2013 STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL OF PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Foreword and formatting updated September 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD i

I. APPLICABILITY 1
II. APPROVAL PROCESS 2
III. STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS 6

Structural Standards

Standard One: Physical Facilities 6

Standard Two: Health, Safety and Nutrition 9

Standard Three: Enrollment and Staffing..... 11

Standard Four: Staff Qualifications and Ongoing Professional Development.....13

Standard Five: Administration 17

Early Learning and Development Standards

Standard Six: Curriculum 22

Standard Seven: Child Assessment 27

Standard Eight: Family Engagement 30

IV. STATE LAW (RIGL 16-48) RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN 32

Rhode Island Department of Education
2013 STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL
OF PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

FORWARD ***September 2014***

In 1968, by act of the Rhode Island General Assembly, nursery schools and kindergartens were endorsed as the first formal steps in the education of young children. This act was in part a reaction to rising interest across the nation in planned educational opportunities for preschoolers. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) was authorized to plan for the approval of existing "nursery schools" and to assume leadership for establishing standards for new childcare facilities. In this way, by legislative act (Chapter 48 of Title 16 of the General Laws of Rhode Island), the Commissioner of Education was given responsibility for setting standards and planning approval procedures for programs serving children ages three to six.

The original legislative intent was to protect and promote the health, education, safety and welfare of children attending Rhode Island preschool programs. The establishment of statewide standards for approval was deemed essential to ensure that all children enrolled in preschool settings would enjoy the benefits of a safe and healthy learning environment.

In 2008, the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education aimed to expand its commitment to supporting high quality early childhood education by strengthening applicable regulations and standards., RIDE in partnership with other key stakeholders, established a two-tiered approval system for early care and education. Programs that demonstrated *foundational program quality* met the basic health and safety standards required for DCYF licensing or BEP/Independent school approval by RIDE. These standards are regulatory and mandatory for programs that wish to operate an early childhood education program in Rhode Island.

Programs that demonstrated *comprehensive program quality* met all the foundational requirements for DCYF licensing/BEP compliance *and* voluntarily pursued and were granted approval by RIDE as a Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) program. RIDE CECE standards encompassed rigorous expectations for program quality. The 2008 RIDE standards, promulgated in 2010, incorporated input from key stakeholders, national organizations and resources, and state and federal agencies.

In 2012, RIDE began work with the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families, the RI Department of Human Services and other partners in a process of standards revision along the full continuum of regulations/standards used to assess programs. DCYF licensing regulations, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System standards (BrightStars), and the 2010 RIDE CECE program standards were revised and aligned to create a logical pathway for continuous program improvement. As programs make improvements they are able to move up the "quality continuum," which begins at DCYF licensing, progresses through the 1-5 Star BrightStars rating process, and culminates in RIDE CECE Approval.

RIDE CECE standards represent the highest level of quality in the continuum for preschool and kindergarten classrooms. RIDE's 2013 Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Standards for Approval of Preschool and Kindergarten Programs reflect the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's commitment to central elements of high quality early childhood education including the understanding that:

- *In the early childhood years, children develop the foundation upon which subsequent development in all domains of learning is built. These years are crucial to a child's healthy growth and development.*

- *Disparities in what children know, understand and are able to do are evident before they enter school and are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances. Participation in high-quality early childhood education programs helps close these gaps in achievement.*

- *Early childhood education programs that implement research-based program standards of quality have been shown to result in positive educational, social, and economic outcomes for both children and society.*

The 2013 CECE Standards were developed by a team of Rhode Island stakeholders using the 2010 Standards as a core reference. The revision process included public feedback from community forums and workgroups, requirements and/or recommendations of national organizations and/or nationally recognized resources, and requirements and/or standards of state and federal agencies including:

- Rhode Island Program Standards Alignment: Public Forums and Focus Group Summary Report, 2012
- Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards, 2003 and 2012 Draft Revised Standards
- Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards Professional Development Modules.
- Common Core State Standards for Math
- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy
- Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Basic Education Program Regulations, 2009
- Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families Child Care Center Regulations for Licensure, 2012 Draft Revised Standards

Early learning programs that meet RIDE's 2013 CECE standards for approval:

Engage highly qualified teachers

Understand that children learn through play and social interactions

Create nurturing and thoughtfully prepared classroom environments

Use carefully designed curriculum and valid and reliable child assessment tools aligned with standards for children

Engage families as partners

Meet the needs of all children

Commit to school readiness and better educational and life outcomes for children

Know that learning begins at birth*

- Rhode Island Quality Rating and Improvement System: BrightStars Child Care Center and Preschool Standards and Criteria Framework, 2012 Draft Revised Standards
- Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, 2011
- Public Playground Safety Handbook: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2010
- Rhode Island Quality Rating and Improvement System: BrightStars Family Child Care Standards and Criteria Framework, 2012 Draft Revised Standards
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, 2008
- Division of Early Childhood Recommended Practices, 2005
- CLASS: Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual Pre-K, 2008
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R)
- Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics

* High quality early learning programs have rigorous quality expectations for all classrooms, including those that serve infants and toddlers. While CECE classroom-level standards apply specifically to preschool and kindergarten classrooms, high-quality programs will include *all* children in program-level policies, including the curriculum framework and child assessment plan.

DCYF, BrightStars and RIDE alignment work has been a central component of Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant. "**Exceed**" is the new name for the cross departmental initiative that implements the work of the grant. Families, programs, professionals and the public can access information about Rhode Island's early learning commitment and search for high quality ECE programs at https://exceed.ri.gov.

I. APPLICABILITY

Pursuant to state law (RIGL 16-48), these standards shall apply to early childhood education programs enrolling children between the ages of three (3) and six (6) years of age in order to ensure developmentally appropriate early development and learning experiences based on Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards. These standards shall also pertain to kindergarten classrooms operating in private programs in which kindergarten is the terminal grade.

At the time of application, applicants must meet one of following **core levels of approval**:

- A community-based program licensed by the State of Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families;
- A public school approved through BEP Regulations and/or Special Education Regulations;
- A private school (PK-12) approved through the Rhode Island Department of Education's RIDE Private School standards; OR
- A special education school approved through the Rhode Island Department of Education's RIDE Special Education School standards and Special Education Regulations.

Additionally, the program must provide evidence that it has also submitted an application to the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System within one year of submitting an application for Comprehensive Early Childhood Program approval.
Application to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education pursuant to these standards represents the program's desire to seek voluntary approval as a Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program.
When a program is subject to a governmental rule or regulation that exceeds the expectation outlined in one of the standards contained herein, that rule or regulation takes precedence. When a governmental rule or regulation differs in other ways or sets a lower threshold of performance, these standards take precedence.

To be eligible for approval under these standards, the program shall operate a minimum of 13.75 hours per week with compliance with these standards as follows:

- Programs that operate double sessions: Separate morning and afternoon sessions each day must comply with these standards 100% of the time that they are in operation.

- Programs that operate single sessions:

    - Sessions of 6 hours or less in duration per day must comply with these standards 100% of the time that they are in operation.
    - Sessions of more than 6 hours in duration per day must comply with these standards at least 6 hours within their daily hours of operation.

II. THE APPROVAL PROCESS

This section of the standards outlines the approval process including:

1. Purpose
2. Procedures for Application and Approval
3. Types of Applications
4. Department Action on Applications
5. Provisions of Approval

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of approval is to encourage and support comprehensive and developmentally appropriate early development and learning experiences in public and private early childhood education programs serving children between the ages of three (3) to six (6) years of age and kindergarten classrooms operating in private programs in which kindergarten is the terminal grade. An approval certificate signifies that the program meets standards for comprehensive early childhood education programs contained herein including provisions to fulfill such requirements of the standards contained herein. Further, the approval signifies to families, guardians and other concerned individuals that each child is in a comprehensive learning environment.

