

Trying
to get it right

Contact Information



Lindsey Ramsey

**Public Policy Regional Coordinator,
Trying Together**

lindsey@tryingtogether.org

Trying Together

Trying Together supports high-quality care and education for young children by providing advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, their families, and the individuals who interact with them.



Stay Up To Date

Newsletter Sign Up

Stay up to date on Trying Together news and events: bit.ly/receive-emails

Follow Trying Together On Social Media

Facebook: @Trying Together

Twitter: @Trying_Together

Instagram: @Trying_Together

LinkedIn: @Trying Together



How To Choose High-Quality Child Care

This presentation will give a brief overview of important characteristics to look for when searching for child care in our area. We will discuss the following topics:

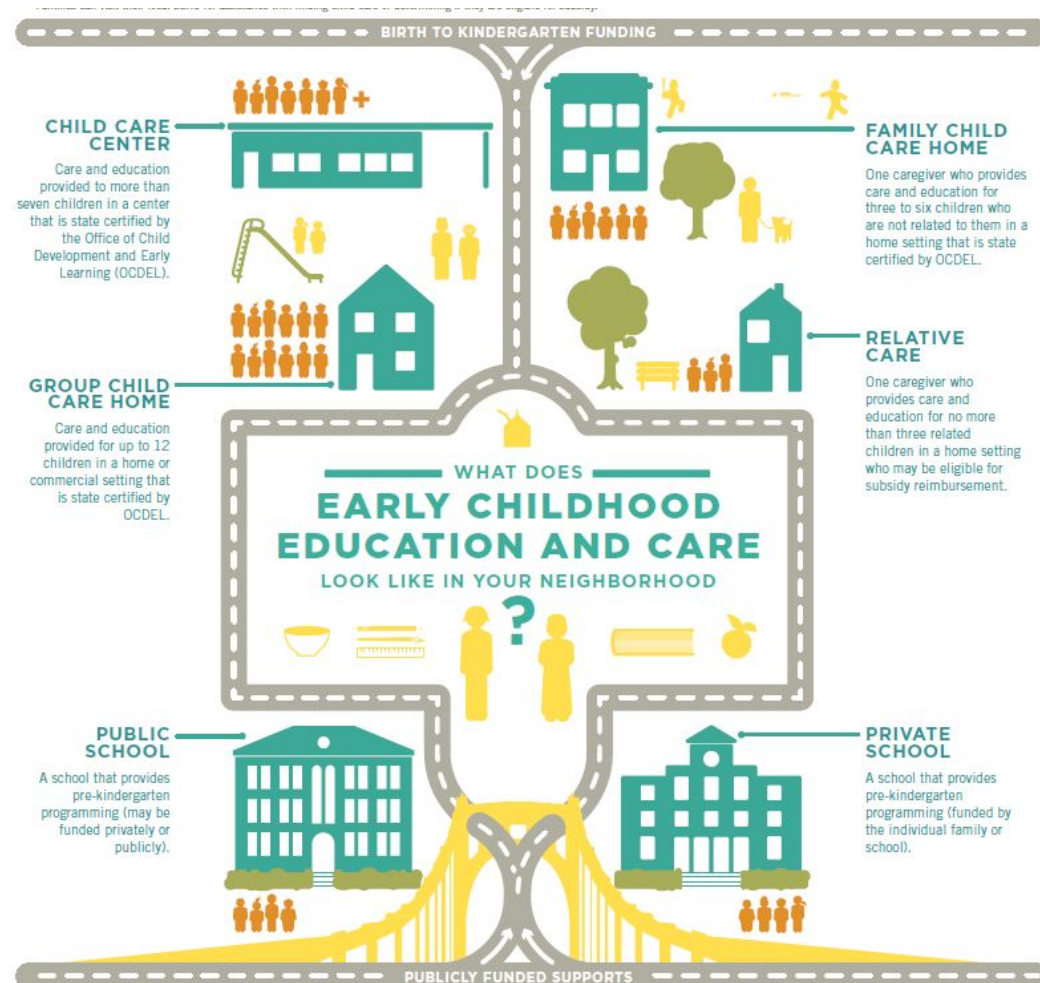
- Early Learning Landscape in Pennsylvania
- DAP and Interactions
- Curriculum and Assessment
- Physical Environment
- Health and Safety/COVID-19 Adaptations
- Center and Family Engagement
- Family and Community Partnerships

The Importance of Choice

- Every child is unique and has different learning styles.
- Each child also comes from a diverse family and background.
- For these reasons, it is important that families have choices when exploring child care options.



