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New Mexico FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality
for Public Education Department Preschool Programs (PreK, Special Education, and Title I)

Commitment Statement

New Mexico is committed to creating and sustaining an early learning system that focuses on building high quality, comprehensive, community programs that form a continuum of integrated services. This commitment reflects the goal adopted by the New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council that “every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based upon equitable access to an aligned and high quality early learning system.”

Early childhood, public policy reforms are built upon the belief that families and community must be the platform from which all efforts are launched. We believe that all work must be informed and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico’s families. Although New Mexico has been at the forefront of the movement to create standards within the early childhood system, the state has taken great care to ensure that these standards do not impose a standardization of practice upon individual children, their families, or the communities in which they live. Rather, it is the state’s experience that these standards provide a framework within which programs are able to flourish, implementing unique and appropriate programs that are based on the strengths of each community. This way, community-specific programs are able to reflect the history, culture, language, and traditions that must be preserved and strengthened to support each and every child’s success.

New Mexico is creating an early learning “system of systems” that transform disconnected, siloed programs —that historically have labeled and segregated children because of categorical funding streams—into a coordinated system. This approach focuses on building high-quality, comprehensive, community programs that are able to work together when provided with a common focus. New Mexico’s “system of systems” ensures that each child has equitable access to appropriate services and supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential.

New Mexico’s Early Learning System of Systems					
Ages					
PRENATAL	BIRTH TO ONE	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR TO KINDERGARTEN ENTRY
	Home Visiting				
	IDEA Part C Early Intervention—NM FIT PROGRAM			IDEA Part B EC Special Education	
	Title I				
	Child Care				
Early Head Start				Head Start	
					NM PreK

Commitment Statement

New Mexico's systematic approach acknowledges and respects the uniqueness of each community, each family, and each child and has led to the establishment of the *Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System*. The FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality reflects these *Guiding Principles*.

(The *Guiding Principles* and all FOCUS documents can be found at www.NewMexicoKids.org)

Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System

Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs, that support the full participation of every child, build on these strengths. They do so by promoting a sense of belonging, by supporting positive social relationships, and by enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child.

We believe that . . .

- Every child has unique gifts and abilities that are to be celebrated and nurtured
- The early years hold enormous promise for every child to reach his or her full potential
- Every child learns within the context of relationships and through playful interactions within their environment
- All children and their families deserve equitable access to appropriate services and to supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential

Therefore, we are committed to . . .

- Valuing and embracing all children and their families
- Involving families and communities as partners and decision makers
- Overcoming biases to build trust and establish collaborative partnerships that benefit children, their families, and the professionals who work with them
- Providing choice, flexibility, and continuity of services and supports for families within communities
- Making a variety of services and support available, so all children have access to—and can participate in—opportunities that are both respectful of and responsive to their family experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances
- Advancing advocacy efforts for inclusive practices that build upon unique child, family, and community strengths and are accountable to every child and his/her family

We will . . .

- Promote every New Mexico citizen's understanding of the importance of high-quality, inclusive, early childhood programs and practices
- Support interactions and relationships that foster self-reflection
- Utilize information about the growth, development, and experiences of individual children and families for program and curriculum development and improvement
- Continuously improve services and supports by evaluating current practices and incorporating effective methods, models, and research in our work with children and families
- Promote the establishment of aligned services and supports that build on both the unique assets of each child and that acknowledge the strengths of children's and families' heritage, language, and culture
- Ensure that services and supports are provided by people who reflect the diversity of the community, are well educated, and are well compensated
- Establish an integrated, multi-disciplinary system of professional development, training, and technical assistance that supports the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices that are respectful of—and responsive to—each child and family

What is **FOCUS on young children's learning?**

FOCUS on young children's learning, New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), provides early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools, and resources they need to improve the quality of their program. These quality improvements focus on children's growth, development, and learning—so that each child has an equitable opportunity to be successful when they enter school. This document contains the FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality that provides a framework for publicly funded preschool programs as they strive to make quality improvements. The Essential Elements of Quality also serve as criteria used to determine a program's level of quality—"quality", "high quality", or "exemplary". Together, the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten* and the *FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality* provide:

- Common Early Learning Standards, standardized criteria for a common, authentic, observation documentation curriculum-planning process
- Common Early Learning Program Standards, a standardized process for continuous quality improvement and standardized criteria for a common quality rating and improvement system

The FOCUS framework is also closely aligned with the New Mexico Professional Development System—a standardized, early childhood workforce knowledge and competency framework, with a corresponding progression of credentials, the Common Early Childhood Professional Development Standards.

Just as the *NM Early Learning Guidelines* provide a framework of criteria regarding children's growth, development, and learning that educators rely on to plan curriculum, the *FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality* provides a framework of criteria that program personnel can use to plan quality improvements to their program.

Through FOCUS, the state's Early Learning Standards, Early Learning Program Standards, and Early Childhood Professional Development Standards merge. Altogether, they are designed to ensure that many more children, from birth through age five, have access to dramatically improved early-learning programs, so that they enter school with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful. Through the use of a program improvement and quality rating system, early learning programs will increase their ability to focus on children's learning, improve their practice, and—as a result of that improvement in practice—improve each child's growth, development, and potential with kindergarten readiness in mind.

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Preschool Program Participation Requirements

All New Mexico public education preschool programs (PreK, Special Education 619, and Title I) will participate in the FOCUS TQRIS. The Public Education Department's (PED's) expectation is that programs will continue to be in substantial compliance with the applicable state rules, standards, and federal regulations that govern the program, services provided, and fiscal responsibilities.

Participation in the FOCUS TQRIS requires engaging in a continuous quality improvement process that includes an action plan with specific goals to meet, at a minimum, the "quality" level. Programs will have up to two years to meet the criteria at each of the levels of quality.

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

Essential Element I:

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

A. Full Participation of Each Child

Components:

- Family engagement
- Inclusive practices for children with developmental delays or disabilities
- Culture and language including the support of dual language learners (DLL)
- Promoting social relationships

Definition. Full participation refers to the range of approaches that promote engagement in play, learning, development, and a sense of belonging for each child.

