

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

There is a link between program quality and child outcomes. Children in high-quality early childhood education programs have better outcomes. Research (Espinoza, 2002) has shown that quality early childhood education considerably influences the social and academic development of children. High-quality early childhood education has strong benefits for children's future academic success and educational achievement, as well as a positive influence on children's social skills and behavior. Research from The National Research Council (Dwyer & McKee, 2000) shows "positive connections between quality educational experiences in the preschool years, readiness for kindergarten and first grade, and later learning outcomes".

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, high-quality early childhood education (Gawrgy, 2006):

1. Promote positive relationships for all children and adults;
2. Implement a curriculum that fosters all areas of child development – cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social;
3. Use developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches;
4. Provide ongoing assessment of child progress;
5. Promote the nutrition and health of children and staff;
6. Employ and support qualified teaching staff;
7. Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with families;
8. Establish and maintain relationships and use resources of the community;
9. Provide a safe and healthy physical environment; and
10. Implement strong program management policies that result in high-quality services.

The Michigan State Board of Education recognizes the value and need for high- quality early childhood education. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), along with other state-level departments and organizational partners, is committed to providing a Great Start for all young children. A Great Start is a strong foundation that assures that every child is safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and in life. In order to have a Great Start, every child must have early childhood experiences and settings that will prepare him or her for success. Part of this foundation is high-quality program standards for early childhood programs and settings. *The Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten (ECSQ-PK)* was developed to improve the quality of early childhood programs and settings in Michigan. A copy of the ECSQ-PK can be found on the Michigan Department of Education Office of Great Start Webpage <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-63533---,00.html>.

It is a document of research-based high-quality standards and learning expectation for preschool programs. When early childhood programs utilize and implement the ECSQ-PK in its entirety, they are ensuring the provision of high-quality learning experiences for the children in their programs.

The ECSQ-PK is meant to provide guidance to all early care and early childhood education programs by providing all three-and four-year-old children with opportunities to reach essential developmental and educational goals regardless of their development. The state-approved assessment tools in this manual are in alignment with the ECSQ-PK. This alignment supports assessment-driven curriculum to provide high-quality programs. The alignments provide teachers and service providers with functional information to help guide the development of IEP goals as well as individualized instruction for each child. The ECSQ-PK includes both *Quality*

Program Standards for Prekindergarten Programs and Early Learning Expectations for Three- and-Four Year-Old Children.