Approval is a method of regulation designed to implement the state's obligation to comprehensive early education programs to children who are enrolled. An approval is granted after a detailed review of the program, its application, and supporting documentation has shown that the program complies with established laws and standards. Basic guidelines to be used in the evaluation are described in Section III of these standards.

PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL

1. Completion and submission of an application and such documentation as may be required by the Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
2. Upon receipt of a completed application and required documentation, review by an authorized representative of the Commissioner to determine compliance of said application with the standards contained herein (See Section III)
3. An on-site visit by an authorized representative designated by the Commissioner for the purpose of providing assistance in terms of compliance matters or observing the program in action
4. Determination by an authorized representative designated by the Commissioner that the program meets requirements for approval based on both the program's application and supporting documentation and the on-site visit to that program

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Outlined below are the types of applications for approval. Prior to filing an application for initial approval it is recommended that the applicant confer with the authorized representative designated by the Commissioner to initiate the steps required for meeting approval requirements. Types of applications include:

1. Application for Initial Approval
2. Application for Renewal of Approval
3. Re-Application for Approval

Application for Initial Approval
A person desiring to open a comprehensive early childhood education program shall make formal application for tentative approval on prescribed forms provided by the Commissioner. Applications may be submitted for multi-site programs or for single-site programs. In either case, all early childhood education programs in any single site must be approved in order for the site to be approved. Approval by the Commissioner is required before any program advertises itself as a comprehensive early childhood education program approved by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Application for Renewal of Approval
Renewal of approval must be made annually. The Commissioner will provide written notification through an authorized representative of the Department prior to the expiration of the current approval that a renewal application must be filed. Early childhood education programs desiring renewal of approval shall make application on forms provided by the Commissioner. In addition to the information required on renewal forms, the applicant program shall provide the Department with information regarding any changes made since the date of last approval.

Re-Application for Approval
A re-application for approval for a comprehensive early childhood education program shall meet the requirements as set forth above in these Standards, "Application for Initial Approval." Re-application shall be filed when:

1. There is a change in the location of the early childhood early education program;
2. There is a major change in the original program, goals and objectives of the program and/or type of population served;
3. There has been a previous discontinuance of the program; or
4. The Commissioner has revoked or refused to renew the program's approval.

DEPARTMENT ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

After reviewing the data collected and reported by the authorized representative designated by the Commissioner, approval action by the Commissioner shall take the form of one of the following:

1. Approval
2. Approval Variance
3. Provisional Approval
4. Probationary Approval
5. Denial of Approval
6. Revocation of Approval

Approval
A program which meets the standards will be approved, will be issued a letter of approval and certificate to operate, and will be listed in the Department's Directory of Approved Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs. Approval is for one year and must be renewed annually.

Approval Variance
A variance to these standards may be allowed at the discretion of the Commissioner or authorized representative. Application for a variance shall include the following items: an identification of the standard for which the variance is requested, an explanation of the program's current status in relation to the standard in question, a justification for the variance request and a specific plan of tasks and timelines for bringing the program into full compliance with the standard. Variances shall be allowed for no more than one calendar year or another timeframe not to exceed five years as specified by the Commissioner or authorized representative. Renewal of the variance can be requested annually as part of the program's annual program approval renewal. A variance renewal request shall address the same items as in the initial variance request plus documentation of task, timelines and progress toward bringing the program into full compliance unless determined unnecessary by the Commissioner or authorized representative.

Provisional Approval
A new program may be given provisional approval for a six-month period during which time an authorized representative(s) of the Commissioner will visit the program for a full review of the program and its operation. This temporary approval may be renewed once if conditions warrant an extension of time and an acceptable step-by-step plan is submitted for meeting the areas not in compliance with these standards.

Probationary Approval
A program currently approved but unable to meet these standards due to special circumstances as allowed by the Commissioner will be required to submit a step-by-step plan for meeting the requirements. If the plan is acceptable, the Commissioner may permit the applicant to continue to operate for a limited probationary period within a given school year. The program will then be re-examined by the authorized representative of the Commissioner and recommendations made.

Denial of Approval
If a program does not meet these standards and the applicant does not submit an acceptable application or step-by-step plan for doing so, the program will be disapproved. When such action is taken, the Commissioner shall, upon written request, grant the applicant a hearing.

Revocation of Approval
The Commissioner may consider any violation of these standards cause for the revocation of or refusal to renew the approval. A comprehensive early childhood education program approval shall be revoked for cause as specified in Section 16-48-5 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, 1956, as amended (See Section IV of these standards). Where approval is revoked or refused, the applicant has a right to a hearing whereby the extent of the program's compliance with these standards shall be determined.

PROVISIONS OF APPROVAL

1. A letter and certificate of approval is issued without charge by the Commissioner of Education.

2. The letter of approval shall be maintained on file in the program and the certificate of approval shall be posted in a prominent place within the program.

3. The letter and certificate of approval will state the maximum number of children to be served in the program during any given session and the dates of validity. It will remain in force unless otherwise specified or sooner, if revoked.

4. When the approval is in force, the Commissioner or authorized representative shall be given the right of entrance at any reasonable time, the privilege to inspect the program, and access to all records for the purpose of ascertaining compliance with these standards and investigating complaints.

5. The approval is granted to a designated holder of the letter and certificate of approval and limited only to the location named.

6. An operator of a program must notify the Commissioner of Education of major changes such as closure of service, change of name or location, change of ownership, change of program administrator or early education coordinator, major program changes, which affect the approval certificate while in force.

7. When a program discontinues its operation, the owner or program administrator shall provide written notification to the Commissioner at least thirty days prior to closure.

8. A person, unincorporated society, association, or corporation purchasing a program shall comply with all of the requirements for securing an initial approval. An approval is not transferable or assignable.

III. STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES

STRUCTURAL STANDARDS

Standard One: Physical Facilities

1.1 It is expected that the early childhood program will comply with either DCYF Licensing Regulations or, if the program is located in a public or private PK-12 school, with RIDE Basic Education Program Regulations, G-14-4 Ensuring a Safe and Healthy Physical Environment, in addition to these standards listed below.

1.2 A **program** is defined as a classroom or set of classrooms which are managed using the same overarching policies and procedures, with a shared leadership team. It may be housed in one building or multiple sites.

1.3 A **classroom** is defined as a group of children in a room with floor to ceiling walls. If floor to ceiling walls are not possible, then stable partitions of at least 4 feet in height shall divide the classroom, separate groups of children as defined in Standard 3.4, and sound shall not exceed:

Area	*Acceptable Noise Levels in Decibels*
Classrooms (up to 750 sf)	40 max
Classrooms (over 750 sf)	35 max

1.4 **Physical facilities** must be:

a. Inspected and certified by OSHA,
b. Be in compliance with building and fire codes,
c. Provide evidence of being lead free or safe,
d. Provide evidence of being asbestos-free or safe,
e. Have an acceptable score on a radon test within the last 3 years and
f. Have a public water supply or a Department of Health certificate related to a water supply of drinking water quality.

1.5 There shall be an appropriately equipped, accessible **outdoor play area for gross motor activity**. The outdoor play area shall have at least 75 square feet of space for at least 50% of the capacity of the center each child and be easily accessible from adjacent to the center. With one classroom, the play area shall have at least 75 square feet per child. It shall be safe, properly fenced with fencing of at least four (4) feet in height, reasonably level, well-drained, and free from hazards.