Rationale. Research indicates that human development is the result of an interaction of nature (biological factors) and nurture (experience factors), with culture affecting caregiving practices (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs, that support the full participation of every child, build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child (State of New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department, 2010). In FOCUS, full participation is addressed in four areas: 1) how families are engaged in the development and learning of their children (**family engagement**), how **inclusive practices** are implemented for young children with developmental delays and disabilities, 3) how the cultures and languages of each child, including young DLL are reflected and supported (**culture and language including DLL**), and 4) how focused attention is paid to **promoting social relationships**.

B. Professional Qualifications

Definition. On-going training, professional development, higher education, and teacher licensure ensure that those working with young children have adequate knowledge to provide a developmentally appropriate program that supports each learner.

Rationale. Education and training with specialized, child-focused content are directly linked to the quality of educator practice. Preschool administrators in quality programs possess the training and education necessary to support the implementation of a quality program that is consistent with the program's philosophy and mission. Educators possess the training, professional development, and education to recognize that learning occurs within the context of positive relationships. They plan and provide developmentally appropriate activities with experiences that support the growth, development, and learning of each child—including those of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2011; Center for Law and Social Policy, 2009; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; State of New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department, 2010; Vu, Jeon, & Howes, 2008; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Curby, Ferhat, Edwards, & Chavez, 2012).

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

A. Full Participation of Each Child


1. Family Engagement

Definition: Family engagement is essential for enhancing children’s learning and family well-being. Family engagement occurs when there is an on-going, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children’s early childhood education programs (Halgunseth et al, 2009).

Rationale: Positive family-program connections have been linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and socio-emotional skills across all young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Christenson, 2000; Mantzicopoulos, 2003; McWayne et al., 2004).

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Preschool programs have a family-centered philosophy that guides all aspects of program planning and implementation.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
Preschool program personnel solicit input from families, at a minimum annually. And preschool program personnel make every effort to provide information in the home language of the family.	Preschool program personnel solicit input from families, at a minimum three times a year (including an annual family survey). And preschool program personnel make every effort to provide information in the home language of the family.	Preschool program personnel solicit, document, and address input from families on an ongoing basis and are responsive to cultural, linguistic, and other family characteristics. Program personnel use information from the annual family survey for quality program improvement.
One home visit per year.	→	→
Preschool program administrators must develop and provide to families and staff a current, written Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance Plan following state guidance. This plan must ensure equal access to the program and meet priorities for enrollment established by the state. This document must describe, at a minimum: 1) how families are informed of the availability of the preschool program 2) how children are recruited 3) the priorities for enrollment 4) the application process	→	During the eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance process, concerns and input from the family are solicited, documented, and addressed as part of the process.

<p>5) the selection criteria</p> <p>6) how children are enrolled and dis-enrolled</p> <p>7) how program personnel work with the district's child find policies and procedures</p> <p>8) how children—without existing individualized education programs (IEPs)— are screened and referred to child find.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel document efforts made to provide the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance Plan in the home language of the family.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel provide the majority of the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance Plan in the home language of the family.</p>
<p>Preschool program administrators must develop a current, written Family Engagement Plan that includes appropriate meaningful opportunities to build trusting relationships. Program staff will share a calendar of events with families. Effort will be made to provide this in the home language of the families represented in the program. The Family Engagement Plan must include two family engagement activities in addition to the three family/teacher conferences and one home visit. The plan must include how program personnel will use the children's portfolios as well as the New Mexico PreK parent materials (available at www.newmexicoprek.org) to assist families in supporting their child's learning.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel support families to understand the developmental strengths and needs of their children and in creating strategies and activities to support growth in the context of natural routines and activities, as evidenced by the individual family/teacher summary reports and the home visit form. The Family Engagement Plan must include four family engagement activities in addition to the three family/teacher conferences and one home visit.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p>The Family Engagement Plan must include six family engagement activities in addition to the three family/teacher conferences and one home visit.</p>
<p>Preschool program personnel must develop, and provide to families, a preschool handbook that offers specific information about the program. This document shall contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool program plans • <i>Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System</i> • A statement that describes/defines the program's family engagement approach and value for soliciting, documenting, and addressing family input and commitment 	<p>Preschool program personnel provide resources regarding community services to support family well-being, such as financial literacy, nutrition, parenting classes, literacy, language classes, fatherhood initiative.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel support family well-being by offering opportunities, such as financial literacy, nutrition, parenting classes, literacy, language classes, fatherhood initiative. These supports are flexible, culturally and linguistically relevant, and responsive to family-identified preferences and styles.</p>

<p>to engaging families as an effective way to support each child's full potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding all preschool services provided (including Special Education 619 services) <p>This information shall be disseminated in a brochure or as a section in the program, school, or district handbook. The program staff will make every effort to provide this in the home language of the families represented in the program.</p>		
<p>Preschool program personnel engage families to ensure smooth transitions for children as they move between settings, between levels or grades, or from program to program.</p>		
<p>To facilitate smooth transitions, preschool program staff communicate with early learning program personnel receiving their children in order to share individual assessments and other information.</p> <p>As a child transitions, preschool program personnel solicit and/or share early childhood outcomes with all early learning programs.</p> <p>Preschool program personnel develop and provide to staff written transition policies and procedures that assist families of children moving into the program, exiting the program, and/or transitioning into kindergarten. This does not take the place of the Transition Plan required for children with an IEP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transition policies must reflect the diversity and uniqueness of the children, families, and community in which they reside. • For children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten, the transition policies must include a series of transition activities that take place throughout the year to prepare the child and family for the upcoming changes and facilitate a positive transition to kindergarten. 	<p>There is a transition plan in place for children moving within early learning programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In compliance with applicable federal and state privacy laws and to assist with transitions, preschool personnel provide information to early-learning staff, which may include strengths, areas of growth, medical and educational data. • Teachers, ancillary, and administrators observe children in their current preschool setting. • A liaison with the early-learning teacher is identified and is the contact person for questions or concerns. • Families of children transitioning from Part C to Part B of the IDEA will have an opportunity to visit program options and participate in the decision of where and with whom the child will be placed. • For preschool to kindergarten transitions, family transition activities are provided and kindergarten classrooms are visited. 	<p>There is a strong partnership between the district preschool and community, early-learning staff. The Transition Plan is implemented and monitored by the school administrator for continuous quality improvement.</p> <p>Transition team members provide opportunities for follow-up support as part of the transition process.</p> 

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

A. Full Participation of Each Child

2. Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities

Definition: Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Rationale: Children with disabilities should have access to and experience the same quality preschool classroom program (presumably high quality) as typically developing children (Bailey et al., 1998); become members of the classroom community through full participation in class activities (Schwartz, 1996); and develop positive social relationships with classroom peers and teachers (Guralnick, 1999; Storey, 1993).

