggestion box
- A written explanation that describes how the feedback is used to consider changes that more fully meet the parents' and children's needs

Example: [APPLE Parent Satisfaction Form](#)

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.



9.0 STANDARD: COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Being involved in the community sets a positive example for the children, stressing the importance of teaching the children the value of giving back through opportunities to share with and work for others. By developing a local presence and forging collaborative partnerships, the Center increases the awareness of local businesses, neighborhood services, and local officials of the impact of early childhood education in the immediate community and beyond.

9.1 INDICATOR: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

It is not about trips into the community, but rather supporting, partnering with, and participating in the community.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Documentation, including photos and dated narratives, that the Center has engaged in two separate community activities during the 12 month period prior to the Portfolio submission, such as
 - Food Drives
 - Fund Drives – Trike-a-thon, Hop-a-thon, etc.
 - Clothing/Gift Drives
 - Walk/run events
 - Team sponsorships
- Letters, social media screenshots, newspaper clippings, if applicable, regarding above mentioned events

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

The verifier will look for evidence within the past two years of plaques, awards, pictures of events that are displayed.

9.2 INDICATOR: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Being involved in the community, brings attention to the business of early learning and the role the Center plays in making the community a better place. A Center's business involvement in local commerce raises awareness about the early learning community in general.



PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- Documentation of membership in a local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, or other business group
- An agenda or other documentation that a representative of the Center spoke at a local business or community group about an early childhood topic within the previous 12 months

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.

9.3 INDICATOR: ADVOCACY

It is a responsibility of those who work with young children to champion the cause of early childhood education in order to advance the issues that support families and improve the lives of all children.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of any of the following from the 12--month period prior to the Portfolio submission date with documentation of submission/participation:

- Letters to legislators, regulators, funding agency, and/or foundations
- Letters to the editor of a local newspaper or industry magazine
- An article submitted to parents, a newspaper, a professional journal, or a newsletter about an early childhood topic
- The agenda, including date and time, of a meeting in which a representative of the Center spoke about an early childhood topic
- Proof of engagement in the political process for early childhood issues
- Participation in informational events and/or research about potential or recent policy changes at local, state, tribal, or national levels that affect the services and resources available for children and their families

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

No on-site evidence is required for this indicator.



10.0 STANDARD: AFTER-CARE PROGRAMS

The Center recognizes the growing physical, intellectual, and social competence of the school-age child. 6- to 12-years old seek opportunities to discover new challenges, form close friendships, and earn independence.

The program offers enriching learning opportunities in a fun environment including before-school and after-school care, back-up or emergency care for school holidays and closings, and exciting summer day camp programs for children up to age 12.

10.1 INDICATOR: PROGRAM OPERATIONS

In addition to applicable policies listed in standards 1 through 9 above, there are special considerations for those Centers that have After-Care programs for school age children.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A description of the program and how families are encouraged to participate
- A schedule of a typical week for School-Age children both part and full day
- A statement of how the program offers academic enrichment, including, but not limited to homework time
- Forms of communication provided to school age parents regarding
 - Activities
 - Child's progress
 - Behavior
 - Homework issues – difficulties, completion of assignments
 - Community resources for school-age children
- An open-door policy that indicates that parents are treated respectfully, encouraged to visit the program, and participate when available, especially on field trips.
- Documentation that activities are planned to involve the children in giving back to the community



ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The verifier will observe homework time, gauging the degree of assistance, supervision, and encouragement offered to the children.
- The verifier will observe the children in outdoor play to determine that there is age-appropriate equipment and materials for the number of children served.
- The verifier will determine if age-appropriate activities are planned to engage the children with suitable equipment and furniture.
- The verifier will observe the interaction between parents and staff during pick up and/or drop off, summer programs, etc.
- The verifier will check that there are no toxics and hazardous articles are inaccessible.
- The verifier will check that attendance is accurately maintained with date and time of arrival and departure.
- The verifier will observe that meals and snacks meet USDA guidelines and that the program has its own space with areas for eating, socializing, homework and enrichment activities available.
- School age children have access to age appropriate resources that stimulate development and learning.

10.2 INDICATOR: RATIOS AND SUPERVISION

Ratios are appropriate for the age group, providing ample supervision while granting children a reasonable degree of independence. Interactions between staff, children, and their families are positive.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

Copies of:

- A policy demonstrating that ratios for groups of children ages 6 and older are between 1:18 and 1:20 and that group size does not exceed 36 children
- A statement that ratios vary according to the age and ability level of the children and according to the type of complexity of the activity.

ON-SITE EVIDENCE

- The verifier will observe if ratios and group size are appropriate for the age and ability level of the school-age children.

END OF STANDARDS MANUAL



ACCREDITATION ASSISTANCE

APPLE Accreditation offers a wide variety of resources to assist you in your accreditation journey.

RESOURCES:

APPLE Support Team:

There is a team of APPLE Accreditation specialists who are here to help you succeed. If you have questions about specific policies, standards, indicators, portfolio, scheduling, or billing, please reach out to the APPLE Support Team. APPLE Support Team – 1.877.634.9874 or applequestions@faccm.org

Technical Assistance:

APPLE Accreditation offers an opportunity to receive an individualized on-site visit anytime before your verification visit to help identify areas where the Center meets APPLE standards and areas that need improvement prior to accreditation. This service is offered for an additional fee. Please inquire by calling 1.877. 634.9874.

Online APPLE Accreditation Courses

APPLE Accreditation has several online courses that help teachers and directors understand the specific requirements of certain standards and best practices. These courses are available online. [Online APPLE Accreditation Courses](#)

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APPLE offers several APPLE Accreditation “Boot Camps” throughout the year. These “Boot Camps” are specifically designed to take the mystery out of accreditation. Our APPLE team will take you through each step of accreditation, clarifying any uncertainties so your school can make the necessary improvements to succeed. Please email info@faccm.org for a current schedule.