

## Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals Area V: Learning Environment

### Rationale

Physical and psychological components of the learning environment dramatically affect children's cognitive, social, and emotional development during the critical years of childhood when attitudes toward self, others, and future learning are maximally impacted. Research-based knowledge of child development, effective learning strategies, and content guides professionals in planning an integrated curriculum, selecting materials and equipment, planning schedules, and arranging space to create a learning environment that nurtures all areas of development. Curriculum is a key component of the learning environment and includes but is not limited to the arts, literacy, mathematics, physical education, health, social studies, and science. The learning environment is optimally effective when it is designed to foster learning through exploration, play, and appropriately challenging experiences in a context that respects diversity in backgrounds, family structure, and special developmental needs of children.

### Knowledge:

Building on an understanding of how children grow and develop, early childhood practitioners design, implement, and monitor the learning environment to support all areas of development. They:

Understand that physical and psychological components of an effective learning environment must be carefully planned, implemented, monitored, and revised on an ongoing basis in order to serve stakeholders in the program (i.e., children, families, practitioners, and the community-at-large) and that effective communication is essential in building respectful relationships among learners, families, and colleagues.

Understand that learning and development is optimized in a nurturing environment that offers opportunities for exploration, play, and challenging experiences that are appropriately matched to the current level of development, interests, and backgrounds of learners.

Understand that curriculum planning for content areas such as, but not limited to Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and

Literacy, Cognition and General Knowledge, Fine Arts, and Physical Development and Health must be guided by knowledge of content, knowledge of children's individual needs, and knowledge of effective strategies for facilitating further development.

Understand that schedule planning is important in order to use time effectively and to achieve a balance between active and quiet as well as indoor and outdoor experiences, and individual as well as group activities (when age appropriate).

Understand that, in addition to health, safety, and comfort, the physical environment must be arranged carefully to meet children's developmental needs for movement and rest, for activity and quiet, and for indoor and outdoor learning experiences, as well as for nurturing autonomy.

Understand that materials and equipment must be selected carefully to ensure health and safety as well as to provide experiences that are appropriate for a variety of developmental levels, individual interests, and cultural backgrounds.

Understand that children are influenced by multiple contexts, and that the child care environment serves children best when goals, plans, and changes in the environment are designed in collaboration with families and community stakeholders.

### Practices Based on Knowledge:

Early childhood professionals, regardless of the type of setting (schools, family child care, centers, private schools), plan, arrange, implement, and evaluate the physical and psychological (cognitive, social, affective) aspects of the learning environments that support physical, cognitive, linguistic and social development, as well as emotional well-being in children with a broad range of developmental levels, special needs, individual interests, and cultural backgrounds. They:



## 1. Overall Learning Environment

Facilitate development in all domains by planning, implementing, monitoring, and revising learning environments that are responsive and that:

- Are safe, comfortable, challenging, and welcoming to children and their families;
- Support curriculum goals (skills, concepts, attitudes, and dispositions) in areas such as literacy, mathematics, appreciation of the arts, science, and language by planning activities that capitalize on curiosity, exploration, and play with objects, materials, and artifacts of nature that promote learning about the physical world;
- Integrate curricular areas in ways that are culturally sensitive, intellectually stimulating, and responsive to children's interests, developmental abilities, and special needs.

## 2. Learning Strategies

Create a nurturing environment and utilize learning strategies that stimulate curiosity, encourage participation in exploration and play, and challenge learners to master new skills.

## 3. Curriculum

Plan curriculum experiences that facilitate the program goals and provide opportunities to acquire concepts and skills that are precursors to academic content taught in elementary school. The curriculum is based upon a philosophical framework that is congruent with the program goals and that stimulates gradual and continuous development in these domains:

- Social and Emotional Development (includes Relationships with Others, Learning about Self, Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation)
- Approaches to Learning (includes Persistence, Initiative and Curiosity, Creativity and Inventiveness, and Reasoning and Problem Solving)
- Language and Literacy (includes Listening and Speaking, Phonological Awareness and Alphabetic Knowledge, Print Awareness and Concepts, Comprehension, and Early Writing)
- Cognition and General Knowledge (includes Learning about Mathematical Concepts, Learning about the World, and Learning about Families and Communities)

- Fine Arts (includes Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual and Performing Arts, and Crafts)
- Physical Development and Health (includes Gross Motor Development, Fine Motor Development, and Health and Well-Being)

## 4. Schedules, Routines, and Transitions

Organize the schedule so that routines are both predictable and flexible, with extended periods of time for uninterrupted exploration, play, and project development.

