Early Achievers
Participant Operating Guidelines

Individually Teaching and Learning for Every Child

Curriculum & Learning Opportunities aligned with Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines

Screening and Ongoing Child Assessment in collaboration with families

Engaging Interactions and Environments
Well organized • Social Emotional Support • Instructional Interactions

Adapted from National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

July 1, 2013
# Table of Contents

I. **Introduction** ............................................................................................................. 1-3  
   a. Overview: What is Early Achievers? ................................................................. 1  
   b. History in Washington ......................................................................................... 1  
   c. Commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement ............................................. 2  
   d. Purpose of the Operating Guidelines ................................................................. 2  
   e. Updates to the Early Achievers Participant Operating Guidelines .................... 3  

II. **Early Achievers Partners: Roles within the System** ............................................. 3-4  
   a. Agency roles ........................................................................................................ 3  
      Figure 1: Implementation Partners .................................................................... 4  
   b. Mandated Reporting ......................................................................................... 4  

III. **Eligibility** ............................................................................................................. 4-8  
   a. Facility Type ....................................................................................................... 4  
      i. Licensing and certification requirements  
         - Licensed child care facilities  
         - Tribal and military facilities  
         - Head Start and ECEAP facilities  
      ii. Ages of children served  
   b. Child Enrollment Requirements ............................................................................ 6  
      i. During Early Achievers Registration and Level 2 participation  
      ii. On-site evaluation  
      iii. Ongoing requirements (after completion of Level 2)  
   c. Licensing Status .................................................................................................. 6  
      i. Requirements: definition of good standing for participation  
      ii. How licensing status affects registration and participation  
         - Initial license  
         - Revocation  
         - Summary suspension  
         - Probationary license  
      iii. Future participation
IV. Early Achievers Quality Standards ............................................. 8-13
   a. Overview .................................................................................. 8
   b. Rating Structure ......................................................................... 9
      Figure 2: Overview of Early Achievers Levels 1-5 .................... 9
      Figure 3: Overview of Early Achievers Points by Level ............... 10
   c. Quality Standards/Components ................................................. 10
      Figure 4: Quality Standard Areas: Examples .............................. 11
   d. ERS and CLASS ........................................................................ 12
      i. Description of assessment tools
      ii. Minimum thresholds
   e. How the Quality Standards are “weighted” ................................. 13

V. Early Achievers Supports and Incentives ....................................... 13-21
   a. Overview .................................................................................. 13
   b. Level 2 Supports ....................................................................... 14
      i. Technical assistance
      ii. Training
      iii. Rating Readiness Consultation
   c. Coaching .................................................................................... 15
      i. Background
      ii. Role of coach
      iii. Quality Improvement Plan
   d. Professional Development .......................................................... 17
      i. Washington Scholarships
      ii. Opportunity Grants
   e. Quality Improvement Awards .................................................. 17
      i. Award eligibility
      ii. Award amounts
      Figure 5: Family child care Quality Improvement Award amounts ........................................ 18
      Figure 6: Child care center Quality Improvement Award amounts ........................................ 18
      iii. Distribution of award funds
      iv. Purpose of award funds
      v. Allowable uses
      vi. Restrictions
      vii. Documentation and reporting
      viii. Fraudulent use of funds
Moving through Level 2: entrance to completion

VI.