Surfaces and equipment shall comply with the Handbook for Public Playground Safety. Climbing equipment, swings, and large pieces of play equipment shall be developmentally appropriate for the ages of children in that area, securely anchored, and maintained in good repair. Cushioning materials such as rubber surfacing, wood chips, or sand shall be used under climbers, slides, or swings. If organic cushioning (i.e. sand, wood chips, etc.) is used, it shall be of at least 9" in depth.

Outdoor play areas for preschoolers shall be separated by fencing or scheduling from those used by children of first grade age and above. Outdoor play areas for kindergarteners may be in the same area used for preschoolers, first and/or second graders but shall be separated by fencing or scheduling from those used by children in the third grade or higher grades.

1.6 It is recommended that accessible **toilet facilities** be in or immediately adjacent to the classroom; if not, the program shall provide a plan that addresses how toileting will be supervised while classroom staff adult/child ratios are maintained. Facilities shall have one toilet and one sink for each group of 10 children. Hand washing sinks shall have 1) warm and cold running water faucets or 2) one temperature faucets set at appropriate hand washing temperatures. Hot water temperature at sinks used for handwashing, or where the hot water will be in direct contact with children, should be at a temperature of at least 60°F and not exceeding 120°F, according to the most recent information in *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care.*

There shall be separate toilet facilities in the same building for staff.

1.7 There shall be **adequate ventilation and natural and/or artificial lighting** throughout the program facility.

- Each room used for instructional purposes shall have sufficient air changes to produce healthful conditions and to avoid odors or concentrations of toxic substances or dust particles.
- All rooms used for children shall have a window or skylight directly to the outdoors.
- The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America standards for the quantity of illumination, Lighting for Educational Facilities RP-3-00, should be met in general classrooms.
- Emergency lighting shall be available when normal lighting systems fail and in locations that permit an orderly egress from the building in an emergency situation

1.8 There shall be **designated adult space** with adult-size furniture for functions such as planning, meeting privately with parents, storage of staff materials, breaks, etc.

1.9 A **cot** shall be provided for each preschool child for programs that are **more than 4 hours in length**. Cots shall be washed and sanitized before reassignment to another child. There shall be at least two (2) feet of space between each cot during rest time.

1.10 All **equipment and materials** shall be kept clean and sanitary and shall be checked monthly to ensure they are free from hazards. Documentation of monthly inspections, and program response, should be maintained on file.

The following standards apply to public school programs. Child care centers in good standing with DCYF's 2013 Child Care Center Regulations are presumed to meet these requirements.

1.11 **Stairways** used by children shall have a handrail with a maximum height of 48 inches for children's use.

1.12 The program's **exterior doors** shall be locked, unless monitored by a staff person, at all times. The program's designated main entrance(s) shall have a doorbell, buzzer, keypad, swipe card or other comparable means for entrance.

1.13 There shall be space for the **storage of each child's clothing** at appropriate levels for the use of children.

1.14 There shall be adequate **storage space for equipment**, including cots and blankets, materials, supplies and seasonal toys.

1.15 There shall be a sufficient quantity of **furniture** in the center to accommodate the number of children to be enrolled. Furniture shall be safe, durable, child-sized and easily cleaned. It shall conform to all applicable safety regulations. Seating shall be provided for every child.

1.16 There shall be a minimum of 35 square feet of **usable floor space** for each child in classrooms or activity rooms.

Standard Two: Health, Safety and Nutrition

The following standards apply to all programs seeking approval.

2.1 It is expected that the early childhood program will comply with either DCYF or, if the program is located in a public or private K-12 school, with RIDE health and safety regulations for public and private K-12 schools in addition to these standards listed below.

2.2 At least one staff person per classroom in the early childhood education program shall have a current valid certificate showing satisfactory completion of **pediatric CPR training and first aid**.

2.3 Programs shall have **written policies and procedures**, which are shared with staff, for **diapering, changing soiled pull-ups, underwear or clothing** that are consistent with the guidelines consistent with the current recommendations of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care*.

2.4 **Toilet training** shall be an individualized plan, relevant to the age and needs of the child, and carried out in conjunction with the family.

2.5 Any suspected case of **child abuse and/or neglect** shall be reported to the Department of Children, Youth and Families within 24 hours (1-8OO-RI-CHILD) in accordance with state law, including any death or serious injury while in care of the program. The program shall report also report to the Department of Education immediately after reporting to CPS (1-800-RI-CHILD).

2.6 The program shall ensure that specific training is provided to staff to be able to appropriately address health and safety of children with special needs including medical needs.

The following standards apply to public school. Child care centers in good standing with DCYF's 2013 Child Care Center Regulations are presumed to meet these requirements.

2.7 Safe **drinking water** shall be available to children throughout the day. Children shall be encouraged to drink water throughout the day, especially before, during or after outdoor play. The source of drinking water shall be separate from the lavatory. When water fountains are used, children shall be provided with disposable, single use cups or washable, one use cups.

2.8 The program shall use appropriate **bleach solution or other Environmental Protection Agency approved products** for the routine cleaning and sanitizing of all surfaces. These shall be consistent with the recommendations of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care.*

2.9 The program shall post and follow a **cleaning and sanitizing schedule** that is consistent with the recommendations of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of*

Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care.

2.10 Each program shall have age appropriate choke-saving posters outlining the Heimlich Maneuver. The **choke-saving poster** shall be prominently displayed in the areas where the children eat. Child **CPR posters** shall be posted in every classroom.

2.11 All **pets** maintained on the premises shall be kept in a safe and sanitary manner and according to state and local requirements. Children shall be protected from pets which are potentially dangerous to their health or safety.

Standard Three: Enrollment and Staffing

3.1 A child may be enrolled in an approved preschool program once the child has attained 3 years of age and until entry into an approved kindergarten program.

3.2 A child may be **enrolled in an approved kindergarten program** if the child has turned 5 on or before September 1st of any school year, as defined by law.

3.3 Programs retain the discretion to address **exceptional circumstances** on a case-by-case basis and, after applying relevant criteria, to determine what is in the best educational interest of a child born after September 1st who has not yet turned three to transition into the program, or a child who has not turned 5 by September 1st of any school year to enter kindergarten. Programs that choose to exercise this option shall have written policies which outline the criteria and that are shared with families and staff.

3.4 The following **staff-child ratios and group size requirements** shall be maintained in all approved classrooms:

AGE	STAFF/CHILD RATIO	MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE
3, 4 and 5 year olds	1 to 9	18
Kindergarten children	1 to 12	24

These ratios shall apply unless federal or state law of regulation, such as the IDEA or the RI regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities, require more stringent ratios, or when determined to be appropriate considering student behavioral, health or educational needs.

3.5 In every classroom, staff adult/child ratios shall include **at least one qualified teacher** as defined in 4.3 of these standards.

3.6 Staff adult/child ratios shall be maintained at **all times of the day**.

3.7 Teaching staff **must be aware of where children are at all times**. The structural design for any classroom, restroom or other program space must not interfere with teacher's ability to observe children. When an ancillary or allied professional (such as a music teacher, art teacher, or librarian, special education consultant) is working with one or more children, that person may be considered a member of the teaching staff for supervision purposes only.

Children may be momentarily out of sight and sound (e.g., if a child leaves the playground to go into an adjoining classroom alone to get something) as long as the child is back in sight and sound within one minute. Note that it is permissible for staff members to supervise preschool children by sound for **up** to five minutes **only** before regaining both sight and sound observation.

