

3-STAR Verification Tool



Facility Name: _____

Classroom Name: _____

Verified by: _____

Date: _____

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3A:
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION*

RATIONALE- One of the most important determinants of program quality is hiring qualified staff in order to ensure the provision of quality services to children and families. Minimum education qualification may ensure that staff have basic awareness of what is required to perform their assigned functions responsibly.

DEFINITION- Minimal requirements for professional development/qualification of the teaching staff.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
All staff members working directly with children must have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED) as of July 1, 2008.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing copies of diplomas in staff personal files. 				

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
<p>Group Child Care Home:</p> <p>Second caregivers have completed at least the 45-Hour Entry Level Course or equivalent approved by the Office of Child Development or have or are currently working toward a higher level of certificate or degree as defined the career lattice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing copy of certificate or by verifying that caregiver is scheduled for a course. 				
<p>Out of School Time Care:</p> <p>All school-age staff have completed at least the 45-Hour Entry Level Course or equivalent approved by the Office of Child Development or have or are currently working toward a higher level of certificate or degree as defined the career lattice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing copy of certificate or by verifying that caregiver is scheduled for a course. 				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3B: **EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM'S ENVIRONMENT**

RATIONALE—The environment affects the way children behave, develop, and learn. It also affects the quantity and quality of interactions between adults and children. It includes tangible aspects, such as appropriate materials and equipment and intangible aspects, such as the physical and human qualities that together create an atmosphere that promotes self-esteem, social interaction, rich language, and joy of learning.

DEFINITION: The environment meets all required local, state, and federal regulations. It includes space (both indoors and outdoors) with appropriate equipment and materials that encourage children to engage in hands-on learning. The environment represents New Mexico's diverse languages and cultures.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
<p>1. Evidence that materials and equipment are rotated on a regular basis to conform to curriculum goals.</p> <p>Evidence of rotation of portable outdoor equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing written lesson plans for verification that materials and equipment are rotated to conform to the curriculum including the outdoor space. - Verify by reviewing chronological dated photographs or videotapes of the classroom and playground. - Verify by interviewing teachers, asking open-ended questions - Other example(s) 				
<p>2. Staff of the program are very familiar with the environmental rating scales and feel confident that they will score an average of four (4) on the appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing signed acknowledgement that staff have been given information about the environmental rating scales through training, studying and/or reviewing the environmental rating scale books and videos. 				

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environmental rating scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copies of the environmental rating scale/s are easily assessable for every classroom. - Interview staff - Other example(s) 				
3. Each classroom in the program must earn an average score of four (4) on the appropriate environmental rating scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review environmental rating reports documenting each classroom received at least an average score of four (4). 				

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3C: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN’S PROGRESS

RATIONALE—One of the major aspects of high quality programs for young children is the curriculum, which stems from sound principles of child development and reflects that each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and development. The curriculum consists of developmentally appropriate practices that are based on a holistic view of children, meeting their needs in all six developmental areas: physical, motor, social, emotional, language, and cognitive. Some programs might also include the spiritual domain as a seventh developmental area. Curriculum is carefully planned to meet both short-term and long-term goals for the program and for individual children.

Children’s progress is assessed informally on a continuous basis using a series of brief anecdotal records (descriptions of the child’s behavior or skills in given situation). Children’s progress also can be assessed formally at least twice/year using a developmental checklist (checklist of behaviors that indicate physical, motor, language, cognitive, social, and emotional development/progress).

DEFINITION: Curriculum is what happens every day in the classroom and on the playground. It includes every aspect of the daily program. Curriculum derives from the program’s mission statement, philosophy (which, in turn, is based on materials and equipment are used, activities that children and adults participate in, and interactions among children and between children and adults).

Assessment information is used to inform the development of curriculum. Observation of children is the primary method of gathering information for assessment but, especially in the case of children with special needs, other forms of assessment and evaluation may be used. Information on each child is collected, summarized and analyzed to document progress, and this information normally is shared with parents.