a. Level 2 Overview

b. Primary and Secondary QRIS Contacts

c. Getting Started

i. MERIT

ii. Early Achievers Orientation

iii. Early Achievers Participation Agreement

iv. Early Achievers Registration

d. Completion of Required Activities

i. Staff Professional Profiles in MERIT

ii. Facility Profile

iii. Professional Training Series

• Overview

• Who is required to attend

• List of trainings

• Order of training series

iv. Facility self-assessment

e. Time limits for Facility Completion of Level 2 Requirements

i. Length of time allowed to complete requirements

ii. Request for extension

iii. Failure to complete requirements within time frame

iv. Reapplication to Early Achievers after time expiration

f. Staff Change before Completion of Level 2

i. Primary QRIS Contact

ii. Secondary QRIS Contact

iii. Facility information

g. Staff Change after Completion of Level 2

h. Achievement of Early Achievers Level 2 Status

i. Submission and review of Application for Level 2

ii. Notification of Level 2 Status

i. Facilities that remain a Level 2

i. Scenarios

ii. Responsibilities of facilities that remain Level 2
VII. Evaluation and Rating ................................................................. 29-42
   a. Overview .............................................................................. 29
   b. Request for Evaluation ......................................................... 29
      i. Eligibility
      ii. Facilities that do not request an evaluation
   c. Evaluation Preparation ......................................................... 29
      i. Rating Readiness Tool
   d. Parent Consent ..................................................................... 31
   e. Process to Submit Request for Evaluation ............................ 31
      i. Request for on-site evaluation in MERIT
      ii. Applicant cohorts
         Figure 7: Request for on-site evaluation in MERIT:
         Choice of applicant cohorts ............................................... 32
         Figure 8: From Request to On-Site Evaluation to Rating: Visual
      iii. Approval of evaluation request
   f. On-site Evaluation ................................................................. 34
      i. Step 1: Community Liaison visit
      ii. Step 2: Data Collector visit
      iii. Post-visit surveys
   g. Rating Assignment ............................................................... 36
      i. Creation of ratings
      ii. Rating notification
      iii. Publication of Early Achievers participation status
      iv. Length of time that rating is valid
      v. Request for re-rating
   h. Ratings Appeals ................................................................. 38
      i. Overview
      ii. Eligibility
      iii. Purpose of rating appeal process
      iv. Criteria for appeal
      v. How to initiate rating appeal
      vi. DEL’s rating appeal resolution process

VIII. Participation Requirements and Expectations ....................... 42-48
   a. Recordkeeping ..................................................................... 42
   b. Notification Requirements ................................................... 42
   c. How address change affects Early Achievers participation ...... 43
   d. Information Sharing ......................................................... 43
e. Internet Usage/Security ................................................................. 43
f. Use and Development of Early Achievers Marketing and Outreach Materials ................................................................. 43
   i. Facility website
   ii. Facility business brochure/flyer
   iii. Custom created marketing materials
g. Conflict of Interest .................................................................................. 45
h. Criteria for Termination ............................................................................. 45
i. Procedure for Termination ........................................................................ 46
j. Obligations of Participants Upon Termination or Withdrawal from Early Achievers ................................................................. 46
k. Reapplication to Early Achievers ............................................................... 47
   i. When can a facility reapply immediately to Early Achievers?
   ii. When must a facility wait one year to reapply to Early Achievers?
   iii. Process to reapply after one year to Early Achievers

IX. Glossary of Terms ...................................................................................... 49-53
X. Appendix ..................................................................................................... i
   i. Appendix A: Early Achievers Quality Standards .................................... i
I. **Introduction:**

a. **Overview: What is Early Achievers?**

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) has developed Early Achievers, Washington’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), to help early care and education programs offer high-quality care that supports each child’s learning and development. Early Achievers is a voluntary program designed to:

- Support child care providers to provide high-quality care by providing resources including training, coaching and incentives
- Help parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing information about facility quality
- Ensure that children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life

Early Achievers is a key strategy of the Statewide Early Learning Plan, Washington’s roadmap to improving early learning so that all children can start school ready to succeed. In addition, Early Achievers is the centerpiece of Washington’s Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grant application. In December 2011, Washington was one of nine states to win Race to the Top, a competitive federal grant designed to support states’ efforts to improve early learning and development programs for young children. Washington will receive $60 million over four years to build upon its existing early learning efforts to ensure that all children are ready for success in school and life. Early Achievers expansion rolled out in regions across the state between July 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013, and is now available in all communities.

Early Achievers is designed to align, support, and build upon other key early learning programs in Washington, particularly WaKIDS, Washington’s Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, and the professional development career lattice. Creating seamless programs for children and families in Washington is key to helping all children grow, develop, and successfully transition from early childhood into early elementary.

b. **History in Washington**

Early Achievers was developed in collaboration with child care providers across the state. For two years, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and Thrive by Five Washington worked with approximately 90 providers in five communities to test and implement elements of QRIS including coaching and program assessment. An independent evaluation of the field test found that when child care providers receive one-on-one coaching and a modest amount of money to make changes to their program, the quality of the care they give children starts to quickly increase. Through
their commitment to quality improvement and supporting children and families in their care, participants provided valuable insight and feedback to DEL that has helped shape and refine the Early Achievers model.