3.8 The grid below represents potential, minimal **staffing patterns**. Programs can choose any option within a category that meets the size of their programs. Individuals need to meet the credential requirements below to serve in these positions, as listed in the staff qualifications section of these regulations.

One Classroom	Two to Four Classrooms	5 or more classrooms
Administrator (part time) Ed. Coordinator (part time) Teacher (full time) Teacher Assistant (full time)	Administrator (part time) Ed. Coordinator (part time) Teachers Teacher Assistants	Administrator (full time) Ed. Coordinator (full time) Teachers Teacher Assistants
Administrator/Ed. Coordinator (part time in each role) Teacher (full time) Teacher Assistant (full time)	Administrator/Ed. Coordinator (part time in each role) Teachers Teacher Assistants	Administrator (part time) and Administrative Assistant (part time) Ed. Coordinator (full time) Teachers Teacher Assistants
Administrator (part time) Ed. Coordinator/Teacher (full time) Teacher Assistant (full time)	Administrator (part time) Ed. Coordinator/Teacher (part time in each role) Teachers Teacher Assistants	Administrator/Ed. Coordinator (part time in each role) Teachers Teacher Assistants
Administrator/Ed. Coordinator/Teacher (full time) Teacher Assistant (full time)	Administrator/Teacher (part time in each role) Ed. Coordinator (part time) Teachers Teacher Assistants	

Standard Four: Staff Qualifications and Ongoing Professional Development

The following standards apply to all programs seeking approval.

4.1 Each program shall have a person assigned to the role of the **Education Coordinator**. This role may be assumed by the following, but not necessarily be limited to, the administrator, principal, education manager, consultant or teacher; or may be a stand-alone position. The Early Childhood Education Coordinator shall meet the following criteria to serve as the program's pedagogical leader:

Qualifications

Option One

Hold a current Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Early Childhood Education Certificate (PreK – Grade 2).

Option Two

Hold a current Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Teacher Early Childhood Special Education Certificate (Birth - Grade 2), which includes Early Childhood Education Certification.

Option Three

Hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in a related field such as Child Development, Elementary Education, or Special Education with 24 credits in Early Childhood Early Education from an accredited or approved institution of higher education. Public school staff must also hold a current Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Certificate.

Experience

1. A minimum of 2 years of early childhood education classroom teaching experience.

2. A 3-credit college course or a minimum of 40 documented hours of professional development over the course of 2 years in mentoring, supervision and leadership **OR** an individual professional development plan not to exceed 2 years from the date of employment for achieving this requirement.

3. A Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standard certificate relevant to this position **OR** an individual professional development plan not to exceed 2 years from the date of employment for achieving this requirement.

Ongoing Professional Development

The program shall assure that each Early Childhood Education Coordinator shall have an individual professional development plan to complete at least 20 hours of professional development related to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies appropriate to his/her position. This plan shall be developed and updated annually as part of each staff person's annual performance evaluation.

4.2 Each program shall employ at least one professionally prepared early childhood **Teacher** in each classroom qualified consistent with the requirements listed below. If the teacher is employed by a school district in any type of classroom, then the teacher shall meet the qualification under Option Two. If the teacher is employed by a community agency or program in a kindergarten classroom, the teacher shall meet the requirements in Option One. All three options apply to teachers in community programs other than school districts.

Qualifications

Option One

Hold a current Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Early Childhood Education Certificate (PreK – Grade 2).

Option Two

Hold a current Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Teacher Early Childhood Special Education Certificate (Birth - Grade 2), which includes Early Childhood Education Certification.

Option Three

1. Bachelor's or Master's in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Human Development, or Child Development from an accredited or approved Institution of Higher Education **AND**
2. An individualized plan for completing requirements to be a certified Early Childhood Education Teacher (PreK – Grade 2) within 1 year of employment **AND**
3. Documentation of progress toward plan completion that is submitted annually to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the early childhood education program's annual approval renewal.

Experience

1. A Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standard certificate relevant to this position **OR** an individual professional development plan not to exceed 1 year from the date of employment for achieving this requirement.

2. A minimum of 3 months of successful supervised teaching in a licensed/approved education program for the appropriate age level (student teaching may fulfill). "Supervised teaching" is defined as a teaching experience in accordance with an individualized professional development plan that is overseen by someone qualified as an Early Childhood Education Coordinator as defined in 5.1 of these standards and that includes active regularly scheduled supervision and review and documentation of the individual's work as it relates to that individualized professional development plan.

Ongoing Professional Development

The program shall assure that each teacher shall have an individual professional development plan to complete at least 20 hours of professional development related to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies appropriate to his/her position. This plan shall be developed and updated annually as part of each staff person's annual performance evaluation.

4.3 **Teacher assistants** shall meet the requirements in one of the columns on the chart below. If the teacher assistant is employed by a school district in any type of classroom, the teacher assistant shall meet the qualification under Option One. Options One and Two apply to community programs other than school districts.

Qualifications

Option One

Meet teacher assistant qualifications as established in Rhode Island law (RIGL 16-11.2) for teacher assistants employed by school districts.

Option Two

1. Be at least 18 years of age.

2. Have documentation of a high school diploma **OR** general equivalency.

3. Have documentation of one of the following options at the time of employment **OR** have an individual professional development plan not to exceed 2 years from the date of employment for achieving:
   a. Successful completion of a Teacher Assistant Training Program approved by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education **OR**
   b. A minimum of 12 credit hours of college coursework relevant to the early childhood education program setting **OR**
   c. A Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential PLUS nine credit hours of college coursework relevant to the early childhood education program setting.

   Documentation of progress toward any one of these plans shall be submitted annually to the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the early childhood education program's annual approval renewal, when applicable.

Experience

A Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standard certificate relevant to this position **OR** have an individual professional development plan for achieving this requirement within 2 years of employment.

Ongoing Professional Development

The program shall assure that each teacher assistant shall have an individual professional development plan to complete at least 20 hours of professional development related to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies appropriate to his/her position. This plan shall be developed and updated annually as part of each staff person's annual performance evaluation.

4.4 There shall be a list of cleared and qualified **substitutes** who can be called upon in the event of the absence of a staff member in order to maintain the required staff-child ratio.

- **Day to day teacher substitutes** must hold a valid Substitute Permit or hold a valid Rhode Island teaching certification in any field.
- **Teacher assistant substitutes** must meet the minimum qualifications for the position, hold a valid Substitute Permit or hold a valid Rhode Island certification in any field.
- **Long term substitutes** shall meet the staff qualifications for the assigned position. Long term substitutes are needed when a person is out for 20 or more consecutive days.

The following standards apply to public school programs. Child care centers in good standing with DCYF's 2013 Child Care Center Regulations are presumed to meet these requirements.

4.5 **Professional development** may consist of workshops/seminars conducted by recognized professionals in the field; professional conferences; courses at an approved or accredited institution of higher education; electronic media, such as webinars; or other professional activities such as classroom observations, technical assistance, reading relevant books and articles, etc.

Standard Five: Administration

This section includes standards related to general administration; continuous quality improvement; and staff evaluation and professional development.

The following standards apply to all programs seeking approval.

5.1 It is expected that the early childhood program will comply with either DCYF or RIDE standards related to Administration in addition to these standards listed below.

5.2 Each early childhood education program shall have a designated **Administrator**. This role includes providing leadership for compliance with the Structural Program Standards contained herein. The position of the designated program administrator may vary from program to program, e.g., a child care center director, a public school principal, etc.

5.3 Each program shall have a person assigned to the role of **Education Coordinator**. This role includes providing leadership for compliance with the Educational Program Standards contained herein. Additional information about this role can be found in Standards 3.8 and 4.1.