Early Childhood Education (ECE) Landscape in PA



Affording High-Quality Child Care

Child Care Works

- 200% of [federal poverty guidelines](#).
- Children ages birth to 12 may receive a voucher to attend a child care program based on the family or household's school or work schedule; a small co-pay is required from the family.

Pre-K Counts

- 300% of [federal poverty guidelines](#).
- School-day, school-year program for children ages three and four; may give preference to four year olds.

Affording High-Quality Child Care

Head Start

- 100% of [federal poverty guidelines](#).
- School-day, school-year program for children ages three and four; may give preference to four year olds.

Early Head Start

- 100% of [federal poverty guidelines](#).
- Serves children birth to age two in home-based or center-based programs; most programs are not full-time care.

Affording High-Quality Child Care

Even if a family does not qualify for Child Care Works, Pre-K Counts, Head Start, or Early Head Start, many programs offer their own independent scholarships or tuition assistance programs. Families can ask each early learning program about financial assistance.

The Importance of Quality

As caregivers begin to navigate their way through the ECE landscape and tour prospective early learning programs, it is very important to keep **QUALITY** in mind!

Pennsylvania's child care providers currently participate in the **Keystone STARS Quality Rating Improvement System** in an effort to support the quality improvement work of providers in our state. Providers are awarded with a STAR level from 1 to 4 to reflect their progression through the system.

Along with this system, here are other indicators of quality...



Characteristics of Quality

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice
(DAP) and Interactions**

DAP and Interactions

Interactions and experiences are some of the most crucial pieces to child development! Always look for programs with diverse social experiences, quality interactions, and developmentally appropriate practices.

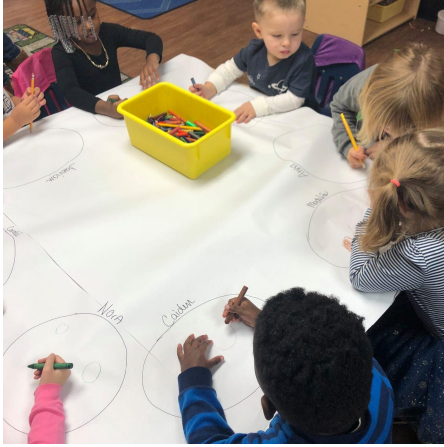
Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP): A framework designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. To make decisions that reflect best practices, educators take into consideration what they know about the whole child and facilitate learning experiences to reflect the needs of each child at their current level of development.

Serve and Return

A style of interaction that includes the back-and-forth communication between children and responsive adults. When a baby coos or cries, or when a pre-k child asks, “Why?”, the responsive adult returns the child’s “serve” with interest and continues the back-and-forth interaction for as long as the child is interested.

During these interactions, connections are built and strengthened in the child’s brain that support communication and social-emotional skill development.





Culturally Responsive Environments

Children need to be served in environments that promote diversity and inclusion. Educators provide culturally responsive environments by knowing their students' backgrounds and incorporating their unique differences in everyday learning.



Characteristics of Quality

Curriculum and Assessment

Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards

“The Learning Standards for Early Childhood provide a framework for classroom implementation. Teachers who use these standards as a guide for creating appropriate learning experiences build instructional strategies that focus on what children should be able to learn and do.”