c. **Commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement**
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) refers to the ongoing process of:

- Learning about strengths and areas to grow using multiple sources of information
- Creating a plan with goals, timelines and responsibilities
- Testing and implementing solutions
- Evaluating the results and revising the plan

Early Achievers is committed to CQI at multiple levels:

- **Facility level:** Early Achievers empowers facility staff and leadership to identify and achieve quality improvement goals and improve practice through work with Technical Assistance Specialists, Rating Readiness Consultants, and Early Achievers Coaches. Early Achievers encourages ongoing quality improvement work that builds facility capacity and includes methods such as observation, reflection, self-assessment, and participation in communities of practice.
- **Partner level:** Partners working to implement Early Achievers (e.g., TA Specialists, Coaches, trainers, Regional Coordinators, evaluators) participate in ongoing professional development such as training, mentoring, and reflective practice, and gather lessons learned from participants to recommend and develop improvements in service delivery.
- **State system level:** The Department of Early Learning reviews implementation of Early Achievers, consults with implementing partners, and considers successes and lessons learned in order to adjust and improve policy on an ongoing basis, and communicate reasons behind changes.

d. **Purpose of the Operating Guidelines**
This document is designed to:

- Help facilities understand key components of Early Achievers to ensure successful participation
- Provide a detailed overview of Early Achievers policies and expectations
- Serve as a reference tool throughout participation

While it is the facility’s responsibility to read, understand and follow the guidelines in this document, your regional Child Care Aware of Washington agency is available to work with you to answer questions or concerns, and help you successfully implement
these guidelines. The term **facility** will be used throughout this document to indicate child care centers and family child care homes participating in Early Achievers.

e. **Updates to Early Achievers Participant Operating Guidelines**

Participant Operating Guidelines will be updated annually in July. The current version of the Operating Guidelines is always available on the Department of Early Learning (DEL) website in the *Early Achievers Participant Toolkit*. The Operating Guidelines posted on the DEL website replaces all former versions of the Operating Guidelines. Participants are responsible for reading and adhering to the current Operating Guidelines.

In the event that an Early Achievers policy change is made in between annual updates, the information will be sent to Early Achievers participants via an email from DEL, titled, “*Operating Guidelines Update*”. In addition, Operating Guidelines updates will be available on the DEL website.

II. **Early Achievers Partners: Roles within the System**

a. **Agency Roles**

There are many organizations across the state that are critical to the success of Early Achievers, including the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and Thrive by Five Washington Early Learning Coalitions. The following agencies are key partners in direct implementation of Early Achievers, and have distinct roles as described in Figure 1:

- The Department of Early Learning (DEL)
- Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA)
- University of Washington (UW)
**Figure 1: Implementation Partners**

| Q (Quality) | All agencies promote child care quality and a commitment to continuous quality improvement. |
| R (Rating) | The University of Washington (UW) is the lead agency for evaluation, assessment and rating assignment. UW is also responsible for development of the Early Achievers coach framework, coach training, and ongoing coach mentoring. |
| I (Improvement) | Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) is the lead agency for coordinating improvement activities including coaching, technical assistance, professional development and training. Regions have Regional Coordinators, who oversee implementation across the region, and regional Child Care Aware of Washington agencies that work directly with participating facilities. CCA is responsible for employing coaches, trainers, Technical Assistance Specialists, and Rating Readiness Consultants. |
| S (System) | The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is the lead administrative agency for systems development and integration, and Early Achievers policy. DEL owns and manages the data systems used in Early Achievers, and includes child care licensing, which is the foundation of Early Achievers Level 1. |

Each region has a regional Child Care Aware of Washington agency that manages and coordinates local efforts, and will be your point of contact throughout participation. The term **local lead agency** will be used throughout this document to indicate the regional Child Care Aware of Washington agency responsible for Early Achievers implementation in your community.

b. **Mandated Reporting**

   All Early Achievers staff, including but not limited to coaches and Technical Assistance Specialists, are mandatory reporters under Washington State Law, and as such any instances of suspected child abuse and neglect must be reported directly to Child Protective Services.

