



Technical Appendix

LICENSING DATA

Public Policy Associates (PPA) maintains a longitudinal database of all licensed child care programs in Michigan, which is updated monthly and drawn from the [publicly available search](#) on the Great Start to Quality (GSQ) Website. All information on the website is auto-populated using information from Michigan's Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. The PPA team looked at database entries between February 2023 and June 2025 to understand the share of each program type that completed Self-Reflection. Duplicate entries from the same licensing number were removed. The estimate of 9,543 programs (5,236 centers; 1,742 group homes; 2,565 family homes) reflects the total number of programs open for at least one month during this 29-month period. Dividing the total number of programs that completed Self-Reflections by these program counts may underestimate completion rates, since not all programs may have been open long enough for the opportunity to complete this process.

SELF-REFLECTION AND VALIDATION PROCESS

Programs interested in moving beyond the foundational level (Level 1, Maintaining Health & Safety) must have an Organizational Profile in MiRegistry, and each staff member working with children must have a MiRegistry profile linked to the Organizational Profile. To complete the Self-Reflection and move to Level 2 (Reflecting on Quality), programs must apply to access the Quality Indicators specific to their program (not all indicators are relevant for all program types, staff, and child ages served). The Self-Reflection is completed on the Quality Improvement tab of the program's Organizational Profile in MiRegistry. For each indicator, programs select the response option that best reflects current practices. If any indicator is marked "Currently meeting," supporting evidence must be uploaded.

During Validation, trained Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) staff review the program's Self-Reflection responses and supporting evidence. If additional evidence is required to support any indicators marked as "Currently meeting," programs have one week to upload additional evidence and re-submit. Programs that complete Validation are moved to Level 4 (Enhancing Quality-Validated), and their Validation results are shared publicly on each program's profile page in the above referenced website.

QUALITY INDICATOR DATA

Data from Self-Reflection and Validation were provided to the research team from ECIC's vendor New World Now. Data was provided at the indicator level and includes the date and time the indicator was last updated. In total, there were 4,122 unique programs that completed Self-Reflection; a small number of programs (366) completed multiple Self-Reflections during the period of interest (February 2023 – June 2025); for these programs, their most recent Self-Reflection was examined. Programs can update responses to Self-Reflection; the most recent response was examined.

For each program, the total number and percentage of indicators for each response option (Currently meeting; Not meeting at this time; Not meeting at this time – Create a goal in the Quality Improvement Plan; Not aligned to program philosophy) was calculated. Percentage was the preferred reporting metric because



programs differ slightly in the number of indicators that apply to them (due to ages served, funding stream, etc.), and because the number of indicators differs for each domain. Patterns of responses were analyzed overall and by quality indicator domain (see Table A1). Data were also analyzed at the indicator level, where the percentage of programs with each response was calculated, both overall and by program type.

TABLE A1. AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF INDICATORS “CURRENTLY MEETING” BY DOMAIN AND PROGRAM TYPE

DOMAIN	OVERALL	CENTERS	GROUP HOMES	FAMILY HOMES
Inclusive Practices (4 indicators)	69%	80%	51%	46%
Family and Community Partnerships (7 indicators)	67%	76%	51%	45%
Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning (15 indicators)	59%	69%	41%	38%
Staff Qualifications (5 indicators)	59%	70%	39%	31%
Professional Development (9 indicators)	51%	54%	41%	44%

VALIDATION OF SELF-REFLECTION

Among the subset of programs that completed validation, the research team examined whether the Self-Reflection responses agreed with the Validation responses. Table A2 presents a cross-tabulation of the Self-Reflection and Validation responses; responses along the diagonal (shaded in grey) are counted as an agreement, while other responses are disagreements.

TABLE A2. VALIDATION RESPONSES COMPARED TO SELF-REFLECTION RESPONSES AT THE INDICATOR LEVEL

		VALIDATION RESPONSE					TOTAL
		MEETING	NOT ALIGNED	NOT MEETING	GOAL	NOT APPLICABLE	
Self-Reflection Response	Meeting	27,305	5	<i>18,203</i>	86	29	45,628
	Not aligned	7	964	22	0	5	998
	Not meeting	276	7	10,204	61	13	10,561
	Goal	894	14	556	7,680	2	9,146
	Not applicable	53	0	72	2	429	556
	Total	28,535	990	29,057	7,829	478	66,889