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Preschool program personnel understand and commit to inclusive practices that build on each child's culture, language, experiences, and abilities.		
Preschool programs will comply with special education policies, procedures, and requirements regarding inclusive settings and the least restrictive environment.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
For PreK programs: Administrators must ensure the completion of the Special Education Policies and Procedures Plan by the date specified in the calendar of due dates.	Preschool program personnel respect and provide classroom supports for each family's experiences, languages, values, and patterns of interaction.	Preschool program personnel serve as advocates for the student and family to access school and community services and resources.
The program will engage in a self-assessment of the program's support of the least restrictive environment (LRE).	Based on the self-assessment data, the program will develop a continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan to ensure that children with developmental delays and disabilities attend class with same age peers without disabilities with supports and services provided in the classroom setting.	Programs will demonstrate progress toward meeting the identified CQI goals that children with developmental delays and disabilities attend and fully participate in class with same age peers without disabilities with supports and services provided in the classroom setting.
The majority of children with developmental delays and disabilities will attend class for the majority of the day with same age peers without disabilities with supports and services provided in the classroom setting (see LRE guidelines).		
Preschool program integrates ancillary services (e.g., occupational, speech/language, and/or physical therapy) within regular program activities	Preschool program staff works collaboratively with families and the ancillary service provider(s) to develop a plan for strategies and modifications	Preschool program staff, families, and ancillary service provider(s) have regularly scheduled meeting times to review progress and update or

and routines to the maximum extent appropriate as indicated in the child's IEP.	that support full participation of each child in activities and daily routines.	revise strategies and modifications needed to support the ongoing full participation of each child in activities and daily routines.
<p>Preschool program personnel must modify the indoor and outdoor physical and learning environments (soliciting support from facilities department) to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities and developmental delays, with supports from appropriate service providers, as indicated for the child with an IEP.</p> <p>All indoor and outdoor facilities must be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.</p>	Preschool program develops a plan (CQI) and budget for the purchase of equipment and materials to provide access for all students based on universal design concepts.	The preschool program incorporates a universal design for learning (UDL) approach for the indoor and outdoor environment that supports all preschool children.
<p>Preschool program staff must complete training specific to inclusionary practices. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <p><i>The Full Participation of Each Child—Part 1</i></p>	<p>The preschool program has a robust system to support inclusionary practices, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing training opportunities intentionally designed to support the unique needs of preschool educators • Access to reference articles and books • Time for reflection to review and support inclusionary practices • The opportunity to reduce class size to support individual needs of children <p>—————→</p> <p><i>The Full Participation of Each Child—Part 2</i></p>	The program staff is experienced and well trained in best practices of special education and early childhood education and how to support the full participation of each child.
<p>Children with special/behavioral needs must not be dismissed from any public school preschool program solely because of their special/behavioral needs unless:</p> <p>a) the teacher has already organized the environment, interactions, and curriculum to minimize the likelihood of challenging behaviors</p>	<p>Preschool program practices demonstrate that staff recognize and understand differences in children such as temperament, preferences, development, and interaction. Program administrators and teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have developed a strong relationship with 	The program provides systematic, ongoing, staff training on areas of developmental delays and disabilities, including positive behavioral supports.

<p>b) the child has been evaluated by the district child find personnel, and an IEP is developed that specifies placement in another setting, or b) the child's current IEP is amended to specify placement in another setting.</p> <p>Children may not be expelled from the preschool program without due process, which includes a Functional Behavior Assessment and a Behavior Intervention Plan with specific supports (see the <i>Policy Statement On Expulsion And Suspension Policies In Early Childhood Settings</i>)</p>	<p>the family and have a reciprocal process for sharing strategies to support the child in the classroom and at home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have highly trained resource personnel and know how to access additional resources 	
<p>Preschool program personnel encourage the full participation of family members, multi-disciplinary professionals, and other early learning educators, to develop or update the IEP for each child with special needs, consistent with federal and state regulations.</p>	<p>The preschool program supports staff in the IEP process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time is scheduled for staff to observe each child at home and/or other settings where the child participates (e.g., childcare, community recreation program). • Time is allocated to meet with families to develop a shared understanding of how best to support their child's full participation. 	<p>Preschool personnel review child data and research techniques and strategies to support the child's learning needs prior to the IEP meeting.</p> <p>Preschool personnel provide information on possible supports for children, such as assistive technology and other specialized techniques.</p>
<p>Preschool program classrooms must provide inclusive settings for children with developmental delays and disabilities, based on the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).</p> <p>Children with an IEP for speech services only may be placed in a PreK-funded classroom without cost allocation. In collaboration with the school district's special education department, the program must show, through clear cost allocation methods, how special education funds are used to support the full participation of children with other exceptionalities.</p>	<p>Children with IEPs for speech services only will attend class with their same age peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each preschool teacher is knowledgeable of best practices related to each child's speech goals. 	<p>The speech and language pathologist (SLP) and teacher have a regularly scheduled meeting time to develop lessons to support all children with speech goals.</p>
<p>Preschool programs integrate children with disabilities and developmental delays into groups</p>	<p>Special education and preschool program personnel work together, and solicit family input,</p>	<p>The program promotes and expands inclusive practices in school and in the community:</p>