### III. Eligibility

a. **Facility Type**

   The following facility types are eligible to participate in Early Achievers:

   i. **Licensing and certification requirements:**
      - Licensed child care centers or family child care homes
      - Tribal and military facilities that are **certified for payment**
o Military and Tribal facilities that wish to participate in Early Achievers will need to become **Certified for Payment Only** with the Department of Early Learning in order to participate in Early Achievers participation.

o To download forms to request Certification for Payment only, visit: www.del.wa.gov/publications/licensing/

o For more information about the tribal certification process, visit: www.del.wa.gov/government/tribal/certification.aspx

- **Head Start and ECEAP programs**

  ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) and Head Start are comprehensive preschool programs that provide free services and support to eligible children and their families. ECEAP is funded by Washington State. Head Start is funded by the federal government. Facilities that serve Head Start or ECEAP funded slots will follow one of two Early Achievers participation pathways based on the following criteria:

  - **Percentage of total facility slots that are funded by Head Start and/or ECEAP**

1. **Head Start/ECEAP Early Achievers Pathway**

   - **Eligibility:** 75% or more of total facility slots are Head Start or ECEAP slots

     - A separate Early Achievers pathway has been designed specifically for Head Start and ECEAP that recognizes and builds upon existing quality standards, streamlines participation, and reduces duplication of efforts. This pathway was built based on feedback and lessons learned from a 2012-13 pilot led by the Department of Early Learning. The Head Start and ECEAP Early Achievers participation pathway is led by the grantee or contractor, and has different requirements, supports and incentives than described in this document. Please contact your grantee or contractor for more information.

2. **Licensed Child Care Early Achievers Pathway**

   - **Eligibility:** Less than 75% of total facility slots are Head Start or ECEAP slots

     - Facility will participate fully in the traditional Early Achievers pathway as described in this document.

ii. **Ages of children served:**

   - Facilities must serve children between the ages of birth to five
Facilities serving school age children only are not eligible to participate in Early Achievers at this time

b. Child Enrollment Requirements
   i. During Early Achievers Registration and Level 2 participation:
      • DEL understands that enrollment can fluctuate, especially in family child care. Therefore, low enrollment will not impact a facility's eligibility to register for Early Achievers and begin to work on Level 2 requirements; however, facilities must ensure that there are three children birth to 5 enrolled before requesting an on-site evaluation after completion of Level 2.
   
   ii. On-site evaluation:
      • There must be a minimum of three children birth to 5 enrolled and present at the time of the on-site evaluation for facility rating.
      • If a facility requests an evaluation and does not have three children enrolled and present during the on-site visit, the evaluation visit may be cancelled and the facility will remain a Level 2. The facility may be required to wait a minimum of one evaluation enrollment period (3 months) before they are considered eligible to receive another evaluation visit.
   
   iii. Ongoing requirements (after completion of Level 2):
      • Facilities are expected to report enrollment on a yearly basis via the MERIT /Early Achievers Tab.
      • Facilities that drop below a minimum enrollment of three children are required to notify their coach (Level 3-5 facilities) or assigned Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist (Level 2 facilities) from their local lead agency within seven business days. Coaches or TA Specialists will work directly with facilities to develop a plan to increase enrollment.
      • If a facility has no children enrolled for 60 calendar days, the local lead agency reserves the right to initiate the termination process described in Participation Requirements and Expectations: Criteria for Termination (Section 8: part h).

c. Licensing Status
   i. Requirements: definition of good standing for participation:
      • Facilities must be in good standing with licensing in order to participate in Early Achievers defined as having an active license that is not suspended, revoked or on probationary status.
   
   ii. How licensing status affects registration and participation:
      • Initial License
- **Registration**: Facilities that hold an initial license may register to participate in Early Achievers and can begin to complete Level 2 requirements. However, the facility cannot submit the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 to achieve Level 2 status until the facility receives a full license.

- **Revocation**
  - **Registration**: Facilities with a license that is revoked may not register to participate in Early Achievers.
  - **During participation**: If a facility’s license becomes revoked while enrolled in Early Achievers, the facility will be immediately terminated from Early Achievers, regardless of facility rating. All activities related to Early Achievers will be terminated.