## 5. Physical Environment

Arrange and monitor the physical environment to provide an aesthetically pleasing space, maintain safety, promote health, support the curriculum, and utilize up-to-date information on environmental impacts on health and learning.

## 6. Materials And Equipment

Select materials/equipment, arrange physical space, and plan schedules/routines to stimulate and nurture development in all curricular content areas by selecting and making available:

- A wide variety of safe, clean, challenging, and stimulating materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.
- A wide variety of materials and activities that reflect respect for the dignity of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, family composition, geographic origin, or cultural background.
- A wide variety of experiences, materials/equipment, and teaching strategies to accommodate a broad range of individual differences in prior experience, maturation rates, learning styles, special needs, cultural practices, and interests.

## 7. Collaboration

Collaborate with families, colleagues, and members of the broader community to construct learning environments that promote a spirit of unity, respect, and service in the interest of the common good.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
<b>1. Overall Learning Environment</b>				
<b>1.1 Components of Learning Environment</b>	Demonstrate an awareness that physical and psychological components of the learning environment have dramatic effects on all areas of development, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Social competence</li> <li>• Autonomy and responsibility</li> <li>• Motor skills</li> <li>• Emotional well-being</li> </ul>	Create indoor and outdoor environments that support and integrate all developmental domains	Model and help others create indoor and outdoor environments that support and integrate all developmental domains	Stay informed of current theory and research on integrated curriculum in early childhood learning environments and share that knowledge with others
<b>1.2 Appropriate and Responsive Teaching</b>	Follow program guidelines that create an appropriate and responsive learning environment. They: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact positively with children</li> <li>• Encourage children to participate in activities</li> <li>• Provide social and emotional support for children to feel comfortable and safe</li> </ul>	Use knowledge of the effects of various components of the learning environment to plan activities, set behavioral guidelines, organize the physical environment, and plan schedules that are appropriate for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual levels of development</li> <li>• Specific needs</li> <li>• Interests</li> <li>• Cultural backgrounds</li> </ul>	Model strategies for and help others understand methods for creating appropriate learning environments that are responsive to needs of children	Develop systematic plans for creating, implementing, assessing, and modifying learning environments that are safe, appropriate for the developmental levels of the children, and responsive to the children, families, and community

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
<b>1.3 Continuity of Care</b>	Provide continuity of care (i.e., same caregiver with child) over an extended period, when providing care for children from birth to three in order to nurture secure attachment relationships and emotional well-being	Provide continuity of care for children from birth to three and articulate to family members the importance of continuity	Help others understand the importance of continuity of care for infants and toddlers from birth to three	Ensure continuity of care when working with infants and toddlers from birth to three
<b>2. Learning Strategies</b>				
<b>2.1 Effective Learning Strategies</b>	Use a variety of learning strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play</li> <li>• Small group projects</li> <li>• Open-ended questioning</li> <li>• Conversation</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Cooperative learning</li> <li>• Methods of inquiry</li> </ul>	Demonstrate skills for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Implementing music and art experiences</li> <li>• Planning and conducting field trips</li> <li>• Leading group activities for children who are developmentally ready</li> </ul>	Model and help others acquire skills in a variety of teaching and learning strategies	Encourage assistants, colleagues and other staff members to practice effective teaching and learning strategies by sharing up-to-date information on best practices derived from evidence-based research
<b>2.2 Encouraging Participation</b>	Recognize the importance of encouraging children to participate in a variety of activities while remaining sensitive to individual preferences and choices	Actively encourage children to participate in activities, while also demonstrating sensitivity to children's preferences and choices about whether to participate and to what extent the participation will be (i.e., honoring children's desire to not participate in every activity)	Model various strategies for encouraging children to participate in activities while honoring preferences and choice	Plan, implement, assess, and modify practices to nurture skills for sensitive encouragement of participation
<b>2.3 Facilitating Curiosity, Exploration, and Play</b>	Support child-centered curiosity, exploration and play as primary learning strategies	Use a variety of strategies to create experiences that stimulate curiosity, exploration, and play that is appropriate to the child's age and ability level	Model and nurture others' skills in creating experiences that stimulate curiosity, exploration, and play that is appropriate to the child's age and ability level	Stay informed of, and share with others, current research and theory regarding strategic facilitation of curiosity, exploration, play, and creative expression
<b>2.4 Articulating the Rationale for Play-based Learning Strategies</b>	Describe how curiosity, exploration, and play contribute to all domains of development	Articulate to family members and others how curiosity, exploration, and play facilitate learning and development	Model and help others acquire skills for explaining how curiosity, exploration, and play facilitate learning and development	Help families and other community members and organizations to appreciate the important role of curiosity, exploration, and play in children's development, and advocate for support of play environments (e.g., playgrounds and museums)