5.4 Each program shall provide **a minimum of two hours of paid time per week** for each classroom dedicated to curriculum planning, including authentic assessment. A part of this planning time shall include collaboration among teaching team members, as relevant.

5.5 The program shall **provide teachers with time and classroom support** to implement a system of authentic assessment.

5.6 Reports shall be submitted to the **Commissioner of Education, or designated representative,** in such manner and form as may be required.

5.7 The program shall have a method for gathering **pre-entry information** such as an open house, family conference or phone interview from each family to gather health and family history, to obtain background information on the child and his/her home, and to develop the child's program. Information may include, but not be limited to:

- child's strengths and needs;
- families goals for a child;
- family history and background; and
- necessary supports and accommodations to ensure the child's health, safety and early learning and development.

Families should also be provided with a copy of the programs policies and procedures, which should be reviewed with them. A signed verification should be maintained in each child's file.

5.8 The program shall have **written policies and procedures** which shall be given to families and staff. Enrollment policies shall be explained to all families and staff. Policies and procedures shall include, but not be limited to, information on:

a. child, family, and staff orientation programs;
b. medical emergency and sick child procedures;
c. toileting policies and procedures;
d. classroom management/guidance of children;
e. calendar, program closing, hours of operation;
f. open door policy;
g. schedule of daily activities;
h. curriculum goals and philosophy;
i. program evaluation;
j. children's records requirements;
k. evaluation of children/child assessment practices;
l. supervision of children; and
m. procedures for reporting cases of child abuse and neglect;
n. child drop off and release policies;
o. confidentiality policy and procedures;
p. program philosophy;
q. volunteer policies and procedures;
r. opportunities for family to be engaged in their child's education; and
s. opportunities for families to be involved in program leadership/decision making.

5.9 The program shall establish and maintain efficient and effective **record-keeping systems** to provide accurate and timely information regarding children, families, and staff.

5.10 Children shall be **released** only to a parent/guardian or authorized individual. The program shall have written policies and procedures for releasing children to persons other than parents/guardians including:

- documentation of any custody or restraining orders relating to the child;
- current written parental/guardian authorization for release to named individuals updated annually;
- verification of identity of authorized individuals including photo id;
- emergency call-in authorization by parent/guardian including verification of identity of parent/guardian over phone, and;
- children shall not be released to any adult under the apparent influence of alcohol or controlled substances.

Additionally, programs shall ensure that children are **dropped off** to the custody and supervision of an authorized individual.

5.11 The program shall be in full compliance with all requirements related to **criminal record checks** found in requirements for:

a. a Child Day Care Center, Family Child Care Home, or Head Start Program licensed by the State of Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families **OR**

b. a program housed in a facility that meets the Basic Education Plan or RI Education Laws.

5.12 The program shall welcome children and families of all abilities, modify the program, make reasonable accommodations, and collaborate with key partners to **support all children**. The program shall have a written plan which describes the process for supporting all children including, but not limited to, those with developmental delays and disabilities, mental health diagnosis and behavioral challenges.

5.13 The program shall have a **written philosophy statement** describing the educational beliefs and practices which inform the implementation of a Comprehensive Early Childhood education program, including:

- Philosophies, beliefs, and theories of central aspects of child development and learning child development, learning, child assessment and family engagement that inform the program's practices;
- How the community served is reflected;
- How all children are welcomed into the program and exclusionary practices of any kind are not allowed (principle of "zero reject");
- How the program supports children and families of all abilities, modifies the program, makes reasonable accommodations, and collaborates with key partners to support children with developmental delays and disabilities in inclusive/integrated classroom settings;
- How each child's individual interests, individual learning goals, and individual learning styles are supported, including English language learners as well as children with developmental disabilities and delays in inclusive settings;
- How the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool and/or the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten are used to inform program practices, as well as the additional components of quality curriculum; context, process, teaching and facilitating;
- The programs commitment to using assessment practices that reflect research and best practices;
- Purposes for collecting child assessment;
- The programs commitment to engaging families in the education of their child;
- The programs commitment to ongoing program improvement; and
- The programs commitment to supporting staff and welcoming volunteers.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Each program shall have a system in place for engaging in continuous quality improvement.

5.14 At least once each year, the program shall engage in a **comprehensive self-assessment** to determine compliance with the structural and educational program standards contained herein and all other standards and regulations governing the program and the program's effectiveness in meeting needs of children and families. This assessment shall include a review and analysis of program-wide child assessment information that reveals patterns and trends. The process shall involve families and staff.

As a result of this self-assessment, the program shall document its **improvement plan**, which shall include priority goals, specific strategies for attaining each goal, and progress towards goal attainment.

Staff Evaluation and Professional Development

Each program shall have a system of staff evaluation and professional development in place that provides individualized supervision and support to every person employed by the program, as defined herein, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies relevant to her or his position.

5.15 Each program shall have a staff and volunteer **orientation** which includes a review of the program's staff and family handbook(s) and/or policies and procedures. A signed and dated description of the information covered in the orientation shall be kept on file in the center for review by the Department representative during monitoring visits.

5.16 Each program shall have an **ongoing staff evaluation process** that:

- includes individual self-assessments;
- includes supervisor feedback based on formal observation;
- includes an evaluation of family engagement;
- is linked to the individual's job description;
- is performance-based;
- includes a formal supervisor/staff conference, conducted at least annually;
- leads to an annual individual professional development plan; and
- provides results that inform the program's annual professional development plan.

5.17 The program shall have **individual professional development plans** in place, aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies and the staff evaluation process, which supports staff in developing competencies associated with:

- curriculum design and implementation and are associated with achieving child outcomes; implementing differentiated teaching and learning practices to enhance each child's learning and development;
- child assessment; and
- enhancing families' involvement in the program and in their child's learning and development.

5.18 A **program-wide professional development plan** shall be developed annually, and shall:

- be informed by the program evaluation;
- be informed by individual staff professional development plans; and
- include a variety of ongoing professional development strategies that reflect effective research-based professional development practices.

The following standards apply to public school programs. Child care centers in good standing with DCYF's 2013 Child Care Center Regulations are presumed to meet these requirements.

5.19 The following applies to **volunteers** who are used on a routine basis as opposed to those who may be involved on an episodic basis, e.g., for a party, field trip, etc. These volunteers shall:

- have a personnel record maintained by the program;
- complete an application for volunteering that shall include signing a statement that they do not have a criminal record or a communicable disease;
- be provided with an orientation to the program and the volunteer assignment; and
- always work under the supervision of program staff and never be left alone with children or engage in any disciplinary action with a child, and shall sign a statement attesting to their understanding of this policy.

5.20 **Volunteers** shall not be counted as staff when scheduling to meet staff/child ratios.

- Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older.
- All volunteers shall be cleared and approved.
- All volunteers shall be given a formal orientation to center policies and procedures, and the volunteer assignment.
- All volunteer must always work under the supervision of program staff and never be left alone with children or engage in any disciplinary action with a child.
- Volunteers shall be allowed to be counted in the staff/child ratio when scheduled staff are absent due to illness or emergency provided that the volunteer has fulfilled all staff requirements.

If **teen volunteers** or interns are engaged, the following additional standards apply:

- Teen volunteers must be 14 years of age.
- Teen volunteers must be closely monitored by an adult who is physically present in monitoring at all times.