- **Summary Suspension**
  - **Registration**: Facilities with a license that is on summary suspension may not register to participate in Early Achievers.
  - **During participation**:
    - If a facility’s license is put on summary suspension while enrolled in Early Achievers, all activities and services related to Early Achievers will be put on hold pending the outcome of the investigation. In addition, a facility may not request or participate in on-site evaluation while on summary suspension.
    - If the summary suspension leads to a full restoration of the facility’s license, the facility may continue full Early Achievers participation. If summary suspension leads to revocation of the facility’s license, the facility will be immediately terminated from Early Achievers and all activities related to Early Achievers will be terminated.

- **Probationary License**
  - **Registration**: Facilities that hold a probationary license may register to participate in Early Achievers and begin to complete Level 2 activities. However, facilities cannot submit the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 to achieve Level 2 status until the probationary license status is reinstated to a full license.
  - **During participation**:
    - If a facility is issued a probationary license during completion of Level 2, the facility may continue Level 2 participation. However, facilities cannot submit the Early Achievers Application for Level 2
to achieve Level 2 status until the probationary license status is reinstated to a full license.

- Facilities with a probationary license are not eligible to request or participate in on-site evaluation for rating.
- The facility may continue to work with a coach or TA Specialist in partnership with the facility licensor. Since licensing is the foundation (Level 1) of Early Achievers, it is important during probationary status to actively involve the licensor in order to address issues regarding licensing compliance. The coach or TA Specialist will meet regularly with the facility licensor to ensure that all support given to facility during the probation period focuses on reinstatement of a full license. All technical assistance and coaching provided during the probation period must focus on the reinstatement of a full license.
- To remain in Early Achievers, the facility’s license must be reinstated as a full license within six months of the date the license was initially placed on probationary status. If the probationary license is not reinstated as a full license within 6 months, participation in Early Achievers will be terminated.

iii. **Future participation:**

In the case that a facility is terminated from Early Achievers due to license revocation, summary suspension that results in revocation, or probation that is not resolved within six months, the facility may reapply for participation after one year from the date of termination following the procedures outlined in *Participant Requirements and Expectations: Reaplication to Early Achievers* (Section 8: part k). In order to be eligible to reapply for participation in Early Achievers, the facility must not be in a suspended, revoked or probationary status.

**IV. Early Achievers Quality Standards**

a. **Overview**

Early Achievers, Washington’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), provides a common set of expectations and standards to define and measure the quality of early learning settings. The Early Achievers Quality Standards promote and support comprehensive facility quality and help ensure that quality practices are having direct impact on individual children’s progress. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the University of Washington (UW) developed the standards based on learnings from a QRIS field test.
All licensed and certified early learning settings are included in the framework, though participation is voluntary: licensing or certification is the foundation of Early Achievers and is considered Level 1; programs that choose to participate in Early Achievers earn rating Levels 2 through 5 based on participation and evaluation. The following section describes the structure of the rating system, what the rating levels mean, and how facilities earn ratings.

b. **Rating Structure**

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) across the nation use the following approaches to create ratings:

- **Building Block Approach**: Facilities must meet every component of each standard in each level before moving to the next level
- **Point System Approach**: Facilities earn points in quality standard areas and rating is based on total cumulative points
- **Hybrid Approach**: A combination of building block and points system approaches; requires that all facilities meet the same basic foundational quality, while allowing for facilities to achieve additional points based on program strengths, philosophy, approach, etc.

Early Achievers is a hybrid model, meaning that all participating facilities share the same basic foundational quality at Levels 1 and 2, and earn points to achieve Levels 3-5.

**Figure 2: Overview of Early Achievers Levels 1-5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Licensing or certification that includes child care centers and family child care, military, tribal, Head Start and ECEAP programs. Early Achievers is a voluntary program and facilities must register to participate. No facilities will be automatically enrolled in Early Achievers and facilities that choose not to participate will not be publically identified as Level 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 2 is considered <em>Professional Growth and Facility Management</em> and is designed to help facilities understand Early Achievers, the Quality Standards and program requirements, and the child outcome and school readiness goals of the system. Program leaders (child care center directors and family child care primary providers) complete a series of activities to prepare the facility for successful participation and evaluation including training, self-assessment and participation in MERIT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Upon completion of Level 2, facilities that choose to pursue rating will earn points based on evaluation on four Quality Standards: Child Outcomes; Curriculum, Learning Environments, &amp; Interactions; Professional Development &amp; Training; and Family Engagement &amp; Partnership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. **Quality Standards/Components**

The Early Achievers Quality Standards (Appendix A) focus on achieving positive child outcomes for each child in care. There are four *Quality Standard* areas:

1. **Child Outcomes**
2. **Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions**
3. **Professional Development & Training**
4. **Family Engagement & Partnership**

Each Quality Standard area is made up of several *components*, which describe ways in which a facility may demonstrate quality within the Quality Standard area. For example, “Developmental Screening is conducted within 90 days of enrollment and results are shared with parents” is one component within the Child Outcomes Quality Standard area.