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. A written curriculum that represents the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing documentation and by what is observed in each classroom between staff and children. 				
a) Consistency between the mission statement, philosophy statement, long-range and short-range goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing written documents: Mission, Philosophy, Curriculum statements - Verify by observation and documentation of specific examples of how the written curriculum reflects the mission & philosophy of the program. Some examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The day-to-day schedule reflects the statement of how children learn. - Behaviors, activities and staff role match the goals of the program. - Verify by interviewing teachers. 				
b) Knowledge of child development (i.e., the curriculum is developmentally appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing that the written curriculum reflects an understanding of the children’s development for each classroom. For example, if the program chooses to use a “program theme” it is tailored to the age of the children (as defined by principles of developmentally appropriate 				Document three (3) examples for each classroom that reflects that staff has knowledge of the children’s development in their classroom.

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	<p>practice). Themes are relevant and of interest to children and are centered around children's real-life experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by observing staff actions, some examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff understand that each child is unique (do not expect every child to perform equally) • Staff provides experiences that match children's development abilities (Repeat activities for children that need to master a skill. Add explicitly to activities for children that are ready for a challenge). - Milestone charts posted in each room 				
<p>c) Facilitation of all areas of development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing the written curriculum and documenting examples of how all the areas occur in the daily program. Some examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical • Motor • Social • Emotional • Language • Cognitive 				<p>Document examples for each classroom.</p>

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
d) A variety of learning experiences	<p>- Verify by reviewing curriculum and by observation that program is offering a variety of learning experiences appropriate for age of children. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water/sand play; • literacy activities such as writing, reading and storytelling, puppet play, • art activities with different media such as crayons, pens/pencils, watercolors, easel painting, chalk, glue, paper recycle items, exploration, etc. 				
e) Variety of learning materials, that ranges from simple to complex.	<p>- Verify by ensuring that materials are available and appropriate for the age of the children. Some examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gradual increase in number of pieces in puzzles accessible to children • addition of props in the block area over time • addition of writing instruments to the writing center 				

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
f) Meaningful content (i.e. it is worth knowing for the children involved)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing the written curriculum. - Verify by observation that the activities and experiences are driven from what is important to children, what children understands and can relate to. The content is not too abstract or removed from the children’s understanding. Examples of meaningful content may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mom is having a new baby. • Current events that children are hearing about through the media. • Older brother is moving away to go to college. • A new building going up across the street. 				
g) Active engagement of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by observing children’s involvement. Some examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children participate in daily tasks like setting table for snack • Children are not withdrawn, they show excitement • Children are actively playing in interest centers. 				Provide at least three (3) examples of how staff plan for active engagement.

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
h) Opportunities to make choices	<p>- Verify by observation that children are allowed to make choices. Some examples may included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can choose from a variety of interest centers • Children are allowed to make choices that are meaningful to them. They are not forced to play in all interest areas. 				Review written curriculum and provide three (3) examples of how children will have the opportunity to make choices.
i) Opportunities to experiment and explore	<p>- Verify by observation that children have the opportunity to experiment and explore. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff allow children to divert in a different direction in order to explore and expand their experience. • Staff provide activities that encourage sensory experiences i.e., sand/water play, finger painting, play dough, field trips. 				Provide three (3) examples of how children will have the opportunity to experiment and explore.

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<p>j) Integrates foundation for the following content areas: math, science, social studies, language art/literacy, health, and fine arts.</p>	<p>- Verify by observation that staff do not “teach” by content area. For example, they do not sit children down to do flash card for math or language. They do, however, provide a rich block area where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children learn concepts like shape, size, density and balance. • children learn to communicate and negotiate with peers. • children learn how to be creative. • children use props to learn about others. 				<p>Review written curriculum and provide at least three (3) examples that each content areas are integrated into the curriculum.</p>
<p>k) Large blocks of time for discovery and child-initiated learning activities.</p>	<p>- Verify by observation that reasonable blocks of time are allowed for children initiated learning. For example, teachers support learning by being flexible and allowing children to continue if they are involved in a complex activity.</p> <p>- Verify by reviewing the daily schedule.</p>				<p>Provide examples in the schedule. Review daily schedule and curriculum.</p>