of same age peers, with supports from appropriate service providers.	<p>to provide support to children in inclusive settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancillary, special education, and preschool personnel meet to discuss classroom-based strategies to assist children with IEPs and to best ensure the full participation of each child. • Strategies are implemented and tracked for success. • Special education (SE) staff mentor general education preschool staff in each child's IEP goals and SE regulations. • SE staff mentor general education preschool staff in the SE federal and state IDEA requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to community programs such as sports teams, arts, dance, library, and those that are faith-based • Training and advocacy for inclusionary practices • A continuum of inclusive services • Liaisons from each program <p>The program informs families of community opportunities that foster the full participation of their child.</p>
Depending on the group of children served and the nature and severity of their disabilities, the adult-to-child ratio and/or the group size may be reduced to meet the needs of the child(ren).	<p>The program works with district-level personnel to braid funding to support all children's learning. This allows for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility with class sizes based on student need • Additional staffing based on student need • Training and support for staff working with children with disabilities. 	<p>The program serves as a model for appropriate adult-to-child ratio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All decisions are based on student need • There is opportunity to review the child's IEP for change in adult-to-child ratio, based on student's maturation/progress • Staff has training and experience in working with students with delays/ disabilities.

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

A. Full Participation of Each Child

3. Culture and Language, Including the Support of Dual Language Learners

Definition: Culture refers to the thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group (The National Center for Cultural Competence). Dual language learners (DLLs) are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center).

Rationale: Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. (State of New Mexico, Children, Youth, and Families Department, 2010). In particular, children whose home language is other than English have many similarities to any other child. Yet, their development may also be different in many ways. Information about how to support DLLs is essential for teachers to know, so that they can provide the best learning opportunities to ensure their students' future successes in school and in life. Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging (McCabe et al, 2013).

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Preschool program personnel and administration are culturally and linguistically responsive.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
Preschool program administrators recruit culturally-diverse personnel from both genders; diversity of personnel is consistent with the cultural diversity of the community and the families the program serves. For programs that serve children who speak languages other than English, administrators make every effort to recruit teachers who have a bilingual or TESOL license endorsement.	Preschool programs make every effort to have at least <u>one adult</u> who is able to interact with families in their home language.	Preschool programs make every effort to have at least <u>two adults</u> who are able to interact with families in their home language.
A process is in place to request translators and interpreters for IEP and other meetings, including family/teacher conferences and home visits.	→	→
Preschool program personnel respect each child's language and demonstrate knowledge and skill related to second language acquisition and dual language learning.	→	Preschool programs have at least one adult in the classroom who speaks the child's home language, or they have access to one or more staff who can communicate in the child's home language.

<p>The program ensures that materials and visuals in the classroom reflect the culture(s) and language(s) of the children and families enrolled in the program.</p>	<p>Preschool programs provide information for families in the family's home language.</p> <p>Preschool program personnel actively learn about, acknowledge and respect differing beliefs, traditions of child rearing and development, wellness and disability, and family systems.</p>	<p>The classroom and preschool program staff offer a variety of meaningful, culturally-sensitive opportunities for families to participate in classroom and school activities.</p> <p>Staff collaborates with families to identify and incorporate content that reflects the cultures and traditions of the children and families.</p>
<p>The lesson plan demonstrates evidence of intentionally fostering relationships of children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel are knowledgeable about and show evidence in their lesson plans and activities that they are fostering the development and integration of children's characteristics, assets, and the needs of the community in the classroom.</p>	<p>Preschool program personnel are knowledgeable about each child's culture(s) and language(s). Evidence of this knowledge is reflected in lesson plans and activities.</p>



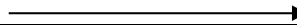
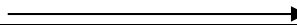
FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