The Early Achievers Quality Standards framework provides a common set of standards for all programs, while recognizing that quality looks different in different settings based on program philosophy and the needs of the families and children served. Therefore participants can demonstrate quality practices in a variety of ways.

The following table provides general examples of the types of facility practices that the Quality Standards measure in each area. Please refer to the Early Achievers Quality Standards Framework (Appendix A) for specific components.
## Figure 4: Quality Standard Areas: Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Standard Area</th>
<th>Examples of how facilities earn points in this Standard Area:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Child Outcomes** (10 points)               | - Screen children to spot developmental concerns  
- Provide ongoing assessment to learn about each child’s strengths and needs  
- Share information about children’s growth and progress with families to promote school readiness  
- Use information about each child’s strengths and needs to plan activities and curriculum                                                                 |
| **Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions** (70 points) | - **Environment Rating Scales (ERS) Assessment:** measures availability and variety of learning materials and activities; organization of space, materials, schedule and routine to enhance learning; interactions between children and providers; use of materials to promote learning  
- **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Assessment:** measures how providers interact with children to create supportive, nurturing relationships, enhance learning, and provide instruction  
- Implement a curriculum that aligns with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines and supports child development and individualized instruction  
- Provide planning time and supports for staff for professional growth and learning                                                                 |
| **Professional Development & Training** (10 points) | - Child care center director/family child care primary provider/teaching staff have qualifications that align with the education levels identified in the Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals, from a Child Development Associate continuing through the Master’s or higher degree level |
| **Family Engagement & Partnership** (10 points) | - Complete and implement research-based Strengthening Families Framework.  
- Provide resources to families such as parenting programs, and information about community resources  
- Partner with families to support children’s progress |
d. **ERS and CLASS**

i. **Description of assessment tools:**

Early Achiever incorporates two standardized program assessments as part of the Quality Standards: the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The ERS and CLASS measure classroom/family child care home quality and focus on the different types of supports available to children. While both tools measure the quality of children’s experiences, each focuses on different elements in the environment. Use of both tools therefore provides a comprehensive assessment of facility quality.

**Environment Ratings Scales (ERS):**

- Measures classroom/family child care home quality of the environment, including how the available materials, activities, routines, schedules, and interactions support learning. The ERS is scored on a 1-7 continuum, with 7 considered excellent and 1 considered inadequate.
- Consists of sets of scales for different settings and ages of children. The following scales are used in Early Achievers:
  - Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)--center classrooms serving children birth to 2 1/2 years
  - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)--center classrooms serving children ages 2 1/2 to 5
  - Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS)--family child care homes

**Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS):**

- Measures the quality of interactions between providers and children. CLASS is scored on a 1-7 continuum, with 6-7 considered high, 3-5 medium, and 1-2 low. CLASS looks at the following areas, or *domains*:
  - *Emotional Support /Emotional & Behavioral Support*: warm and respectful relationships, positive communication, responsive caregivers, and awareness of children’s needs.
  - *Classroom Organization*: proactive behavior management, organized routines that maximize learning time and children’s involvement, and children who are active and engaged in activities and learning.
  - *Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning*: discussion and activities that encourage development of children’s reasoning and logic skills, frequent conversations with open-ended questions and advanced
language, use of children’s past knowledge and understanding to build upon and increase learning, and active and engaged children.

