



Administration and Leadership Practices

ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES



Program administrators play an important role in overall quality of a program and their leadership affects teachers, children, and families. Strong leaders set a clear vision, support teachers, and create a positive environment where children can grow and learn. Studies show that when administrators use good leadership practices, programs are more effective, teachers feel supported, and children benefit from better learning experiences (Fu, 2022; Kirby et al., 2021; Bloom & Abel, 2015). In the Family Child Care programs, the provider may serve in both the administrator and teacher roles.

The Administration and Leadership domain has two sections: Child/Adult Interactions and Continuous Improvement Plans. One way administrators can strengthen their programs is by using continuous improvement plans. These plans help leaders look closely at what is working well and what needs to change. By setting shared goals, collecting data, and checking progress, administrators can guide their teams toward steady growth. Research shows that this process builds a system of learning and accountability, where teachers and staff work together to improve over time (Douglass, 2019). Continuous improvement is not just a one-time task, it is an ongoing cycle that helps programs stay strong and responsive to children's needs.

Classroom self-assessments are another key part of the continuous improvement process. Classroom self-assessments measure the quality of adult-child interactions and the learning environment. These assessments give clear information about what teachers are doing well and where they can improve. When leaders use this data to guide coaching and professional development, teachers are more likely to use effective practices that support children's learning (Burchinal et al., 2010). By combining classroom self-assessments with continuous improvement plans, administrators can make sure their programs are always moving forward and providing high-quality care for every child.

Note: As with all Step Up to Quality Standards, the information presented in this document does not replace licensing requirements or operating standards that may apply to a program.

KEY TERMS

- **Action Step** – A measurable task that leads to an associated goal.
- **Community Partnership** - A relationship between a program and any business, agency, or group that is part of the local community and provides support to enrich programming. Support could be monetary, volunteers, or services. Community partners may include, but are not limited to, libraries, food banks, churches, community service agencies, and public safety agencies. Community partnership example: Fire department offers a safety presentation on safe car seat installation for families enrolled in the program.
- **Continuous Improvement Plan** - A documented set of goals and action steps updated at least annually to improve the program over time.
- **Goal** - A desired outcome.
- **Group of Children** - A group of children assigned to a lead teacher or a family child care provider. Also, may be referred to as a class.
- **Self-Assessment Tool** – A standardized tool or process that addresses the quality of the classroom or Family Child Care environment and/or staff-child interactions and is appropriate for the age group served.

CHILD/ADULT INTERACTION STANDARDS

At all levels, early care and education programs address the child-adult interactions standard by completing a self-assessment annually for each lead teacher and/or each group of children. In family child care programs, the self-assessment tool must measure the learning environment. For child care centers and schools, the self-assessment tool should be a measure of quality that is designed to be used as part of a continuous improvement process at the individual teacher or classroom level. Classroom self-assessments may measure elements of quality including, but not limited to, adult-child interactions, the physical environment and materials, inclusion practices, curriculum implementation, social and emotional supports. In all settings, the self-assessment tool must be appropriate for the age groups served. If an individual lead teacher serves more than one group of children, they may only be required to complete one self-assessment. See the Tips and Frequently Asked Questions sections for examples.

	Standards	Verification Visit	Tips	FAQs
Bronze, Silver, & Gold	<p>Child Care Centers and Schools: Complete an annual self-assessment tool for each group of children.</p> <p>Family Child Care: Complete an annual self-assessment using a tool that measures the learning environment for the program.</p>	Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) specialists will review the completed self-assessment documentation to ensure the entire tool has been completed annually for all lead teachers, and/or groups as applicable.	<p>The individual completing the assessment should be familiar with the instructions to complete and score the tool.</p> <p>A list of example self-assessments is posted on the DCY website.</p> <p>The self-assessment tool must be completed in its entirety including any scoring pages or graphs that are part of the tool.</p> <p>Only one self-assessment must be completed for multiple groups in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lead teacher has different morning and afternoon groups of children who are the same age and use the same space. • A lead teacher has multiple groups of children who are the same age and in the same space. • Family Child Care 	<p>Is a program able to create their own classroom self-assessment tool? Yes, for guidance about creating your own classroom self-assessment tool, please contact your DCY specialist.</p> <p>Who can complete the classroom self-assessment tool? The self-assessment may be completed by any program staff or an individual designated by the program. An outside observer (e.g., CCR &R¹ or SST² staff) may complete the classroom self-assessment tool as long as the completed tool is provided to the teacher or family child care provider to keep for their records.</p> <p>Does a teacher who has a morning and an afternoon preschool class have to complete two self-assessments? No, only one self-assessment tool is required to be completed when there is a morning and afternoon group of children who are the same age, using the same space with the same lead teacher.</p> <hr/> <p>¹CCR&R – Child Care Resource and Referral Agency ² SST – State Support Team</p>

	Standards	Verification Visit	Tips	FAQs
Bronze, Silver, & Gold				<p>We have a large classroom that is subdivided by furniture to create two smaller spaces for separate groups of children in the same space with the same lead teacher. Do I need to complete two self-assessments, one for each group of children?</p> <p>If the groups rotate between the two spaces, one self-assessment is acceptable. For other scenarios, please reach out to your DCY specialist to discuss your specific situation.</p>
Silver & Gold (1 of 2)	The required number of groups observed meet the minimum rating on the Ohio Classroom Observation Tool (OCOT).	DCY specialists will complete observations in selected groups using the OCOT.		<p>Can the OCOT be used as the classroom self-assessment tool?</p> <p>No, the OCOT cannot be used as the self-assessment tool.</p>