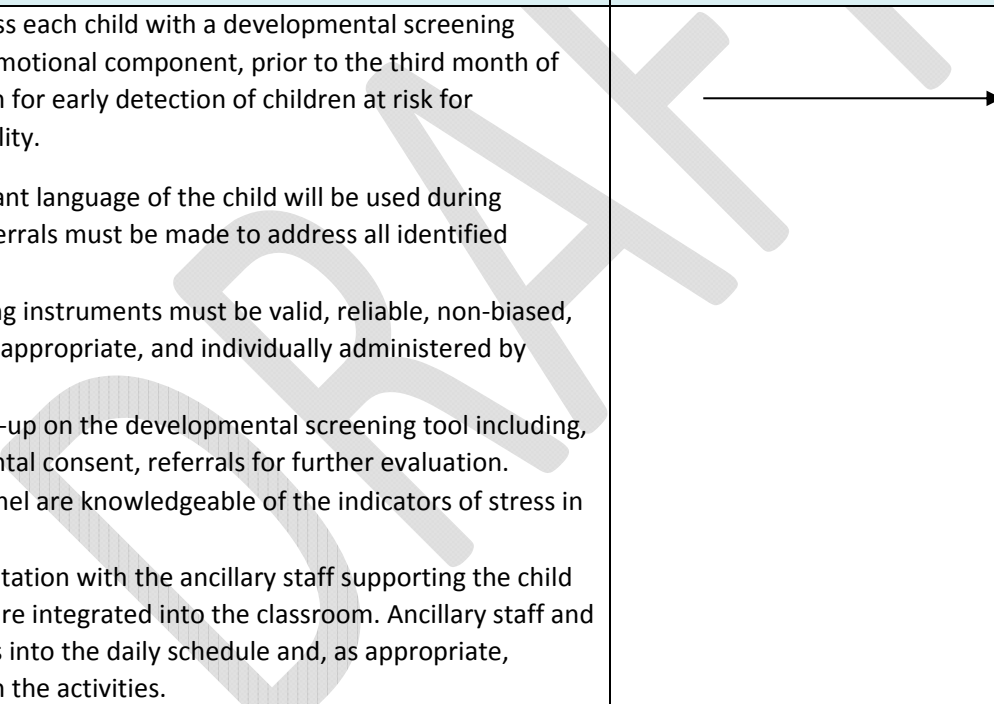
A. Full Participation of Each Child

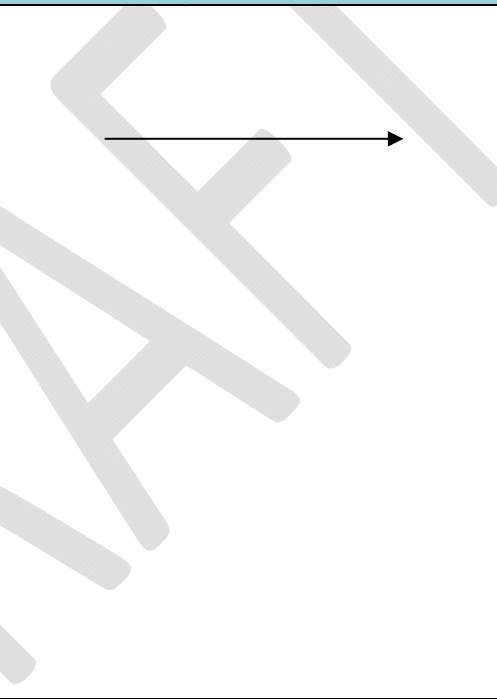

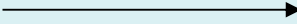
4. Promoting Social Relationships

Definition: Social skills that have been identified as essential for school success include: getting along with others, following directions, identifying and regulating one's emotions and behavior, thinking of appropriate solutions to conflict, persisting on tasks, engaging in social conversation and cooperative play, correctly interpreting other's behaviors and emotions, and feeling good about oneself and others (Fox & Smith, 2007).

Rationale: Research has established a compelling link between social emotional development and school success (Raver, 2002; Smith, 2006).

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Assessment of children's educational needs is an ongoing process of collecting information from multiple sources, using varied approaches, and should be used to plan for—and modify—program curricula as well as to address specific needs of individual children.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
<p>The classroom staff demonstrate positive interactions and guidance with children to</p> <p>a) develop their self-esteem by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively listening to children, refraining from judgmental statements, responding to children's ideas, and recognizing children's efforts <p>b) encourage autonomy by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing children with opportunities to make choices, allowing children time to respond or complete task independently, creating opportunities for decision making, problem solving, and working together, and teaching children strategies for self-regulating and/or self-monitoring behaviors; and <p>c) promote children's individualized emotional regulation by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> helping children recognize emotional cues, helping children identify appropriate choices and how to solve problems. 		
The program provides ongoing training for teachers on positive behavior supports.		
<p>Preschool programs serving children with social emotional or behavioral needs will be supported by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> input solicited from the family 	Preschool program practices demonstrate that staff recognize and understand differences in children	<p>The program provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher resources on positive

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson plans modified to support the child’s behavioral needs • support accessed from the ancillary service providers in implementing additional strategies, including a Functional Behavior Assessment and a Formal Behavior Plan, if necessary. 	<p>such as temperament, preferences, development, and interaction. Program administrators have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed a strong relationship with the family • a reciprocal process for developing strategies to support the child in the classroom and at home • highly trained resource personnel and know how to access additional resources 	<p>behavior supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource library for families on positive behavior supports in the home environment
<p>Preschool program staff must assess each child with a developmental screening instrument that includes a social-emotional component, prior to the third month of attendance. Programs must screen for early detection of children at risk for developmental delay and/or disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, the dominant language of the child will be used during screening. Appropriate referrals must be made to address all identified concerns. • All developmental screening instruments must be valid, reliable, non-biased, linguistically and culturally appropriate, and individually administered by trained personnel. • There is evidence of follow-up on the developmental screening tool including, if necessary and with parental consent, referrals for further evaluation. • Preschool program personnel are knowledgeable of the indicators of stress in young children. • In collaboration and consultation with the ancillary staff supporting the child and the family, strategies are integrated into the classroom. Ancillary staff and educators embed the goals into the daily schedule and, as appropriate, incorporate typical peers in the activities. • Preschool programs must inform families of screening and observational assessment results no later than the next scheduled family-teacher conference. 		<p>Based on screening results, there is evidence that the child receives targeted intervention (Response to Intervention process). Follow up occurs in 4–6 week cycles.</p> <p>The program creates a data portfolio for each child that documents assessment results using appropriate identified methods. The program monitors progression of developmental progress.</p>

Foundations of Quality		
A. Full Participation of Each Child		
5. Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Developmental Screenings		
QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Assessment of children’s educational needs is an ongoing process of collecting information from multiple sources using varied approaches and should be used to plan for and modify program curricula and to address specific needs of individual children.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
<p>Preschool program staff must assess each child with a developmental screening instrument (that includes a social-emotional component) prior to the third month of attendance. (The program should ensure that a child is not rescreened if a screening has taken place within the last 12 months and the documentation is available to the preschool program.) Programs must screen for early detection of children at risk for developmental delay and/or disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When possible, the dominant language of the child will be used during screening. Appropriate referrals must be made to address all identified concerns. All developmental screening instruments must be valid, reliable, non-biased, linguistically and culturally appropriate, and individually administered by trained personnel. Preschool programs must inform families of screening and observational assessment results no later than the next scheduled family-teacher conference. Refer to child find team for further support, if necessary. 		<p>Based on screening results, there is evidence that the child receives targeted intervention (Response to Intervention process). Follow up occurs in 4–6 week cycles.</p> <p>The program creates a data portfolio for each child that documents assessment results using appropriate identified methods. The program monitors progression of developmental progress.</p>
<p>Preschool programs funded by the PED must ensure that the following assessments are administered by a school health professional for each child, prior to the beginning of preschool or within the first three months of attendance. The school health professional must either conduct the assessments or arrange for another health provider to conduct the assessments on site. Families who choose to have their child assessed by their private provider must present evidence of such to the school. These</p>		