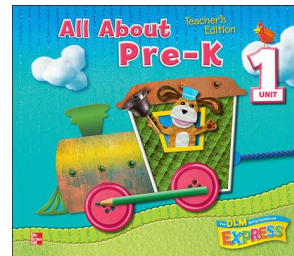
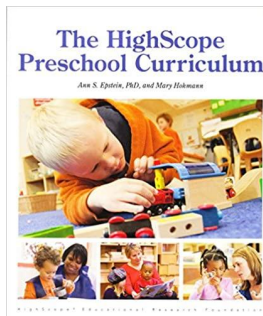
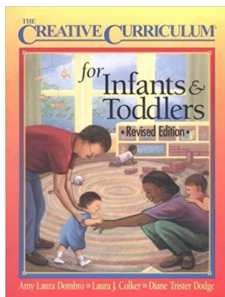
Time	Activity	Description	Key Learning Area Standards
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Snack Time	<p>Children are to count out 5 crackers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask children to talk about the shapes they have chosen (circle, square, triangle) and describe the shape's attributes (how many sides etc.).• Ask Justin and Jamal (at their tables) to pour the juice.• Ask Jared to count out the cups/napkins.	<p>1.1.3 Vocabulary Development: Janie, Joe 2.1.1 Count and Compare Numbers: Jared 10.5.2 Eye/Hand Coordination: Justine, Jamal</p>



Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards

“Used together with curriculum content resources, the Standards help teachers provide responsive and intentional opportunities for learning to all children.”

While touring prospective early learning facilities be sure to inquire about the program’s curriculum. Curriculum types vary between providers, but the use of a curriculum assists educators in delivering structured and comprehensive learning experiences.



“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

– Fred Rogers

**Early childhood curriculum
is structured around the
most crucial part of early
learning...PLAY!**



Informal Assessments

Early childhood educators meet their students where they are developmentally and come up with child-centered comprehensive plans and individualized instruction to further their development. Every child is unique and develops at their own pace.

Educators preform informal assessments through gathering ongoing evidence of each child's progression. High-quality collection of evidence can be the following:

- children's work samples from throughout the year,
- teachers' observation notes,
- photos of children's work, and
- children's reflections on their work.

Formal Assessments

In addition to informal assessments, providers use formal assessment tools to track skill development. Many providers complete assessments multiple times a year and conduct parent/teacher conferences to inform parents about their child's learning journey and developmental milestones. This helps parents discover what practices are developmentally appropriate for their child.

For resources on developmental milestones, visit:

helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/DevelopMilestone/index.html

Characteristics of Quality

Physical Environment

Physical Environment

Early childhood educators develop high-quality physical environments so each child can explore and be further enticed to learn. When exploring the physical environment of a child care facility, the most important thing to look for is **SAFETY**.

Along with ensuring that there are safe spaces, here are additional indicators of high quality...

Centers

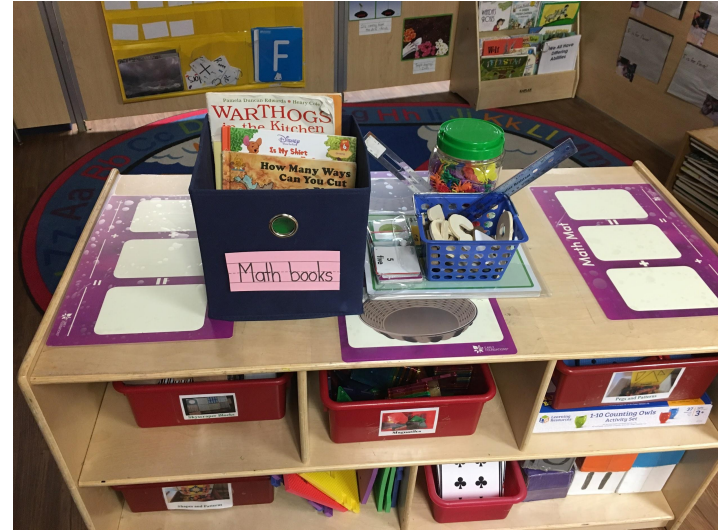
The creation of centers within early childhood classrooms assists educators in facilitating routines and classroom organization. Centers are used to facilitate learning in specific content areas (science, literacy, dramatic play, etc.).

The enrichment of centers helps extend a child's learning experience and sparks their imagination and creativity.