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<b>2.5 Creating a Context that Supports Curiosity, Exploration, and Play</b>	Follow guidelines for creating the physical and psychological context for curiosity, exploration, and play behaviors related to these areas of development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and motor skills</li> <li>• Cognitive development</li> <li>• Social engagement</li> <li>• Emotional expression</li> <li>• Linguistic development</li> </ul>	Structure the environment to provide a supportive context for exploration and play through such strategies as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutually engaging interaction</li> <li>• Reciprocal exchange of actions/words</li> <li>• Turn-taking</li> </ul>	Model proficiency in and help others to develop skills in creating environments for optimal facilitation of learning and development through curiosity, exploration, and play	Plan for continuous improvement of program environment in order to facilitate curiosity, exploration and play
<b>2.6 Sequential Patterns of Development in Exploration and Play</b>	Recognize that children exhibit different types of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional behaviors in terms of their individual development	Describe the changes in play behaviors that typically occur as development proceeds	Help others understand the developmental progression of exploration and play behaviors that characterize children with typical development	Stay informed of current trends in research and theory related to the development of exploration and play and share this information with others
<b>2.7 Adapting Learning Environments to Support Learners with Atypical Developmental Patterns</b>	Follow instructions to modify the learning environment to support curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Adapt the learning environment to support curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Model and help others learn ways to adapt the environment to provide optimal support for curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Plan, carry-out, evaluate, and modify environmental factors that provide adaptive support for curiosity, exploration, and play among learners with atypical development

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<b>3. Curriculum</b>				
<b>3.1 Curriculum Philosophy</b>	Describe basic ideas that guide curriculum development	Articulate how philosophical ideas affect curriculum	Have a written philosophical statement that guides curriculum development and help others develop a philosophical statement	Provide leadership for developing curriculum philosophy
<b>3.2 Curriculum Framework</b>	Use a curriculum framework to implement activities that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture all domains of development</li> <li>• Are responsive to families</li> <li>• Are responsive to needs of learners of diverse ability levels</li> </ul>	Use assessment of children's progress to adapt curriculum to nurture gradual and continuous acquisition and integration of new skills among learners	Model and helps others improve skills in adapting curriculum to nurture gradual and continuous acquisition and integration of skills among learners	Provide leadership for curriculum development and implementation
<b>3.3 Social and Emotional Development</b>	Use attentive, responsive methods to help children acquire skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing appropriate and positive relationships with others of various ages across the lifespan</li> <li>• Learning about the "self" (e.g., how to manage or regulate one's behavior)</li> <li>• Learning to both express feelings and to inhibit unacceptable behaviors when also asserting one's independence</li> </ul>	Use a variety of attentive, responsive methods to facilitate children's social-emotional skills, and plan experiences, based on assessment of child's progress, to facilitate gradual and continuous mastery of these skills  Create opportunities for children to engage in caring behaviors for other living things (e.g., people of all ages, domesticated animals, wildlife, plants)	Model and help others acquire proficient skills to facilitate children's social-emotional skills  Model and assist others in mastering the planning of social-emotional growth experiences for children, based on the child's progress	Facilitate continuous improvement of social-emotional curriculum using best practices derived from evidenced-based research
<b>3.4 Approaches to Learning</b>	Provide opportunities for children to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistence</li> <li>• Initiative and curiosity</li> <li>• Creativity and inventiveness</li> <li>• Reasoning and problem solving</li> </ul>	Use a variety of research-based strategies to facilitate children's adaptive approaches to learning	Model and help others to acquire proficient skills in nurturing children's adaptive approaches in learning	Facilitate continuous improvement of curriculum goals that facilitate adaptive approaches to learning among young children