*In the Early Achievers Quality Standards, the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains in PreK CLASS are combined for scoring purposes.

ii. Minimum thresholds:
A facility must achieve designated minimum CLASS and ERS scores in order to achieve a rating of Level 3, regardless of total facility points scored. Each assessed child care center/family child care home must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support, and a 3.5 on the ERS. For child care centers, the facility ERS and CLASS scores are averages based on the scores of all assessed classrooms. These scores, or **minimum thresholds** represent the foundational level of quality that all facilities must have in order to be rated Levels 3-5. Facilities that do not meet the minimum thresholds will receive a rating of Level 2, regardless of total facility points earned.

e. How the Quality Standards are “weighted”
Although facilities have flexibility in how they achieve points towards ratings, one Quality Standard area, Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions, represents the most total points (70 out of 100) of the four standard areas. Within Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions, ERS and CLASS scores make up 55% of a facility rating, with 40% determined by CLASS scores and 15% from ERS. The CLASS score makes up a significant portion of overall facility rating because effective and positive social and instructional provider-child interactions are associated with important achievement gains for children.

V. Early Achievers Supports and Incentives
a. Overview
Early Achievers includes a range of supports and incentives to assist participants with quality improvement efforts throughout their participation. Supports in early stages of Early Achievers (Level 2) focus on director-level training and technical assistance to increase successful Early Achievers participation and evaluation readiness. After a facility receives an on-site evaluation and rating, a package of supports is available to facilities that achieve rating Levels 3 through 5. All supports in Levels 3 through 5 are designed to support facilities to implement goals based on evaluation results, increase assessment scores, and ultimately increase facility quality.
b. **Level 2 Supports**

i. **Technical Assistance:**

   Technical Assistance (TA) is a service provided by regional CCA of WA agencies and is designed to meet the needs of diverse adult learners and help them understand the policies and navigate participation in Early Achievers. Participants access TA services through their regional CCA of WA agency.

   Upon registration for Early Achievers in MERIT, facilities will be assigned a TA Specialist by their local lead agency to support them as they move through Level 2 requirements. The TA Specialist will work with the child care center director/family child care primary provider to develop a work plan and timeline for moving through Level 2. The work plan will identify specific required activities of Level 2 as well as additional resources available to help the facility meet the Early Achievers Quality Standards.

   Technical assistance is delivered in multiple ways including individual sessions and group sessions. Participants will work individually with TA Specialists on their unique work plans in a set number of one-on-one TA sessions in Level 2. Additionally, in order to build community connections and peer support, the regional CCA of WA agency will offer small group TA sessions including, but not limited to topics that address continuous quality improvement and Early Achievers Quality Standards. TA Specialists are also available by phone and email.

   The goals of TA are:

   - Participants will **understand** Early Achievers program requirements, quality standards, and the process to successfully complete Level 2 activities.
   - Participants will **apply** new knowledge gained from Self-Assessments, the Level 2 Professional Training Series, and personal reflections by **developing** action plans that prepare them to receive a facility rating.
   - Participants will begin to **value and embody** the concept of continuous quality improvement, laying the groundwork for deeper goal-setting through coaching in Levels 3-5.

   To learn more about technical assistance, read the *Early Achievers Technical Assistance Framework*, located in the *Early Achievers Participant Toolkit* on the DEL website.

ii. **Training:**

   The Professional Training Series described in *Moving Through Level 2/entrance to completion: Professional Training Series* (Section 6: part d) is available to participating
child care center directors and family child care (FCC) primary providers free of charge and includes STARS hours. The trainings provide background and context for key elements of the Quality Standards, and are designed to prepare facilities for successful participation in Early Achievers.

iii. Rating Readiness Consultation:
Facilities that successfully complete all Level 2 activities and intend to pursue an onsite evaluation have the opportunity to access Rating Readiness Consultation. Rating Readiness Consultation is customized onsite support to help facilities prepare for a rating of 3 or above. This support will focus on key elements of the quality standards that have the most impact on ratings, including the CLASS and ERS assessments. Consultation is based on need and time limited. Facilities will sign a Rating Readiness Consultation Agreement outlining the scope of services. At the point that the Rating Readiness Consultant determines that the facility is ready to go on for an onsite evaluation, they will end services and recommend the next step, which is requesting an onsite evaluation.