Notes: “Not applicable” responses pertain to CIL11 (“Program has completed the Environment Rating Scale [ERS] or Social Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment [SEL PQA] Self-Assessment for every age group/classroom”) which is not required for programs that are National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], National Association for Family Child Care [NAFCC], or National Accreditation Commission [NAC] accredited, or that receive Great Start Readiness Program [GSRP], Head Start, or Early Head Start funding. In some instances, responses to Validation were, “Incomplete”; to aide interpretation, these were recoded to, “Not currently meeting.” Grey shaded responses add to 46,582, the agreements; among the disagreements (20,307), the majority are “Currently meeting” on the Self-Reflection and “Not currently meeting” on the Validation; the value in this cell (18,203) has been bolded and italicized.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROCESS

Programs must have each age group they serve observed. For example, a program serving both toddlers and preschool-aged children will be observed with Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Pre-K CLASS, while a program serving infants through school-age children may be observed with both



CLASS (Infant CLASS, Toddler CLASS, Pre-K CLASS) and SEL PQA. Similarly, a family child care program could be observed using Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS), while a center-based program serving preschool children may use Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). This ensures that observation tools are aligned with the ages of children served in each program.

All observations are conducted by trained GSQ assessors or approved assessors. Each observation is carried out in a single day within a classroom and scored according to tool-specific domains and dimensions. For CLASS tools, each domain is scored across approximately four cycles of observation, with cycle-level scores averaged into a domain score. For the ERS and SEL PQA, dimensions are rated once, but multiple domains are covered during a single observation.

Table A3 provides a detailed summary of the observation tools used in the reimagined Great Start to Quality system, including their families (CLASS, ERS, SEL PQA), subtypes (e.g., Infant CLASS, ECERS), the domains covered within each tool, the specific dimensions scored under each domain, and the threshold score required to demonstrate quality. Each observation tool uses its own scoring scale, with thresholds set to indicate when programs are rated at Level 5 or considered to be Demonstrating Quality.

For CLASS instruments, each dimension is scored by trained and certified observers on a 7-point scale where a score of 1-2 indicates low quality (e.g., poor behavior management, negative teacher-child interactions), a score of 3-5 indicates mid-range quality with a mix of effective and not effective interactions, and a score of 6-7 indicates high-quality interactions with consistently effective teacher-child interactions. Thresholds for CLASS are applied at the domain level in every classroom observed, meaning that programs must meet or exceed the cutoff for each domain in each classroom to pass (e.g., Pre-K Emotional Support domain average must be equal to or exceed 4.7, which falls in the mid-to-high-quality range). A program must meet these thresholds in every observed classroom to be rated at Level 5, Demonstrating Quality. For CLASS, not meeting the threshold in any domain within any classroom means the program does not meet the standard for Level 5.

For ERS and SEL PQA, the average across domains at the classroom level is compared against the threshold to determine whether programs are moved to Level 5. For ERS instruments (ECERS, FCCERS, Infant/Toddler ERS [ITERS]), the threshold is based on average scores across all domains, with programs required to score equal to or above 5.0 overall for each observed classroom. ERS instruments use a 7-point scale where scores represent environmental quality, with 1 indicating inadequate quality (e.g., dangerous for children, 3 indicating minimal quality (basic care), 5 indicating good quality (developmentally appropriate care) and a 7 indicating excellent or best-quality care.

For SEL PQA, the threshold is also an average across all domains, with programs required to achieve equal to or greater than 3.5 for each observed classroom. The SEL PQA uses a 5-point scale to measure program practices with a score of 1 indicating practice not in place, a score of 3 indicating that practice is present in limited or less advanced form, and a score of 5 indicating that practice is present with high frequency. Scores between 4 and 5 are considered excellent while 1 to 2 raise concerns.