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<b>3.5 Language and Literacy</b>	Provide opportunities through such activities as conversation, field trips, books, and expressive arts, for children to acquire skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening and speaking</li> <li>• Phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge</li> <li>• Print awareness and concepts</li> <li>• Comprehension</li> <li>• Early writing</li> </ul>	Have a wide range of skills for promoting language and literacy that are sensitive to the language spoken in the child's home and that meet the needs of individual learners	Model skills that promote language and literacy development  Use assessment data to create learning opportunities that are adapted to the developmental level and learning abilities of individual learners	Facilitate continuous program improvement in language and literacy curriculum
<b>3.6 Learning about Mathematical Concepts</b>	Provide opportunities for children to explore and play with activities related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers and operations</li> <li>• Measurement</li> <li>• Patterns and relationships</li> <li>• Shapes</li> <li>• Spatial sense</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis</li> <li>• Time and sequence</li> </ul>	Have a wide range of skills for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and facilitating play-based mathematics activities that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrating with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Using observations, work samples, or other assessment tools to plan experiences that facilitate gradual and continuous development of mathematics concepts</li> </ul>	Model and help others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and facilitate playful curriculum activities that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrate mathematics curriculum with other content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Use assessment of child's progress to plan curriculum experiences that are matched to individual needs, interests, and ability levels</li> </ul>	Facilitate continuous improvement for mathematics curriculum goals and activities that are appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs
<b>3.7 Learning about the World (Scientific Knowledge and Scientific Inquiry and Exploration)</b>	Provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation, play, and creative expression related to cognitive understanding of the world in content areas that include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific Knowledge (e.g., living things, weather, life cycles)</li> <li>• Scientific Inquiry and Exploration (e.g., asking questions, suggesting explanations, collecting and describing information)</li> </ul>	Have a wide range of skills for: planning and facilitating play-based science activities that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Facilitate gradual and continuous development of scientific concepts</li> </ul>	Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based science activities that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Facilitate gradual and continuous development of scientific concepts</li> </ul>	Facilitate continuous program improvement by using up-to-date evidence-based research on best practices for planning and implementing science curriculum

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<p><b>3.8 Learning about Families and Communities</b></p>	<p>Provide opportunities for children to learn basic concepts and skills that lay the foundations for concepts taught in the school-age years (geography, economics, history, government) in ways appropriate for the child's age and skill levels. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of oneself as a member of social groups such as the family, early childhood program, or religious group</li> <li>• Similarities and differences among people</li> <li>• Physical characteristics of the locality, a pre-cursor to geography (e.g., mountains, water)</li> <li>• Effects on environment (e.g., recycling, pollution)</li> <li>• Community social roles (letter carrier, teacher, religious leader, mechanic)</li> <li>• Resource exchange, a precursor to economics (e.g., play store, sell and trade things)</li> <li>• Stories, dramas, and artifacts that convey history</li> <li>• Participation in social groups (e.g., make and obey rules for group) and citizenship</li> </ul>	<p>Have a wide range of skills for: planning and facilitating play-based social studies activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples or observations</li> <li>• Facilitate gradual and continuous development of precursors to social studies concepts taught in elementary school</li> </ul>	<p>Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based social studies activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Facilitate gradual and continuous development of precursors to social studies concepts taught in elementary school</li> </ul> <p>Provide opportunities for children to develop cognitive skills that are precursors to social studies content, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Economics</li> <li>• Families and Communities</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate continuous program improvement for planning and implementing families and communities (social studies) curriculum based on best practices derived from evidence-based research</p>