<p>assessments are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a physical examination - current immunizations - a vision screening - a hearing screening - a dental screening 		
<p>All appropriate local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to health, safety, and nutrition for young children in out-of-home care are met—including, but not limited to—buildings and grounds, equipment, sanitation, water quality, fire protection, storage and handling of food.</p> <p>Preschool programs funded by the PED must comply with the Standards for Excellence 6.29.1 NMAC.</p> <p>Preschool program facilities must be smoke-free, alcohol-free, and free of illegal substances.</p>	<p>At each school site, in addition to the health care professional, at least one preschool staff person will be trained in first aid and CPR.</p>	
<p>Preschool programs must participate in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Care Food Program or School Lunch Program and must organize their schedule to meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs funded for 450 hours must provide at least one meal per day that meets USDA requirements. • Programs funded for 900 hours (full-/extended-day pilot) must provide at least two meals per day, both meeting USDA requirements. <p>All personnel must be knowledgeable about each child’s special nutritional needs (allergies, medical) and physician requests for dietary restrictions.</p>	<p>Preschool programs encourage healthful eating habits, through the provision of nutritious and culturally-relevant foods, eaten in a positive, social atmosphere such as family-style dining. The program ensures that family-style dining is in compliance with USDA requirements.</p>	<p>Family-style dining takes place in the classroom. The program ensures that family-style dining is in compliance with USDA requirements.</p>

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

B. Professional Qualifications

1. Preschool Administrator

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Administrator Credentials		
Administrators must have early childhood knowledge and experience or have on-site administrative personnel with early childhood knowledge and experience. Administrators will support quality early childhood practices.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
Preschool program administrators must hold the New Mexico education administration, PreK–12 license, the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade, or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: PreK through grade three, or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through PreK.	→	→
Training		
Preschool program administrators ensure that administrative tasks are successfully accomplished and the program complies with all contractual obligations.		
Preschool program administrators must ensure that all preschool staff successfully complete the required FOCUS trainings.	→	→
Preschool Administrator must have successfully completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two FOCUS administrator meetings Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (year 1) and at least once every three years thereafter The full participation of each child—Part 1 	Preschool Administrator must have successfully completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The full participation of each child—Part 2 Leadership Academy I 	Preschool Administrator must have successfully completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Academy II

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY



B. Professional Qualifications

2. Educator

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Educator Credentials		
Professional personnel are qualified to work with young children and families by education, training, and experience.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
<p><u>Teachers</u> In each preschool classroom, a teacher must have either the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: PreK through grade three, or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through PreK. If the teacher does not hold one of these early childhood teacher licenses, but does hold a K–8 elementary license and/or a special education license, he/she must provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of six college credits annually toward one of the two early childhood licenses. Every preschool classroom must be staffed at all times by a licensed teacher.</p> <p><u>For Special Education</u> Special education teachers must meet the above licensing requirements or hold a highly qualified special education PreK–12 license.</p>	<p><u>For Special Education</u> Special education teachers must provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of six college credits annually toward one of the three early childhood licenses.</p>	<p><u>For Special Education</u> Special education teachers must have the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: PreK through grade three, or the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through PreK.</p>

<p><u>Educational Assistants (EA)</u> In each PreK and Title I program classroom with an EA, that teacher must have an associate of arts (AA) degree in early childhood education and hold the EA license from the PED. Any EA who does not currently possess an AA in early childhood education must provide evidence of completion of a minimum of six college credit hours towards the degree annually.</p> <p><u>For Special Education</u> EAs working with students with special needs must, at a minimum, have a Level III license and must successfully pass the Para-Educator Learning Network assessment.</p>	<p>→</p> <p><u>For Special Education</u> EAs must have a Level III license and must provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of six college credits annually toward an early childhood education degree.</p>	<p>→</p> <p><u>For Special Education</u> EAs must have, at a minimum, an AA degree in early childhood education.</p>
<p>Preschool program personnel must all have a current professional development plan (PDP) with specific professional goals and timelines related to the current FOCUS criteria. Personnel must document ongoing activities to increase knowledge, specialization, and qualifications in early childhood education, individualization, and family support. PDPs must include specific coursework that must be entered into the appropriate database upon successful course completion. Timelines will follow the established PED teacher evaluation process.</p>	<p>→</p>	<p>→</p>
<p>Preschool program teachers and educational assistants, including approved long-term substitutes, must attend all required FOCUS trainings.</p>	<p>→</p>	<p>→</p>

Preschool program personnel are compensated with salaries and benefits that are comparable with other professional positions that have similar qualifications and responsibilities in the school district or charter school.		
Preschool program teachers and EAs must be employees of the program/district/charter school. If a long-term substitute teacher or EA must be hired, the program/district/charter/Regional Education Cooperative (REC) must inform the PED, within 10 days of the placement. The program must have a plan in place for how the FOCUS criteria will be maintained during this transition.	→	→
Preschool program personnel benefits must include time for planning and classroom preparation and for release time, at least comparable to kindergarten teachers, in compliance with teacher union contracts, if applicable.	→	→
Training		
Each program implements research-based early childhood education practices based upon child, family, and community needs and at no cost to the child or families. To support the application of these practices, the state provides training opportunities for preschool program staff. Program staff are required to attend these trainings.		
Assessment of children's educational needs is an ongoing process of collecting information from multiple sources using varied approaches and should be used to plan for, and modify, program curricula and to address the specific needs of individual children.		
Teachers and EAs must have successfully completed: Intentional teaching (year 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines - New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process Intentional teaching (year 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Powerful Interactions Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales and The full participation of each child—Part 1	Teachers and Educational Assistants must have successfully completed: → The full participation of each child—Part 2	→

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY		
B. Professional Qualifications		
3. Ratios and Group Size		
QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Staff: Child Ratios and Group Size		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
<p>Preschool program adult-child ratio must be no greater than 1:10 with one lead teacher and one educational assistant, if the group size is 11 or more. Depending on the group of children served and the nature and severity of the disabilities of children, the adult-to-child ratio might be smaller.</p> <p><u>Special Education:</u> The ratio cannot be greater than 1:4.</p> <p>Group size must never exceed 20 children.</p>		

Focus Essential Elements of Quality

Essential Element II:

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN’S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

A. Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process

Definition. New Mexico has created a comprehensive system for utilizing the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten* as the framework and criteria for an authentic assessment process and curriculum planning.