**TABLE A3. OBSERVATION TOOLS, DOMAINS, DIMENSIONS, AND THRESHOLD SCORES BY TOOL TYPE AND SUBTYPE**

TOOL FAMILY	TOOL SUBTYPE	DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS	MINIMUM THRESHOLD SCORE	MAXIMUM SCORE
CLASS	Infant CLASS	Responsive Caregiving	Relational Climate; Teacher Sensitivity; Facilitated Exploration; Early Language Support	4.50	7.00
	Toddler CLASS	Emotional and Behavior Support	Positive Climate; Negative Climate; Teacher Sensitivity; Regard for Student Perspective; Behavior Guidance	5.00	7.00
		Engaged Support for Learning	Facilitation of Learning and Development; Quality of Feedback; Language Modeling	3.25	7.00
	PreK CLASS	Emotional Support	Positive Climate; Negative Climate; Teacher Sensitivity; Regard for Student Perspective	4.75	7.00
		Classroom Organization	Behavior Management; Productivity; Instructional Learning Format	4.50	7.00
		Instructional Support	Concept Development; Quality of Feedback; Language Modeling	2.75	7.00
ERS	ECERS ¹ ; FCCERS ² ; ITERS ³	Space and Furnishings	Indoor space; Furnishings for care, play, and learning; Room arrangement for play and leaning; Space for privacy ¹ ; Child-related display; Space for gross motor play ¹ ; Gross motor equipment ¹	5.00	7.00
		Personal Care Routines	Meals/snacks; Toileting/diapering; Health practices; Safety practices		
		Language and Literacy	Helping children expand vocabulary; Encouraging children to use language ¹ ; Encouraging children to communicate ^{2,3} ; Responding to children's communication ³ ; Staff use of books with children; Encouraging children's use of books; Becoming familiar with print ¹		
		Learning Activities	Fine motor; Art; Music and movement; Blocks; Dramatic play; Nature/science; Math materials and activities ¹ ; Math in daily events ¹ ; Math/number ^{2,3} ; Understanding written numbers; Promoting acceptance of diversity; Appropriate use of technology/screen time; Gross motor ^{2,3}		
		Interaction	Supervision of gross motor; Supervision (non gross motor) ^{2,3} ; Individualized teaching and learning ¹ ; Staff/provider-child interaction; Peer interaction/interactions among children; Discipline ¹ ; Providing physical warmth/touch ^{2,3} ; Guiding children's behavior ^{2,3}		
		Program Structure	Transitions and waiting times; Schedules and transitions ^{2,3} ; Free play; Whole group activities for play and learning; Group time ² ; Group play activities ³		



TOOL FAMILY	TOOL SUBTYPE	DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS	MINIMUM THRESHOLD SCORE	MAXIMUM SCORE
SEL PQA	SEL PQA	Safe Environment	Creating Safe Spaces	3.50	5.00
		Supportive Environment	Emotion Coaching; Scaffolding Learning; Fostering Growth Mindset		
		Interactive Environment	Fostering Teamwork; Promoting Responsibility and Leadership; Cultivating Empathy		
		Engaging Environment	Furthering Learning; Supporting Youth Interests; Supporting Plans and Goals		

Notes: ECERS = Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. FCCERS = Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale. ITERS = Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale. While the domains are consistent across ITERS, FCCERS, and ECERS, the specific dimensions within each domain vary slightly by tool. To reflect these differences, dimensions unique to a given ERS tool are noted with a corresponding superscript in the “Dimensions” column.

OBSERVATION DATA

Across the period of interest (February 2023 – March 2025), the observation dataset includes 436 programs and 722 completed classroom observations. Because programs often serve multiple age groups, the number of observations was greater than the number of programs, and many programs had multiple classrooms observed, often using different tools (see Table A4).

The classroom observation data are multilevel in structure. Each observation was conducted at the classroom level within a licensed program organization. Within each classroom observation, assessors scored multiple domains, which in turn contained multiple dimensions. Cycles (repeated within a day for CLASS) were nested in 133 unique dimensions (e.g., positive climate, teacher sensitivity), nested in 28 domains across three observation tools, representing 722 completed classroom observations nested in 436 unique programs. For CLASS instruments, each domain is observed across approximately four cycles in a single day, yielding repeated ratings for each dimension. For ERS and SEL PQA instruments, ratings are collected once per dimension but span multiple domains (see Table A3). Additionally, programs often had multiple classrooms observed, sometimes with different tools, reflecting the complexity of serving multiple age groups and the multilevel structure of the data.

Pre-K CLASS was the most widely used tool subtype.

Pre-K CLASS was the most frequently used tool subtype overall, accounting for 50% of all observations, and was exclusively administered in center-based settings. The ERS tools were used less frequently: ECERS (3%) and ITERS (3%) were limited to center-based programs, while FCCERS (3%) was used exclusively in home-based settings, split between group homes (29%) and family homes (31%). SEL PQA represented 4% of all observations, also exclusively in centers. A total of 639 unique program-tool-subtype observations were completed across program types. Frequencies of all tool subtypes by program type are described in Table A4.