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<p><b>3.9 Fine Arts</b></p>	<p>Provide opportunities for exploration, play, and expression in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Music (vocal and instrumental)</li> <li>• Theatre arts (e.g., word play, pretense, dramatic play)</li> <li>• Visual arts (e.g., drawing, cutting, pasting, sculpting, painting)</li> </ul> <p>Provide opportunities for seeing and using various open-ended expressive media such as art, music, poetry, dance, and drama that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are appropriate to the child's age and skill level</li> <li>• Represent a broad range of cultures</li> <li>• Are responsive to families' goals and values</li> <li>• Result from playful engagement with expressive materials</li> <li>• Expose children to artistic products that have been recognized as significant by various cultures</li> <li>• Do not focus on copying or replicating work of others</li> </ul>	<p>Have a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based fine arts activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of fine arts skills that set the precedent for life long engagement in the fine arts</li> </ul>	<p>Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating fine arts activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of fine arts skills that set the precedent for life long engagement in the fine arts</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate continuous program improvement in the fine arts curriculum based on best practices derived from up-to-date evidence-based research</p>

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<p><b>3.10 Physical Development and Health</b></p>	<p>Offer play-based physical and motor activities that foster skills in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross motor development</li> <li>• Fine motor development</li> <li>• Health and well-being (including nutrition and self-care practices)</li> </ul> <p>Provide regular opportunities for children to use health and safety practices such as these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating nutritious foods</li> <li>• Resting</li> <li>• Relaxing</li> <li>• Exercising</li> <li>• Washing hands</li> <li>• Brushing teeth</li> <li>• Preventing accidents</li> <li>• Practicing safety rules</li> <li>• Preventing harm to one's body</li> <li>• Getting routine medical care</li> </ul> <p>Provide opportunities for children to learn about, ask questions, and use stories and play-based activities to reduce anxiety about medical concepts (e.g., immunizations, dentist, hospital)</p>	<p>Have a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based physical and motor activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of physical and motor skills</li> </ul>	<p>Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based physical and motor activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to the child's age and stage</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Adapted for children with special needs</li> <li>• Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains</li> <li>• Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations</li> <li>• Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of physical and motor skills</li> </ul>	<p>Provide leadership for planning and implementing physical and motor curriculum based on best practices derived from up-to-date evidence-based research</p>

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<b>4. Schedules, Routines, and Transitions</b>				
<b>4.1 Predictable and Flexible Schedules and Transitions</b>	Demonstrate awareness of importance of implementing both predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions that are appropriate to children's developmental levels	Plan and implement predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions appropriate to children's developmental levels	Model for others and encourage others to develop proficiency in the implementation of predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions appropriate to children's developmental levels	Provide leadership for planning, implementing, and assessing routines, and transitions, and implementing changes when appropriate
<b>4.2 Balanced Schedules</b>	Follow plans that promote learning and creative expression through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor and outdoor activities</li> <li>• Active and quiet activities</li> <li>• Group (if age appropriate) and individual experiences</li> </ul>	Create and implement plans that include indoor and outdoor experiences, active and quiet activities, and individual as well as group (if age/stage appropriate) opportunities for learning and creative expressions	Model for others and encourage others to develop proficiency in the creation and implementation of varied and balanced schedules	Supervise, assess, and inform others of current information to support continuous improvement in scheduling and planning variation and balance in activities

