

### Overview of Changes to NIEER Quality Standards Benchmarks

New quality standards benchmarks raise the bar for quality supports and reflect the importance of more direct supports for process quality—the actual experiences children have within classrooms, primarily through interactions with teachers and peers.

Such interactions are significantly linked with children’s development. New benchmarks focus on policies that can foster high-quality interactions, such as professional development and coaching for all teaching staff and continuous improvement quality systems through which teachers receive constructive feedback on their teaching practices. Recent research shows coaching focused on improving interactions with children can both improve teaching practices and ensure high-quality classroom environments.

Additional updates focus on the content of classroom instruction, including policies to support curriculum implementation and early learning standards aligned with both other state standards and child assessments. The figure below shows the list of current and new quality standards benchmarks, as well as the changes.

### Changes to NIEER Quality Standards Benchmarks

<b>Current Standard</b>	<b>New Standard</b>	<b>Change?</b>
Comprehensive Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive Early Learning and Development Standards that are horizontally and vertically aligned, supported, and culturally sensitive	Enhanced
None	Supports for Curriculum Implementation	New
Lead Teacher Degree (BA)	Lead Teacher Degree (BA)	No change
Lead Teacher Specialized Training in ECE/CD	Lead Teacher Specialized Training in ECE/CD	No change
Assistant Teacher Degree (CDA)	Assistant Teacher Degree (CDA)	No change
Teacher-in-Service (15 hours/year)	15 hours/year of professional development, individualized plans professional development plans, and coaching for lead <i>and</i> assistant teachers	Enhanced
Maximum Class Size (20)	Maximum Class Size (20)	No change
Staff-Child Ratio (1:10)	Staff-Child Ratio (1:10)	No change
Screenings & Referrals & 1 Support Service	Screenings & Referrals	Slight Change
Meals (At least 1)	None	Discontinued
Monitoring (Site Visits at least once every five years)	Continuous Quality Improvement System	Enhanced

## **Additional detail on the requirements to meet the four New or Enhanced Benchmarks**

### **Comprehensive Early Learning & Development Standards (ELDS):**

- ELDS in effect during the current school year
- ELDS is comprehensive, covering the following domains:
  - Physical well-being and motor development
  - Social/emotional development
  - Approaches to learning
  - Language development
  - Cognition and general knowledge
- ELDS are vertically aligned with:
  - State K-3 standards or State developed college and career ready standards for the early grades
  - State Infant and Toddler Standards (if the state has them)
- ELDS are horizontally aligned with required child assessments (or are required to be aligned with child assessments)
- State provides supports for use of the ELDS including:
  - Professional development opportunities to support the use of ELDS
  - Additional resources to implement the ELDS
- ELDS (or guidance) include content related to serving Dual Language Learners such as world languages, foreign language acquisition, and/or cultural awareness

### **Supports for Curriculum Implementation**

- At least one of the following supports to assist programs in selecting a curriculum:
  - Offers guidance on criteria for selecting evidence-based curriculum models
  - Provides a list of state-approved curricula
  - Provides a list of state-recommended curricula
  - Requires adoption of a specific curriculum by all programs/sites
  - Requires alignment of curricula with ELDS
- At least one of the following supports to assist programs with implementing curricula
  - Provides SEA/Office of Early Learning sponsored training
  - On-going technical assistance on curriculum implementation
  - Provides funding to support curriculum implementation or training

### **Professional Development**

- At least 15 clock hours per year (or the equivalent) of approved professional learning activities for (The majority of these hours should be on topics other than health & safety):
  - Lead teachers
  - Assistant teachers
- Written individualized annual professional development plans for:
  - Lead teachers
  - Assistant teachers
- Coaching is required for all lead teachers (or all classrooms)

### **Continuous Quality Improvement System**

- All classrooms receive a structured observation of classroom quality at least annually
- A reliable and valid classroom observation measure must be used
- Results from classroom observations are fed back to the classroom to improve practice