

BEST IN CLASS Environment Standards

The Environment Standards are designed to ensure that all learning experiences and environments are delivered with intentionality to promote strong child outcomes aligning with the North Dakota Early Learning Standards.

- Materials and equipment listed in the standards are required to be purchased during the first year of funding and replaced as needed through BIC participation.
- All materials should be age appropriate for four-year-old children of all abilities.

Definitions

- An *interest center* is a clearly defined area for a particular kind of play including but not limited to; library, fine motor/tabletop manipulatives, art, block play, dramatic play, discovery.
- *Free play* is a designated time when children choose the materials and peers to play with. Adult interaction is in response to the child's social and developmental needs.

Classroom Furnishings/Room Arrangement

Cubbies/lockers are designated for each child enrolled

Appropriate child-size tables and chairs are used (children's feet are flat on the floor when seated). Desks are not used with children.

At least 6 clearly defined *Interest centers* are available to provide a variety of experiences

Interest centers are organized for independent use by children; materials are stored on open shelves in labeled containers, and near designated play space

A social emotional (calm down) space is accessible

Additional materials are available to add to or change interest centers

Furniture and materials should be sturdy and in good repair

All interest centers are accessible to children with disabilities and adaptive furniture to permit inclusion is available (when applicable)

Gross Motor

Adequate designated space outdoors for gross motor play exists

Adequate materials are accessible for gross motor play indoors

Children have access and the opportunity to use equipment daily that promotes a variety of gross motor skills

Adaptations are made or special equipment is provided for children in group with disabilities (when applicable)

Library

One front-facing bookshelf is available to display books

A wide selection of books is accessible to children (topics shall include people, feelings and emotions, nature/science, math, males and females, jobs/work, health or self-help skills, sports/hobbies, abilities)

Books representing diversity are accessible

Soft seating is available to children

Additional materials are accessible to enhance library area (examples: puppets, soft toys, flannel boards, etc.)

Fine Motor and Tabletop Manipulatives
Two shelves and one table for fine motor and manipulative storage are accessible (recommended)
At least three types of interlocking building materials are accessible
At least three types of manipulatives are accessible
At least five puzzles are accessible (at different difficulty levels)
Math/Number (materials are accessible in multiple interest centers)
At least three types of materials are accessible for counting
At least three types of materials are accessible for measuring
At least three types of materials are accessible for learning shape/size
At least three types of materials are accessible for comparing quantities
At least three types of materials are accessible for written numbers
Art
One shelf and one table for art are recommended.
Art easel is accessible to children daily
Art materials are accessible, including drawing, painting, three-dimensional, collage and tools.
Writing (may be combined within another center)
Writing materials are accessible in multiple interest centers and include, but not limited to, a variety of writing tools and paper
Block Play
Two shelves and adequate defined space are set aside for block play
Complete set of unit blocks (100 minimum blocks) are accessible
Three categories of accessories, including people, animals and vehicles, are accessible
Block accessories represent diversity
Dramatic Play
One shelf and adequate defined space are set aside for dramatic play (recommended)
Play kitchen and kitchen accessories (food, pots/pans, dishes) are accessible
Baby dolls that represent diversity and accessories are accessible
Dress-up clothing is accessible
Additional props including, but not limited to, cash register, play phones, doctor kit, vet kit, tool kit, etc. are accessible
Discovery
One shelf for discovery is recommended
At least three collections of natural objects are accessible
At least three books and/or games representing nature/science are accessible
At least three science tools are accessible for activities
At least one living object is recommended
Sand and Water Play
Sand/water table is accessible to children indoors containing sand and/or water

Accessories and/or props are accessible to use with sand/water table

Music and Listening Center

Music materials are accessible for children's use (if children do not attend music class regularly)

Listening Center includes CD player or listening device and recorded stories/songs for independent use (listening center is a recommended additional classroom center)

Schedule

Daily visual schedule is posted in classroom and relates generally to what occurs

Indoor *free* play is an uninterrupted time that occurs daily for a minimum of 60 minutes. Materials are accessible during this time. *Minimum of 30 minutes is required for half day programs

Outdoor play occurs daily for a minimum of 30 minutes. *Weather permitting

Large group experiences occur daily and is limited to 10-20 minutes depending on child's interest level

Small group experiences are planned to address individual strengths, needs, and interests of each child

Transitions are optimized for learning experiences and minimal wait time