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<b>5. Physical Environment</b>				
<b>5.1 Environments that Nurture Development</b>	<p>With supervision, can organize, assess and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment to ensure the presence of these essential components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Comfort</li> <li>• Aesthetically pleasing learning conditions</li> <li>• Healthy space for free play</li> <li>• Supervision at all times</li> <li>• Available quiet space for individual children as needed</li> </ul>	<p>Organize, assess, and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment on an ongoing basis to meet the criteria for safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions</p>	<p>Model and help others develop skills to organize, assess and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment to ensure safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions</p>	<p>Supervise and provide support to others as they organize the indoor and outdoor environment to promote safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions and implements changes if deficiencies are identified</p>
<b>5.2 Monitoring Physical Environment</b>	<p>With supervision, monitor the physical environment to ensure it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is safe</li> <li>• Has non-obstructed pathways</li> <li>• Permits unobstructed view of all children at all times</li> <li>• Supports a variety of activities to meet diverse levels of development</li> <li>• Nurtures decision-making, autonomy, and creativity</li> <li>• Facilitates access to materials and activities</li> <li>• Provides storage for personal belongings</li> <li>• Minimizes interruptions</li> <li>• Allows active and quiet activities</li> <li>• Supports individual and group activities</li> </ul>	<p>Independently monitor physical environment for the criteria listed at the previous level and make appropriate modifications as needed</p>	<p>Model and help others develop skills to ensure that the physical environment is optimally arranged to support development</p>	<p>Provide leadership for monitoring physical aspects of the environment to ensure safety and to support program goals and objectives</p>

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<b>5.3 Current Trends in Environmental Design</b>	Participate in professional development opportunities to learn of current trends in designing the learning environment	Implement changes in physical environments based on current information related to environmental design	Model for others and share information with others on implementing current trends in creating optimal physical environments for young children, with particular attention to stress reduction through managing acoustic properties for noise abatement and increasing space or otherwise reducing crowding	Stay informed of current research and theory that has implications for design of the indoor and outdoor learning environment, and share the information with others
<b>6. Materials And Equipment</b>				
<b>6.1 Materials Appropriate to Age and Ability</b>	Use safe, clean, and appropriately challenging materials that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills	Select, create and use materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills  Encourage children to find or bring materials, screened for safety and appropriateness, and then explore their possible uses	Create designs for materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills and help others develop skills for creating appropriate materials	Supervise and provide support to others for the selection and creation of materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills and promote continuous improvement in this area
<b>6.2 Culturally Responsive Materials and Equipment</b>	Use learning materials and equipment that respect diversity in developmental abilities, family composition, and cultural backgrounds	Plan and implement learning experiences that involve materials and equipment that are respectful of all people	Model the design and use of materials and equipment that reflect cultural diversity and articulate to others why this is important	Provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and continuously improving the selection and use of materials/equipment that encourage respectful relationships among all people
<b>6.3 Variety in Materials and Equipment</b>	Rotate learning materials and equipment that are available to provide variety in children's experiences and to stimulate new interests	Plan and implement learning experiences which offer a broad range of experiences with materials and equipment	Model the practice of rotating materials in order to challenge learners to acquire new interests and skills	Provide leadership that encourages others to provide materials/equipment on a rotating basis

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
<b>7. Collaboration</b>				
<b>7.1 Collaborating with Peers to Improve Learning Environment</b>	Recognize that collaboration with other professionals provides a valuable opportunity to learn strategies for enhancing the learning environment	Participate in various ways (e.g., professional meetings, training programs, e-mail listserv discussions, etc.) in collaborating with colleagues to share ideas for enhancing the learning environment	Actively collaborate with colleagues to create ways (e.g., projects, sharing action research, etc.) to enhance the physical and psychological aspects of the learning environment	Support collaborative activities of staff members and provide leadership and time for providers to establish and maintain additional collaborative opportunities designed to enhance skills in improving physical and psychological aspects of the learning environment
<b>7.2 Collaborating with Community to Improve Learning Environment</b>	Recognize the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and the larger community to develop an effective learning environment	Practice verbal and non-verbal communication skills needed to establish positive working relationships with others	Model a variety of strategies to achieve positive working relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and members of the larger community to optimize the learning environment	Take leadership in establishing positive relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and the larger community and promote continuous improvement to optimize learning