Rationale. Research and best practice in early childhood care and education emphasize the importance of carefully observing and assessing children within the context of their daily activities—and using those observations for curriculum planning and the on-going monitoring of each child’s growth, development, and learning. These criteria-based observations are the best way to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum that acknowledges each child’s culture, language, and ability (Gao & Grisham-Brown , 2011; NAEYC, 2003; New Mexico PreK, 2012; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2010; RAND Corporation, 2012).

B. Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

Definition. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a proven strategy to increase and sustain efforts to improve a program’s quality. CQI is considered to be an appropriate approach for a TQRIS system because it provides a clear framework for programs that are moving from one level of quality to the next. CQI uses data to inform and guide a program’s efforts to improve its quality, thereby influencing positive outcomes for children. CQI is a four-step cycle:

1. PLAN—establishing a plan of action by identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and needs
2. DO—implementing the plan of action and making programmatic changes
3. STUDY—reflecting on the actions taken and learning from what has been done
4. ACT—implementing successful changes into daily practice and determining what needs to be done next

Continuous Quality Improvement relies on an organizational culture that is proactive, supports continuous learning, and is firmly grounded in the overall *mission, vision, and values* of a program. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of everyone involved with the program—administrators, educators, board members, families, and FOCUS quality partners.

Rationale. The CQI process is an essential element of FOCUS because it focuses on 1) learning what is working well to promote each child’s growth, development and learning; 2) systematically identifies programmatic challenges; and 3) targets strategies to maintain and build upon successes. In FOCUS, program leadership guides the PLAN—DO—STUDY—ACT CQI cycle for the program as a whole that is focused on these previously identified areas for quality improvement:

- Families' engagement
- Inclusive practices for children with developmental delays and disabilities
- Culture and language including the support of dual language learners
- Promoting social relationships
- Health, safety, nutrition, and developmental screenings
- Professional qualifications
- Ratios and group size
- Intentional teaching: Authentic observation documentation and curriculum planning

The FOCUS CQI process of continuous quality improvement is more than a plan on paper, it is a culture of change created, embraced, and guided by a collective vision and willingness to work on moving forward with actions that benefit children, their families, and the program as a whole (Deming, 2000; Miller, 2014; Wiggins & Mathias, 2013).

The FOCUS CQI process is not rated for quality designation purposes. However, programs participating in FOCUS are required to engage in this process.

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN’S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

A. Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process

QUALITY	HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
Assessment of children’s educational needs is an ongoing process of collecting information from multiple sources using varied approaches and should be used to plan for and modify program curricula and to address specific needs of individual children.		
MUST MEET PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS PLUS:	MUST MEET QUALITY PLUS:	MUST MEET HIGH QUALITY PLUS:
Preschool programs must use The New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines, Essential Indicators with Rubrics as an ongoing assessment of children’s progress and as a primary source of information for individualized lesson planning.	→	→
Preschool programs must use observational assessments that are a continuous, dynamic process in which results are used to inform instruction and modify curricula for all children. Assessment results may also be used by the transdisciplinary team, which includes family members, to develop the child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).	→	→
Preschool program personnel must implement classroom-based services with fidelity to New Mexico’s Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Planning Process (AODCPP) available at www.NewMexicoPreK.org . Compliance with all participation and program data reporting are required for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AODCPP • Exclusive use of the New Mexico Pre K Observational Assessment tools • Use of the New Mexico PreK lesson plan form 	→	→
In preschool programs, the child observational assessment process includes the following: Using the New Mexico Early Learning (EI) Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten. For each child, educators must complete the NM Quick Look Recording Sheets and report data for 12 essential indicators (EIs):	→	→

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2 (Displays fine motor control) • 5.1 (Listens with understanding) • 5.3 (Displays phonological awareness) • 7.1 (Shows interest in books) • 7.4 (Understands print concepts) • 9.2 (Uses numbers and counting) • 10.1 (Recognizes shapes) • 12.1 (Sorts and classifies) • 14.3 (Makes predictions) • 19.1 (Cares for personal and group possessions) • 23.2 (Shows interest in learning new things) • 24.2 (Develops independence) 		
Collect samples of children's creative work to support EI 13.1 (Communicates through creative activities).	→	→
Complete portfolio documentation for EI 8.3 (Early stages of writing), EI 11.3 (Measurement), and EI 7.2 (Comprehension of stories read aloud) using the NM Portfolio Collection Forms specifically designed for these EIs.	→	→
Embed EIs 6.1 (Converses in home language), 20.1 (Plays with others), 17.4 (Expresses cultural influences), 20.2 (Problem solving), 25.3 (Role plays), and 27.1 (Focuses and completes tasks) in portfolio documentation.	→	→
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 450 hour programs, educators must complete the child observational assessment and report data within 45 calendar days of enrollment and within two weeks prior to that last day of the child's attendance. • For 900 hour programs, educators must complete the child observational assessment and report data within 45 calendar days of enrollment, by the first Friday in February, and within two weeks prior to the last day of the child's attendance. • For preschool special education, within the first 30 days that the child enters the program, their first ECO must be completed. The second ECO must be completed by end of year. 	→	→
A family/educator conference must be held after each of the designated reporting periods and must use the family/teacher summary report to share information gathered on the NM Quick Look Recording sheets and the completed NM Portfolio Collection forms. Samples of children's creative work must be shared to satisfy EI 13.1.	→	→

After each designated reporting period, entries are made for all children into the web-based data collection system. Data entered includes: rubric ratings from completed NM Quick Look Recording Sheets, Portfolio Collection forms, EI 8.3 (Early stages of writing), EI 11.3 (Measurement), EI 14.1 (Uses senses to observe and explore), and EI 7.2 (Comprehension of stories read aloud).	→	→
Use information from multiple sources, such as assessments, on-going child observations, family input, and (with written consent) a child's ECO summary form and IEP document to complete the NM Weekly Lesson Plan form or approved alternate lesson plan form (for special education preschool programs only).	→	→
Make each week's lesson plan available for families by posting in the classroom every Monday (or first day of the program week).	→	→
Formally reflect on classroom practices weekly by completing the reflection section of the NM Weekly Lesson Plan form or approved alternate lesson plan form. Incorporate reflections into lesson plans to document planned changes in practices and/or the physical environment.	→	→
Educators must have weekly planning time to review child assessment information and for curriculum planning.	→	→