Materials

Young children become even more engulfed in play when they have developmentally appropriate materials to explore. Ensure there is a variety of materials that help engage children in constructive play opportunities.



Cozy Areas

Just like adults, sometimes children need a quiet space to relax and reflect. Cozy areas contribute to social-emotional development by allowing children with a space to take a break from large group interactions to identify their feelings and emotions.



Outdoor Space

Young children need adequate outdoor space to explore the world around them! Strong development of gross motor skills occurs in outdoor spaces. Along with that, there are so many lessons to be learned outside! Play in outdoor spaces promote all facets of development!



Evidence of Learning

In collaboration with the environment and adequate resources, high-quality interactions allow educators to produce amazing moments for young children! High quality is something you can see and feel when entering a child care facility.

Evidence of Learning is documentation such as photos, quotes, writing samples, and charting displayed to convey what the children have been learning in their classrooms. This is another way to indicate high quality while touring early learning programs.



Characteristics of Quality

Health and Safety – COVID-19 Adaptations

Health and Safety: COVID-19 Adaptations

What questions may a caregiver ask child care providers regarding COVID-19 procedures?

First, it is important to note that all child care providers were given the guidance to go by CDC regulations, and they are to comply to the **best of their ability**. These regulations are NOT REQUIRED at this time, so it is up to the provider's discretion and ability to meet these regulations.

Health and Safety: COVID-19 Adaptations

As we review what these regulations are, think about which ones are the most important to you and your family. Regulations include:

- Social Distancing Strategies
- Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures
- Screening Children Upon Arrival
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Routines
- Eliminating Personal Items Brought Into the Center
- Mask Wearing for Staff and Children



tryingtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TT-Family-Checklist_06-20-1.pdf
cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#pickup



Characteristics of Quality

Provider and Family Engagement

Provider and Family Engagement

The relationship between the provider and family is vital to the success of every child's learning experience. Creating a strong partnership between the provider and family creates optimal support for the child's social, emotional, and developmental needs.

Here are some things to remember...

Provider and Family Engagement

- Communication is key! Before touring a facility be sure to write down the most important topics to you regarding your child's care and education.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and share important information to get as much information as you can.
- Thoroughly read all tour and enrollment paperwork. Educate yourself on the mission and policies of the early learning program before committing.

Provider and Family Engagement



Families are children's first and most important teachers, so when caregivers are working in partnership with providers, educators are best able to individualize learning experiences, develop strong relationships, and communicate openly and respectfully.

Be sure to inquire about parent engagement opportunities and ways you can stay actively involved with your child's early learning journey.

Family and Community Partnerships

Start Strong PA

Advocate for affordable high-quality child care: startstrongpa.org

Pre-K for PA

Advocate for increased access to high-quality pre-k: prekforpa.org

Childhood Begins at Home

Advocate for evidence-based home visiting: childhoodbeginsathome.org

Support Our Public Policy Agenda

Receive advocacy alerts right in your inbox: bit.ly/advocacy-alert



Kindergarten Registration and Transition

The Hi5! Partnership focuses on engaging all 43 public school districts in Allegheny County and supports each district to:

- develop and implement their own kindergarten transition plans;
- build awareness with families that when “your child reaches five years of age, it’s time to register” them for kindergarten;
- network and share best practices between pre-k teachers, kindergarten teachers, early childhood program directors, and school administrators; and
- gather community resources throughout the county.



More Resources from Trying Together

Allegheny Child Care - www.alleghenychildcare.org

Early Learning Resource Center Region 5 - elrc5.alleghenycounty.us

The Homewood Early Learning Hub & Family Center -
www.tryingtogether.org/community-resources/hub-and-family-center

Developmentally Appropriate Parenting (DAP) Series -
<https://tryingtogether.org/parenting-resources/>



Share Your Feedback!

Fill out this survey to receive DAP
Series cards via mail -

<http://bit.ly/parentingtogether>



Contact Information



Lindsey Ramsey

**Public Policy Regional Coordinator,
Trying Together**

lindsey@tryingtogether.org

Thank you.