	Standards	Verification Visit	Tips	FAQs
Silver & Gold (2 of 2)	<p>Child Care Centers and Schools: Self-assessment results for each lead teacher and/or group of children are used to determine the area of focus and to set a goal for improvement.</p> <p>Family Child Care: The results of an environmental assessment are used to determine the area of focus and to set a goal for improvement.</p>	<p>DCY specialists will review documentation of the focus area and goals to ensure it includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of lead teacher for the group or Family Child Care provider • Name or description of group • Date goal was developed • Name of the self-assessment tool used • Area of focus identified • Improvement goal • Action steps and timeframe for completing the goal identified 	<p>Co-lead teachers may collaborate to complete a single area of focus and goal for improvement that applies to both teachers or they may each complete their own areas of focus and goals.</p> <p>The goal and action step must be re-determined annually following the annual completion of the self-assessment.</p> <p>An individual who serves as the lead teacher for more than one group must complete one area of focus, goal and action steps for each group that is required to have a self-assessment.</p>	<p>Can the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) Professional Growth Plan be used to meet the self-assessment action plan requirement?</p> <p>Yes, if the OTES Professional Growth Plan includes at least two action steps for each goal, it can be used to meet the self-assessment action plan requirement.</p>

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN STANDARDS

At all levels, each early care and education program must develop an annual continuous improvement plan that includes program goals and action steps for achieving the goals.

	Standard	Verification Visit	Tips	FAQs
Bronze, Silver & Gold	<p>All programs will develop an annual plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two program goals and • One action step for achieving each goal. 	<p>DCY specialists will verify that the plan includes at least two goals and action steps.</p> <p>The goals and action steps must be updated annually.</p>	<p>A <u>sample continuous improvement plan</u> is available for programs to use if they choose.</p> <p>Programs should have documentation of information used to determine each goal.</p>	<p>Should the program’s continuous improvement plan be based on the results of classroom self-assessments?</p> <p>A program may choose to use the results of the classroom self-assessments to inform their continuous improvement plan. The program should look at a variety of information when developing the continuous improvement and base the goals and action steps on areas where they would like to strengthen their program.</p>
Silver & Gold	<p>One additional goal and action step created based on input from staff and families at the program.</p>	<p>DCY specialists will verify that the plan includes at least three goals and action steps.</p> <p>DCY specialists will look for written evidence that staff and/or parent input was obtained.</p>	<p>Written documentation that staff and/or parent input was obtained may include, but is not limited to, completed surveys, meeting minutes, notes from comment boxes, etc.</p>	<p>How can one goal be created from two different sources of information?</p> <p>While it is required that the program collect input from both staff and families, once the information is collected and reviewed, the program may choose how to use the information to create a goal. The program may find that there is a clear need (either from the family input or staff input) that must be prioritized for the goal.</p>

	Standard	Verification Visit	Tips	FAQs
Gold	One additional goal and action step related to creating, maintaining, or expanding ongoing community partnerships to better serve children and families.	<p>DCY specialists will verify that the plan includes at least four goals and action steps.</p> <p>DCY specialists will review documentation for at least one community partnership activity, function, or meeting annually.</p>	Written documentation of community partnerships may include, but is not limited to emails, letters, meeting agendas, invitations, posters, etc.	<p>Does the annual goal for community partnerships have to be based on my current community partner functions or activities?</p> <p>No, although programs must maintain at least one community partnership activity, function, or meeting annually, the goal may focus on a new partnership that your program would like to create.</p>

Example Classroom Self-Assessment Tools

This is a list of assessments that could be used to meet the self-assessment requirement. It is not an exhaustive list. Any other published tool that addresses environmental quality and interaction quality for child care centers and schools, or that addresses environmental quality for family child care programs may be used. The notes column includes information about specific target age groups, settings, or other specifications that may help a program determine if the tool would be appropriate for a specific group.

Assessment Name	Publisher & Year	Notes (target age groups and settings)
Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO)	Brookes Publishing, 2007	Birth to 5 years in home-based settings
Child Caregiver Interaction Scale (CCIS), Revised Edition	Barbara E. Carl, School of Behavioral Sciences and Education, Penn State University, 2010	Birth to 5 years
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	Teachstone	Available for Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, K-3, or Upper Elementary
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3)	Teachers College, Columbia University, 2015	3 - 5 years in center-based programs
Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Toolkit (ELLCO)	Brookes Publishing, 2008	Pre-K
Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-3)	Teachers College, Columbia University, 2019	Birth through 12 years in home-based programs
Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP)	Brookes Publishing, 2016	Classrooms serving children ages 2–5

Example Classroom Self-Assessment Tools

Assessment Name	Publisher & Year	Notes (target age groups and settings)
Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-3)	Teachers College, Columbia University, 2017	Birth through 2 years in center-based programs
Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) Teacher Self-Assessment	Ohio Department of Education and Workforce	Preschools in public schools
Program Quality Assessment (PQA)	HighScope Educational Research Foundation	Classroom assessment for infant-toddler, preschool, or family child care programs implementing HighScope Curriculum
School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U)	Teachers College, Columbia University, 2015	Ages 5 - 12 during out-of-school time

Citations

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- Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 166–176
- Douglass, A. (2019), Leadership for quality early childhood education and care, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 211, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6e563bae-en>.
- Fu, W. (2022). A critical examination of effective leadership in early childhood education. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, 7(1).
- Kirby, G., Douglass, A., Lyskawa, J., Jones, C., & Malone, L. (2021). Understanding leadership in early care and education: A literature review. OPRE Report 2021-02. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.