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN’S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

B. Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

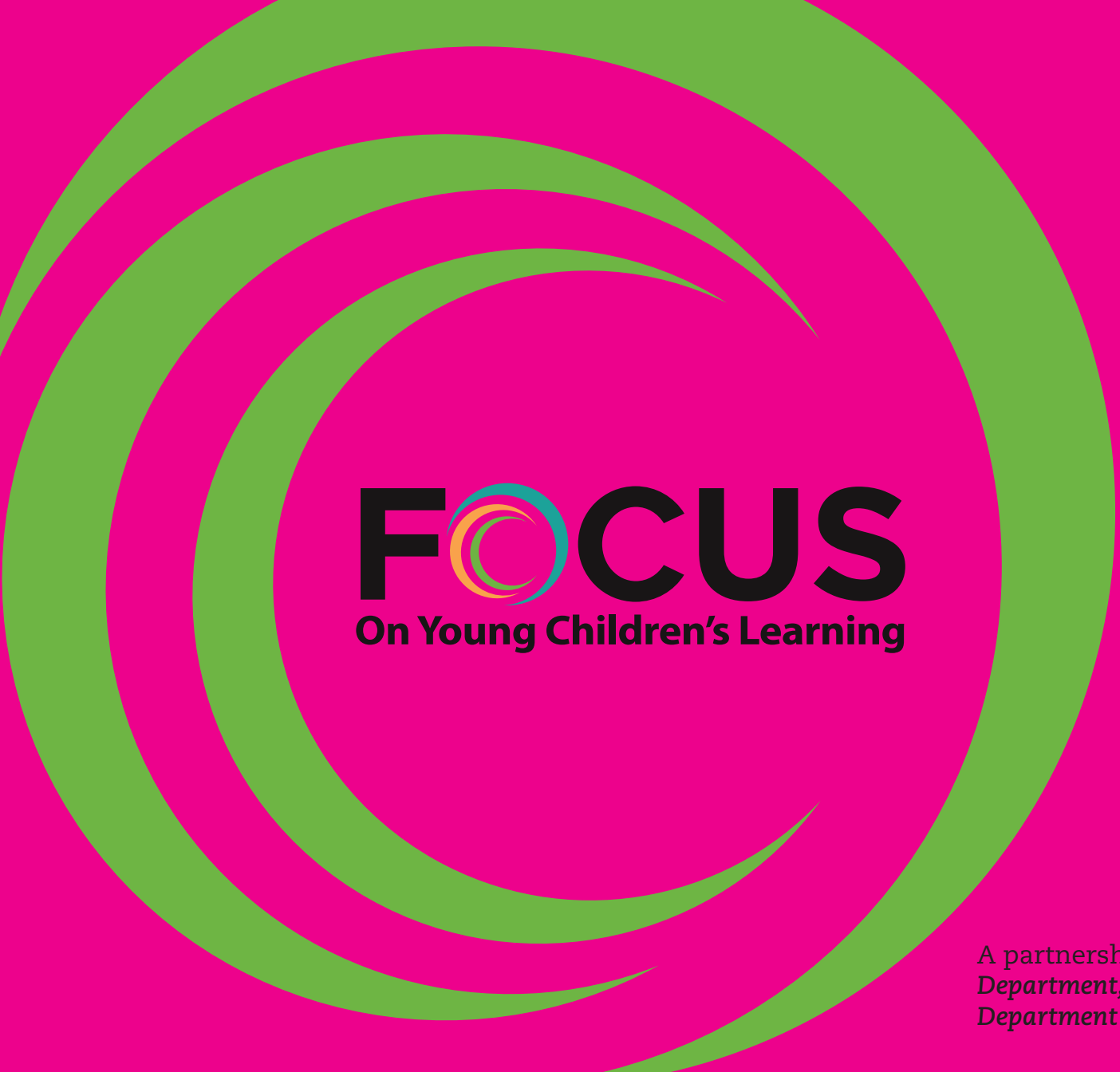
QUALITY		HIGH QUALITY	EXEMPLARY
PLAN	Use the program’s mission and vision statements to guide the CQI process.	—————→	—————→
	Use the CQI Strengths and Needs survey for families and educators as a source of evidence for planning.	—————→	—————→ Include community partners in the survey process.
	Gather information and, together as a team, review results to identify: 1. Program strengths in all FOCUS areas for quality improvement 2. At least three areas of program quality needing attention/improvement	—————→	—————→
	Identify one task for <u>three</u> FOCUS areas for quality improvement that will strengthen the program.	Identify one task for <u>five</u> FOCUS areas for quality improvement that will strengthen the program.	Identify one task for all <u>eight</u> FOCUS areas for quality improvement that will strengthen the program.
		Use at least one additional source of evidence to gather information in all classrooms. Together with the classroom team, identify one task for one FOCUS area for quality improvement for each of the classrooms.	Use at least two different sources of evidence to gather information in all classrooms. Together with the classroom team, identify one task for two areas for quality improvement for each of the classrooms. Over a period of three years, each classroom must have addressed all areas for quality improvement.
	Identify how the program will measure success.	—————→	—————→
	Document the Program Improvement Plan.		
Do	Coordinate the Program Improvement Plan with each individual’s PDP as appropriate.	—————→	—————→
	Work as a team and individually on action plans.	—————→	—————→

	Meet regularly as a team to reflect, track, and document action plan progress.	_____→	_____→
	Build staff knowledge and capacity.	_____→	_____→
	Measure program success.	_____→	_____→
STUDY	As a team, review data, share, and document what is working, what has been successful, and what needs improving.	_____→	_____→
	Celebrate successes.	_____→	_____→
	Submit quarterly documentation of progress.	_____→	_____→
ACT	Integrate successful practice.	_____→	_____→
	Determine what more needs to be learned and do that.	_____→	_____→
	Consider revisions, modifications, and additions to plan.	_____→	_____→

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FOCUS

On Young Children's Learning

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