Programs must keep the following documentation on file:

- Have a signed consent agreement from a parent or guardian stating that they approve of this volunteer assignment, and have reviewed with their child assuring the teen must never be alone with a child/group of children or engage in any disciplinary action with a child.
- Have copies of the child's emergency contact information
- Have a copy of the child's signed school physical form

5.21 The programs shall have a **confidentiality policy** that requires all employees, consultants and volunteers to maintain confidentiality of child, family, and staff information included in files, conversations, observations, meetings, correspondence, electronic media or any other source. The program shall have policies and procedures to ensure the appropriate implementation of this policy.

Information contained in a child's record shall only be released with written authorization from the child's parent/guardian. The center shall maintain such authorization on file.

EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The following early learning and development standards apply to all programs seeking approval.

Standard Six: Curriculum

Programs have an evidence-based written plan that describes program practices for supporting the learning of each child based on their individual developmental levels, learning styles and interests, and is informed by the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool and/or Common Core State Standards/ Grade Level Expectations for kindergarten.

Program Level

6.1 The program shall have a **written curriculum framework** aligned to the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations that recognizes the individual needs for all children. This framework is a description of how the program will implement core components of a quality curriculum:

- Context
- Content
- Teaching and Facilitation
- Process

6.2 The curriculum framework shall describe how the **materials and equipment** are intentionally chosen to support children's learning, interests, and skills levels while:

- reflecting the lives of the children and families;
- reflecting the diversity found in society, including gender, age, language and abilities;
- encouraging exploration, experimentation, and discovery;
- organized to support independent use;
- rotated to reflect changing curriculum and accommodate new interests and skill levels;
- rich in variety; and
- accommodate children's developmental delays and disabilities.

6.3 The curriculum shall guide teachers in the development of a developmentally appropriate **daily schedule** that is predictable, yet flexible and responsive to the needs of the children.

6.4 The curriculum framework shall guide teachers in incorporating content, concepts and activities that foster and integrate the **Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations** to support all children's learning.

6.5 The curriculum framework shall articulate that **intentional teaching practices**, such as learning through play, are the mechanisms through which children attain developmentally appropriate goals in all developmental domains.

6.6 The curriculum framework shall reflect the programs understanding of **how children learn and develop** to guide teachers in meeting the individual needs of children.

6.7 The framework shall act as a guide for teachers in **designing and implementing a variety evidence based strategies and multi-level learning opportunities** based on the assessment of the child's developmental levels, learning styles and interests.

Classroom Level

Classroom level curriculum emerges from the program level curriculum framework as it is translated into the daily experiences for the individual children in the class. It is informed by the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards, and/or Common Core State Standards, as well as child assessment data and includes a variety of instructional strategies and multilevel learning opportunities. It also encompasses teaching staff roles, daily schedule, classroom environment, planned activities, intentional practice and nurturing relationships.

Context

6.8 Teachers shall design a **learning environment** that is well organized, accessible to all children and equipped with clearly defined learning areas which include, at a minimum, areas devoted to: construction, dramatic play, discovery, books, manipulatives and creative expression.

6.9 Teachers shall **organize space and select materials** to stimulate exploration, experimentation, discovery and conceptual learning in all developmental areas. These materials shall be:

- chosen intentionally to support children's learning goals;
- well-maintained;
- organized and labeled;
- easily accessible to children;
- representative of the interests, needs and cultures of children;
- age-appropriate;
- of sufficient quantity for the numbers of children being served.

6.10 Teaching staff shall post, maintain, and follow a regular **daily schedule** which allows flexibility to meet interests and individual needs of the children. The schedule prioritizes play and incorporates:

- a combination of teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities;
- learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days;
- large group, small group and individual activities;
- indoor and outdoor activities; and
- an age appropriate balance between active and quiet activities.

6.11 The **outdoor environment** shall be used to promote children's development and active physical play through intentional curriculum planning.

Content

6.12 Teachers shall **intentionally plan and imbed learning opportunities/activities** aligned with the domains of the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade level Expectations to support all children's learning throughout the day.

6.13 Teachers shall maintain a **method of documented planning** that demonstrates that curriculum is developed based on the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade level Expectations. Plans should be written at least on a weekly basis with adjustments as needed based on emerging needs, skills and interests of children in the class.

Teaching and Facilitating

6.14 Teaching staff shall create a **positive learning environment** by using a wide range of teaching strategies. Teaching strategies shall be:

- based on information gained through ongoing observation and documentation of children's behavior and learning;
- supportive of children's growth and development in the areas addressed in all domains; and
- supportive of the development of individual relationships through interactions that are respectful of and sensitive and responsive to differing abilities, temperaments, activity levels, culture and cognitive and social developmental levels.

6.15 Teaching staff shall **implement curriculum** in a manner that:

- reflects responsiveness to goals that families have for their children;
- is informed by child assessment and observation data; and
- supports the development and maintenance of children's home language whenever possible while promoting English language acquisition; while
- ensuring that all children have access to universal curriculum, are active participants in classroom activities, and provided accommodations, as needed, to facilitate such participation.

6.15 Teaching staff shall **promote children's learning** by responding to their observed and documented need for and interest in practicing emerging skills. Teaching staff shall:

- provide targeted and individualized instruction;
- utilize multi-level learning opportunities and a variety of instructional strategies to support children's development;
- use children's interest in and curiosity about the world to engage them with new content and developmental skills; and
- provide children opportunities to effect what happens in the classroom through participation in decision making about issues concerning classroom behavior, plans, and activities.

6.16 Teaching staff shall **promote positive interactions** with children by:

- managing behavior, teaching and implementing classroom rules and expectations, and helping individual children learn socially appropriate behavior by providing positive guidance that is consistent with the child's level of development;

- talking frequently with children and listening to children with attention and respect through responding to children's questions and requests, using multiples strategies to communicate and build relationships with every children, and engage in meaningful and extended conversation with each child;
- creating a positive environment through their own behaviors, including frequent social conversations with children, joint laughter and affection, eye contact, tone of voice and smiles;
- developing individual relationships with children by providing care that is responsive, attentive, consistent, comforting, supportive, and culturally sensitive; and
- providing children with opportunities to effect what happens in the classroom through participation in decision making about issues concerning classroom behavior, plans, and activities.

6.17 When a **child presents with challenging behavior, teaching staff shall**:

a. meet with parents/guardians to share observations, listen to parental/guardian insights, and discuss intentions of how best support the child's appropriate behavior.
b. Observe the child, then identify events, activities, interactions and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
c. Focus on teaching the child social communication and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support and other intervention strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior rather than focusing only on eliminating the challenging behavior.
d. Respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that:
    i. Provides for the safety of the child and others in the classroom
    ii. Is calm and respectful to the child
    iii. Provides the child with information about acceptable behavior

6.18 For all children, staff **shall not use food or outdoor play as a reward or as a behavior consequence**. Exceptions may only be made if specifically stated in a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

6.19 **For children requiring special education services**, teaching staff shall collaborate with special education professionals and families to support children with disabilities and developmental delays to succeed in inclusive environments and ensure each partner has access to necessary information and supports for appropriate services.

6.20 When technology is used in a program, **technology shall be used for the purpose of extending learning** within the classroom to integrate and enrich the curriculum. Staff shall be actively engaged in this process with children.

Process

6.21 Teachers shall **implement curriculum through play experiences** that provide multiple opportunities for all children to attain developmentally appropriate goals in each developmental domain.

6.22 Teachers shall **design learning opportunities that integrate multiple goals**.

Standard Seven: Child Assessment

The program has a written plan and description of practices for implementing a child assessment system aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool and/or the Common Core State Standards/Grade level Expectations for kindergarten. Assessment data is used to:

- *ascertain the degree to which the program is attaining desired child outcomes and goals for children;*
- *identify patterns and trends across the program; and*
- *inform the program's improvement plan and professional development of staff.*

Program Level

The program has written policies and procedures that guide their child assessment practices at the program and classroom level.