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
<p>1) A balance of active/quiet, individual/small group/large group activities and indoor/outdoor time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing daily schedule and curriculum. - Verify by observation that a balance of the following times occurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Active activities</u> include: gross motor activities like dancing, jumping, running, hopscotch • <u>Quiet activities</u> include: Cozy area for book reading • <u>Small group</u> consists of 2-3 (for young children) 4-6 for older children) so that individual attention can be provided to children and/or new activities presented for the first time. • <u>Large group</u>: Circle time is the appropriate length of time for each specific age group. It is inappropriate to expect children to participate in large group activities for long periods of time. To determine the optimum length of time for group time, the best guides are the cues given by the children (i.e., are the children involved in the activity or restless and bored?) • <u>Outdoor time</u>: Children have opportunities to be outdoor for an extend time when weather permits. 				

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	In NM, it is rare that the weather would not permit however if that is the case, children should be allowed to go outdoors for at least 15 minutes dressed appropriately.				
m) Emphasis on the value of social interaction through peer learning	<p>- Verify by observation that staff and curriculum support social interaction through peer learning. Some example include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for small group of children to work together i.e., block building and dramatic play. • Staff help children express their feelings to each other. • Staff model conflict resolution <p>Staff only intervenes in children's conflict when it appears they cannot solve it on their own.</p>				Review curriculum provided at least three (3) examples that the value of social interaction through peer learning does occur.
n) Protection of children's psychological safety.	<p>- Verify by observation. Document examples of how staff support emotional development. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff comfort children when they appear, hurt, upset, afraid or disappointed. • Staff do not belittle children. • Staff do not allow children to tease or reject each other. 				

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Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs.	Document How The Element Was Verified
<p>o) Posted weekly lessons plans organized around an appropriate curriculum that incorporate a posted daily schedule and a written description of the role of the teacher(s) and teaching/learning strategies used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing lesson plans. Give examples to verify that element is met. - Verify by reviewing written description of the role of teacher(s). The description may include examples like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will provide many choices so children can learn and have new experiences. • Teachers will challenge children to solve problems. • Teachers will nurture and provide children with a sense of purpose and belonging. • Teachers will observe, document and assess to support children's learning. • Teachers will plan activities that match children's developmental level. 				
<p>2. Research and choose an assessment/instrument. Staff receives training on how to observe children, and on the use of the assessment/ instrument.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing that the assessment/instrument was chosen based on the following criteria. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings about benefits for children. • Is tailored to a specific purpose and is reliable, valid 				

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	<p>and fair for that purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes that the reliability and validity of assessments increase with children's age. • Is age-appropriate in both content and the method of data collection. • Is linguistically appropriate, recognizing that to some extent all assessments are measure of language. • Is a valued source of assessment information, <p>- Verify that staff have received training on how to observe children by reviewing training certificates or signed acknowledgement by staff members.</p> <p>- Verify that staff have received training on how to use the assessment instrument by verifying training certificates or signed acknowledgement by staff members.</p>				
<p>3. Develop and implement an observation and assessment process (i.e. Anecdotal observations or a developmental checklist) for individual curriculum and program planning. For</p>	<p>- Verify by reviewing the written process for observing children. Some plans may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of certain children each day to observe. • Plans to observe a specific area of development on certain days. 				