**TABLE A4. TOTAL UNIQUE PROGRAM-TOOL SUBTYPE OBSRVATIONS BY TOOL SUBTYPE AND PROGRAM TYPE**

TOOL TYPE	TOOL SUBTYPE	OVERALL	CENTERS	GROUP HOMES	FAMILY HOMES
CLASS	INFANT CLASS	69 (11%)	68 (12%)	--	1 (3%)
	TODDLER CLASS	164 (26%)	120 (21%)	25 (71%)	19 (66%)
	PRE-K CLASS	320 (50%)	320 (56%)	--	--
ERS	ECERS	19 (3%)	19 (3%)	--	--
	FCCERS	19 (3%)	--	10 (29%)	9 (31%)
	ITERS	20 (3%)	20 (3%)	--	--
SEL PQA		28 (4%)	28 (5%)	--	--
TOTAL		639 (100%)	575 (100%)	35 (100%)	29 (100%)

Demonstrating Quality varied by tool subtype and tool domains.

Pass rates varied by domain. For pass rates of observations at the domain level, classroom level, and program level by tool, tool subtype, and tool domain (CLASS only), please see table A5. The highest pass rates were observed for Pre-K CLASS Emotional Support (98%) and Pre-K CLASS Classroom Organization (93%), while Pre-K CLASS Instructional Support (88%) and Toddler CLASS Engaged Support for Learning (78%) showed slightly less frequent rates of passing. Infant CLASS (with only one domain, Responsive Caregiving) showed relatively strong performance with 89% of observations passing. Out of the ERS tools, ITERS had the highest pass rate at 47% of classrooms observed.



TABLE A5. PERCENTAGE OF PROVIDERS, CLASSROOMS, AND DOMAINS OBSERVED MEETING MINIMUM THRESHOLDS BY TOOL, TOOL SUBTYPE AND DOMAIN

		THRESHOLD RULE	DOMAINS (N = 1,671)			CLASSROOMS (N = 722)			PROGRAMS (N = 454)		
TOOL FAMILY	TOOL SUBTYPE	DOMAIN	TOTAL N (%)	PASS N (%)	NOT PASS N (%)	TOTAL N (%)	PASS N (%)	NOT PASS N (%)	TOTAL N (%)	PASS N (%)	NOT PASS N (%)
CLASS	Infant CLASS	Responsive Caregiving	70 (100%)	62 (89%)	8 (11%)	70 (100%)	62 (89%)	8 (11%)			
	Toddler CLASS	Emotional and Behavior Support	165 (100%)	149 (90%)	16 (10%)						
		Engaged Support for Learning	165 (100%)	128 (78%)	37 (22%)						
	PreK CLASS	Emotional Support	393 (100%)	386 (98%)	7 (2%)						
		Classroom Organization	392 (100%)	365 (93%)	27 (7%)						
		Instructional Support	392 (100%)	343 (87.5%)	49 (12.5%)						
	Total	All CLASS	1,577 (100%)	1,433 (91%)	144 (9%)	628 (100%)	516 (82%)	112 (18%)	384 (100%)	295 (77%)	89 (23%)
ERS	ECERS	Tool Average	19 (100%)	6 (32%)	13 (68%)	19 (100%)	6 (32%)	13 (68%)			
	FCCERS	Tool Average	19 (100%)	7 (37%)	12 (63%)	19 (100%)	7 (37%)	12 (63%)			
	ITERS	Tool Average	28 (100%)	13 (46%)	15 (54%)	28 (100%)	13 (46%)	15 (54%)			
	Total	All ERS	66 (100%)	26 (39%)	40 (61%)	66 (100%)	26 (39%)	40 (61%)	42 (100%)	16 (38%)	26 (62%)
SEL POA	Total	Tool Average	28 (100%)	6 (21%)	22 (79%)	28 (100%)	6 (21%)	22 (79%)	28 (100%)	6 (21%)	22 (79%)

Notes: Domain pass indicates that all domain scores were equal to or above threshold score for that tool-domain. Classroom pass indicates all domains within same classroom met thresholds. Not passing at the classroom level reflects at least one domain below the minimum threshold (most often instructional support in Pre-K CLASS or Engaged Support for Learning in Toddler CLASS).