7.1 The program shall have a **written plan and description of practices** for implementing a child assessment system that is aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and program curriculum for preschool children and/or the Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations and program curriculum for kindergarten. The plan shall include:

- timelines associated with assessments that occur throughout the year;
- procedures to keep individual child records confidential;
- ways to involve families in planning and implementing assessments (see standard 7.4); and
- methods for communicating assessment information with families, including two-way communication.

7.2 The program shall have a **written plan outlining the types of assessment** used by the program and their appropriateness, including:

- monitoring children's development and learning;
- informing curriculum and decision-making;
- identifying children who might benefit from additional or increased supports and/or special services; and
- monitoring program effectiveness.

7.3 The **assessment methods** used by the program shall be:

- sensitive to and informed by family culture, experiences, children's abilities, and home language;
- meaningful, accurate, and objective; and
- used in settings familiar to the children.

7.4 The program shall have a **written statement in their family handbook** informing families about their child assessment practices that includes information about the assessments used by the program, including:

- purposes for which assessment is used;
- methods used for assessment;
- tools used for assessment, and how staff or others are trained to use assessment procedures and interpret results; and
- how assessment information will be shared with families.

7.5 Families shall have ongoing opportunities to share the results of observations from home to **contribute to the assessment process and the identification of goals** for their child.

7.6 The program shall make **provisions for teachers, families and relevant specialists to have regular opportunities to participate in two-way communication** to discuss each child's goals, progress, accomplishments and developmental challenges in the classroom, and at home, as well as to plan learning activities. This includes providing family members with information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning on at least a quarterly basis, with written reports at least two times a year as part of the family conferences.

7.7 The program shall use **child assessment data at the program level** to:

- ascertain the degree to which the program is attaining desired child outcomes and goals for children;
- identify patterns and trends across the program; and
- inform the program's continuous quality improvement plan as well as the professional development of staff.

7.8 The program shall **collaborate with Child Outreach programs** to screen children annually through active collaborations such as providing space for onsite screenings, coordinating onsite community screening events for children and their families in community-based setting and/or providing families with dates and times of upcoming child outreach screenings.

Classroom Level

Classroom level child assessment practices, aligned with the RI Early Learning and Development Standards developmental progressions and/or the Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations, emerge from the written program level assessment plan and are used to:

- ***monitor*** *children's development and learning;*
- ***inform*** *curriculum and decision making;*
- ***determine*** *who might require additional supports and/or special services; and*
- ***communicate*** *early learning and development information with families and other authorized parties.*

7.9 Teachers shall use **ongoing, formative assessments** to inform the implementation of classroom practices that reflect each child's developmental level, learning style, and interests in each Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards domain and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations.

7.10 Teachers shall have a **system to help manage and organize** the collection of assessment information for each child.

7.11 Teachers shall assess the developmental progress of each child using assessment data from **natural classroom environments and situations consistent with children's culture, language, developmental abilities and everyday experiences**.

7.12 Teachers shall **use child assessment information** to:

- identify children's strengths, learning styles and developmental levels;
- inform classroom instruction, make sound decisions about individual and group curriculum content, inform teaching approaches, guide personal interactions, and inform the design of the children's learning environment;
- identify children who might benefit from additional or increased supports and/or special services;
- document and implement a plan for each child that supports his or her inclusion and success; and
- share information on each child's progress with families and other authorized parties.

7.13 For children requiring special education services, **early childhood educators and special education providers shall work collaboratively**, and in **partnership with families**, in supporting successful participation in inclusive environments and in ensuring that each partner has access to the necessary information and supports.

7.14 Teachers shall conduct **child assessment as an integral part of the classroom**, so that children are provided with multiple options and varied opportunities for learning and demonstrating what they have learned.

7.15 Teachers shall **engage families and relevant specialists in regular two-way communication** to discuss each child's goals, progress, accomplishments and development needs, both in the program and at home.

Standard Eight: Family Engagement

The program has a written plan that describes program practices for communicating with and involving family members as partners in their child's education and in program decision-making. Family members include adults and children significant in the child's daily life who influence the child and support their learning.

Program Level

8.1 The program shall be **open to families** for observation and visits whenever the program is in operation.

8.2 The program shall implement activities to facilitate the **transition of children and families** including:

- opportunities for the child and parent/guardian to visit the program one or more times prior to enrollment;
- activities to support internal transitions within the program, e.g., from class to class, during program enrollment; and
- strategies to support families with their transitions to other programs or schools as they transition out of the program. These strategies may include providing information on future program options, enrollment procedures and practices, networking with families who have already made this transition, and opportunities for program visitation.

8.3 The program shall use a variety of methods to engage all families in **active two-way communication** on an ongoing basis such as new family orientations, small group meetings, individual conversations, notes between program and home, and written questionnaires.

8.4 The program shall plan and implement a wide variety of **opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education**, both within the program and in the family's home.

8.5 The written program plan shall delineate the expectation that **teaching staff engage all families in the education of their child**, including families with special needs and circumstances, so that they can take full advantage of family engagement opportunities.

8.6 Programs shall encourage collaboration with families by **making teachers available** to meet with families to discuss children's progress, collaborate with IEP teams by attending meetings, participating in relevant training, and/or sharing information to support children with and without developmental delays or disabilities and their families.

8.7 The written program plan shall describe the **opportunities for all families to be actively involved** in program decision making (e.g. advisory groups) and leadership.

8.8 The written program level plan shall describe how program **actively seek and utilize input** from families in the following areas:

- establishing or refining program philosophies, long-term goals and short-term objectives;
- conducting program assessment and evaluation;
- designing family engagement opportunities;
- establishing strategies to ensure that the program remains relevant to the values, culture, identity and home language; and
- creating a physical environment that is welcoming to families.

8.9 The program shall make efforts to **accommodate families with special needs and circumstances** so that they can take full advantage of family engagement opportunities.

Classroom Level

Classroom level family engagement emerges from the program level written plan as it is translated into individual teacher and staff practices with families.

8.10 Teaching staff shall implement intentional practices designed to **foster strong two-way relationships with all families** from the first contact and maintain them over time.

8.11 Teaching staff shall **communicate with all families in a variety of ways** on at least a weekly basis regarding children's activities and developmental milestones, shared care-giving issues, and other information that affects the well-being and development of their children.

8.12 Teaching staff shall **collect information from individual families** for use in designing family engagement opportunities appropriate to their interests and circumstances.

8.13 Teaching staff shall use a variety of resources to **communicate with families who speak languages different from their own** and, whenever possible, provide information for families in their primary language.

8.14 Teaching staff shall communicate with all families to **gather information** about their child's interests, approaches to learning and developmental needs, and to learn about each family's goals and concerns and goals for their children. This information shall be **incorporated into ongoing classroom planning and assessment**.

8.15 Teaching staff shall **plan and implement a continuum of opportunities** so that all families:

- know what young children should know and be able to do as articulated in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or the Common Core State Standards;
- recognize how standards-based programs support their child's learning; and
- understand and embrace the positive role that families play in supporting their child in learning at home and in the program.

IV. STATE LAW (RIGL 16-48) RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

CHAPTER 16-48: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

SECTION
16-48-1. Applicability
16-48-2. Establishment and operation of schools and programs
16-48-3. Rules and Regulations
16-48-4. Enforcement
16-48-5. Revocation of approval
16-48-6. Penalty

16-48-1. Applicability. -- This chapter shall pertain to private nursery schools and such other regular programs of educational services to children between the ages of two (2) years, eight (8) months and six (6) years of age where such schools and programs operate one or more sessions daily. It does not include bonafide kindergarten and nursery classes which are part of a non-public elementary school system.