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<p>preschoolers, anecdotal observation should be completed at least 4 times a year for each child enrolled or a development checklist completed at least 2 times a year accompanied with written observations that are conducted during the interim time period. For infants and toddlers, anecdotal observations should be completed 6 times a year or a developmental checklist completed 3 times a year accompanied with written observations conducted during the interim time period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process of observing some children everyday for at least 15 minutes. - Verify by reviewing all the documentation regarding assessment and how the program is using it for individual and program curriculum planning. - Verify by reviewing children's files that anecdotal observations and/or a developmental checklist are done as required in the element. 				
<p>4. Describe how the program will communicate assessment information with families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing the parent handbook or documentation such as newsletters, letters to parents, notes from parent conferences etc. 				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3D: STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

RATIONALE—The quality of the staff is the most important determinant of the quality of programs. Research shows that the level of professional preparation and formal education directly impact developmental outcomes for children. Teachers make decisions about the environment and the curriculum based on knowledge of early childhood theories and best practices. Well-prepared teachers advocate for quality in early childhood programs and take advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of New Mexico’s culturally diverse children and families.

DEFINITION: An on-going plan for continued professional development for each staff member, including the director.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
Evidence of progression of the professional development plan.	1) Verify by reviewing the written document that shows movement of goals set on level 2.				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3E: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

RATIONALE—Parent participation is valuable in assisting parents to increase their knowledge about child development and education which enhances their ability to serve as their child’s primary teacher and to help staff make learning meaningful for children.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Provide at least TWO (2) family involvement activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by documenting the two family involvement activities provided. Some activities may include: suggestion box, parent bulletin board newsletter, written monthly communication, parent meetings, socials, informational workshops, minimum of one activity that encourages male participation, child development milestone information, parent/staff conferences, classroom and/or field trip volunteer, support of program operation, daily (written communication system between parent and teacher. - Verify by reviewing copies of written documents provided like newsletter, flyers for workshops, parent meetings 				
2. Information on family involvement activities is cross-referenced in the program’s parent handbook.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review parent handbook to verify that family involvement activities are included. 				

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**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3F:
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES- FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
 AND OPERATIONAL EVALUATION***

RATIONALE - Sound financial management is one of the best ways for your business to remain solvent. How well you manage the finances of your business is the cornerstone of every successful business venture. Each year thousand of potentially successful businesses fail because of poor financial management. As a business owner, you will need to identify and implement polices that will lead to and ensure that you will meet your financial obligations. (U. S. Small Business Administration).

DEFINITION; A business plan that details strategies for obtaining adequate funding, the handling of money, accompanied by a budget, which balances income and expenses, in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws regarding the reporting of income and management of money.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Evidence that program has a business plan	- Verify that a business plan has been written by reviewing plan which is voluntarily shared with the PDS or reviewing other written documentation by an outside business professional (such as a CPA, accountant) verifying that program has a business plan.				
2. Evidence of a one-year budget.	- Review a letter from a business accountant that the program has a one-year budget or review a budget, which is voluntarily shared with the PDS.				
3. Polices and procedures for the handling of financial transactions.	- Verify by reviewing that a document with polices and procedures is written for the handling of financial transactions like: monthly cash flow reports, reconciling accounts, purchase of goods and services, payroll, petty cash, etc.				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3G: EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

RATIONALE—Programs that are able to offer employee incremental compensation and benefits reinforce the professionalism of the staff employed by the program and provide incentive for the staff. Research shows that programs that provide incremental compensation and benefits are more likely to retain staff.

DEFINITION: Provide a brief written description of benefits available to staff.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Implement an incremental compensation plan that includes tangible recognition and salaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the personnel handbook • Asking the program director to provide examples of the incremental compensation that the program has provided to staff • Interviewing staff 				
2. Programs must provide at least THREE (3) employee benefits.* *The Office of Child Development must approve benefits other than those listed prior to implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing program documents for employee benefits including but not limited to: Payment of individual professional membership or association fee; Insurance supplement; Paid Leave (sick, vacation, personal, maternal, parental or bereavement); Monetary bonuses; Insurance (health, life, accident, disabilities, dental or vision); Work release time to attend professional development. - Interview program director - Interview staff 				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3H: RATIOS AND GROUP SIZE

****NO NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR LEVEL THREE***

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3I: ACCREDITATION

****NO NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR LEVEL THREE***