16-48-2. Establishment and operation of schools and programs.
(a) No person, unincorporated society, association, or corporation desiring to operate a school or program as defined in this chapter shall be permitted to establish and maintain such a school or program unless and until an application has been filed with the Commissioner of Education and suitable provision has been made to fulfill such minimum requirements of adequate faculty, health, safety, sanitation, site, physical plan, educational program and such other standards as may be established through rules and regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Education. Upon satisfactory compliance with the standards as established by the Commissioner of Education, along with the certification by the appropriate fire, health and building inspectors, such school or program shall be approved for a period of one year, which approval shall require renewal unless sooner revoked by said Commissioner for cause.
(b) Upon application to establish a school or program as defined in this chapter or to renew the application, the applicant will submit the names of its owner, officers, and employees. The commission may request the bureau of criminal identification of the state police to conduct a nationwide criminal records check of the owners, officers, and employees of the school or program and the bureau of criminal identification of the state police will conduct criminal records checks on request. To accomplish nationwide criminal records checks, the commissioner may require owners, officers, and employees of the schools or programs to be fingerprinted by the bureau of criminal identification of the state police. The commissioner may examine these criminal records checks to aid in determining the suitability of the applicant for approval or renewal of approval.

16-48-3. Rules and Regulations. -- The Commissioner of Education shall make all necessary rules and regulations as he shall deem necessary or expedient, in conformity with the provisions of this chapter and not contrary to law, for the necessary accreditation of the schools and programs, and he shall do all things and perform all acts necessary to enforce the provisions of this chapter.

16-48-4. Enforcement -- It shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Education to prosecute any person, firm or corporation violating the provisions of this chapter, and the director of said department of any duly authorized agent thereof may make complaint for the violation of the provisions of said chapter, and such director or such agent making such complaint shall not be required to give surety for the payment of cost.

16-48-5. Revocation of approval. -- The Commissioner of Education may revoke or refuse to renew the approval of any nursery school or program so approved upon reasonable notice to such school authorities and/ provided further that a hearing on such revocation shall be afforded such parties. Grounds for revocation or refusal to renew shall include: failure to maintain standards; refusal to submit proper reports or records; refusal to admit authorized representatives of the department; furnishing or making misleading or false statements of reports; failure to maintain adequate financial resources; or for any other cause which, in the opinion of the Commissioner, may be detrimental to the health/ education, safety/ or welfare of the children involved.

16-48.6. Penalty. -- Every person who violates any of the provisions of this chapter by conducting such a school or program without first having obtained approval as herein provided or who shall refuse to permit a reasonable inspection and examination of such a facility as herein provided or who shall intentionally make any false statements or reports to the Commissioner of Education or his agents with reference to the matters contained herein or who conducts such facility after approval has been revoked or suspended, shall, upon conviction of the first offense be imprisoned for a term not exceeding six (6) months or be fined not exceeding one hundred dollars ($100.00) for each week that such facility shall have been maintained without approval, and on the second or subsequent offense shall be imprisoned for a term not exceeding (1 year) or be fined not exceeding five hundred dollars ($500.00) for each week that such facility shall have been maintained without approval or both such fine and imprisonment.

CHAPTER 16-48.1: CERTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

SECTION
16-48.1-1. Definitions
16-48.1-2. Qualification
16-48.1-3. Employment background checks
16-48.1-4. Criminal records checks -- Operations
16-48.1-5. Criminal records check -- Employee
16-48.1-6. Prior criminal records checks
16-48.1-7. Rules and regulations
16-48.1-8. Destruction of fingerprint records

16-48.1-1. Definitions. --
(1) . The term "commissioner" means the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or the designee of the commissioner.
(2) The term "person" when used to describe the owner or operator of a facility which must be licensed or registered with the commissioner includes individuals, associations, and corporations.

16-48.1-2. Qualification. -- Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary/ any person seeking to operate or seeking employment in any facility covered under § 16-48-1, if the employment involves supervisory or disciplinary power over a child or children or involves frequent and routine contact with a child or children without the presence of other employees, shall undergo an employment background check and criminal records check as provided for in this chapter. The commissioner may by rule identify those positions requiring background checks and criminal record checks.

16-48.1-3. Employment background checks. -- Any person seeking to operate a facility covered under § 16-48-1 will submit an affidavit to the commissioner providing information relating to individual employment history as shall be required by rule promulgated by the commissioner. Any person operating a facility covered under § 16-

48-1 shall require all persons seeking employment, if the employment involves supervisory or disciplinary power over a child or children or involves routine contact with a child or children without the presence of other employees, to execute a similar affidavit prior to employment and will maintain the affidavit on file subject to inspection by the commissioner. Failure to require the affidavit or failure to maintain the affidavit on file will be prima facie grounds to revoke the authority of the facility to operate.

16-48.1-4. Criminal records checks -- Operations. -- Any person seeking to operate a facility covered under § 16-48-1 shall apply to the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department for a nationwide criminal records check. The check will conform to the applicable federal standards including the taking of fingerprints to identify the applicant. The commissioner will determine by rule those items of information appearing on a criminal records check which constitute disqualifying information because the information would indicate that the operation or, in the case of an employee, the employment could endanger the health or welfare of a child or children. Upon the discovery of any disqualifying information with respect to a proposed operator, the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department will inform the commissioner in writing of the nature of the disqualifying information.

16-48.1-5. Criminal records check -- Employee. -- Any person seeking employment/ if the employment involves supervisory or disciplinary power over a child or children or involves routine contact with a child or children without the presence of other employees, in any facility covered under § 16-48-1 shall, after acceptance by the employer of the affidavit required by § 16-48.1-3, apply to the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department for a nationwide criminal records check. The check will conform to applicable federal standards including the taking of fingerprints to identify the applicant. Upon the discovery of any disqualifying information as defined in accordance with the rule promulgated by the commissioner, the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department will inform the applicant, in writing, of the nature of the disqualifying information. In addition, the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department will inform the employer, in writing, without disclosing the nature of the disqualifying information, that an item of disqualifying information has been discovered. In those situations in which no disqualifying information has been found, the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department will inform both the applicant and the employer, in writing, of this fact. The employer will maintain on file, subject to inspection by the commissioner, evidence that the criminal records checks have been initiated on al~ employees seeking employment after August 1, 1985/ and the results of the checks. Failure to maintain that evidence on file will be prima facie grounds to revoke the license or registration of the operator of the facility. It will be the responsibility of the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department to conduct the nationwide criminal records check pursuant to this section. The nationwide criminal records check will be provided to the applicant for employment without charge.
16-48.1-6. Prior criminal records checks. -- If an applicant for employment has undergone a nationwide criminal records check pursuant to § 16-48.1-4 within eighteen (18) months of an application for employment, then an employer may request from the bureau of criminal identification of the state police or the local police department a letter indicating if any disqualifying information was discovered. The bureau of criminal identification will respond by stating if an item of disqualifying information was discovered without disclosing the nature of the disqualifying information. The letter may be maintained on file to satisfy the requirements of § 16-48.1-4.

16-48.1-7. Rules and regulations. -- The commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the intent of this chapter.

16-48.1-8. Destruction of fingerprint records. -- At the conclusion of any background check required by this chapter, the state police or the local police department will promptly destroy the fingerprint card of the applicant.