c. Coaching
i. Background:
Coaching is foundational to Early Achievers. In the QRIS field test, coaching was found to be a highly effective method of improving the quality in child care settings, and participants reported that their relationships with coaches were key to their professional growth and quality improvement progress\(^1\). Coaching remains a central element of the Early Achievers model. Coaches are highly trained early learning professionals with experience and education in early childhood education, and participate in ongoing professional development and consultation with the University of Washington. To learn more about the coaching model, read the Early Achievers Coach Framework, located in the Early Achievers Participant Toolkit on the DEL website.

ii. Role of Coach:
Coaches are employed by Child Care Aware of Washington. All Level 3 through 5 facilities will be assigned an Early Achievers coach by their local lead agency. The role of the coach is to help facilities:
- Understand and use Early Achievers ratings and assessment data

• Identify goals and make plans to achieve goals
• Access resources to support achievement of goals
• Implement quality improvement

The Early Achievers rating is a measure of facility quality, rather than specific classroom quality, so coaches and directors/FCC primary providers will work together to best allocate coaching resources across the facility to different teaching staff. The total amount of coaching that a facility receives will be flexible and vary based on the areas of need identified in the facility Quality Improvement Plan, and the facility’s rating Level. Coaching services will change as facility rating increases, with Level 3 facilities receiving more coaching than Level 5 facilities.

Coaches partner with participants through the quality improvement process; the facility is ultimately responsible for implementing and maintaining positive changes. Upon coach assignment, the coach will provide the director/FCC primary provider with a Coach/Participant Agreement which will outline how the coach and facility will work together. In an effort to maintain individual privacy, information shared with coaches regarding a specific child in their care shall remain confidential; however coaches’ documentation of their work with facilities is subject to public disclosure law as described in Participation Requirements and Expectations: Information Sharing (Section 8: part d).

iii. Quality Improvement Plan:
Participants set goals with their coaches based on their facility evaluation results including:

• ERS and CLASS assessment scores
• Components of the Quality Standards
• Overall facility rating

These goals make up the facility Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Coaches work with participants to apply evaluation data to develop a QIP that addresses program strengths and areas of growth identified by evaluation results. The QIP acts as a “roadmap” for the ongoing continuous quality improvement process, and will guide the work of the facility and the coach.

Participants and coaches create QIPs together—coaches approve final QIPs and enter them into the WELS data system. Participants can review completed QIPs through the Provider Portal in WELS (described in Section 5: part g).
d. **Professional Development Scholarships**

Scholarships are available to students that are employed in Early Achievers facilities to pursue CDA programs, stackable certificates, Associates Degrees and Bachelor’s Degrees in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Early Achievers Opportunity Grants and Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals are two student financial aid resources that are prioritized for students who are employed by Early Achievers facilities. Each scholarship has different eligibility criteria and financial benefits. To learn more about each scholarship, visit the DEL website and look for *Professional Development System: Financial Support.*

i. **Washington Scholarships:**

Washington Scholarships is administered by Child Care Aware of Washington and supports educators working towards their CDA (Child Development Associate), stackable certificate, and AA/AAS and BA degree in Early Childhood Education. Washington Scholarships also offers CDA Assessment fee Scholarships once students have completed CDA coursework. Participants interested in Washington Scholarships should contact Child Care Aware of Washington.

ii. **Early Achievers Opportunity Grants:**

Opportunity Grants are administered by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and help employees at Early Achievers facilities pursue Early Childhood Education credits towards ECE stackable certificates and Associate’s degrees in ECE. Participants interested in Early Achiever Opportunity Grants should contact their college’s financial aid department for more information on how to apply.

e. **Quality Improvement Awards**

Quality Improvement Awards are awarded to facilities that achieve ratings Levels 3 through 5. Quality Improvement (QI) Awards recognize achievement and support facilities to implement quality improvement goals.

i. **Award eligibility:**

To be eligible to receive QI Awards, facilities must:

- Achieve an Early Achievers rating of Level 3, 4 or 5
- Be an eligible Early Achievers participant as defined in *Eligibility* (Section 3)
- Agree to create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with assigned coach

ii. **Award amounts:**

QI Awards are distributed *annually* as follows:
iii. Distribution of award funds:
QI Awards will be distributed to the facility between 30 to 60 days from the date that a facility’s rating is issued. See Figure 8: From Request to On-Site Evaluation to Rating: Visual for more information.

iv. Purpose of award funds:
All QI Award funds must be used towards achievement of quality improvement goals outlined on coach-approved, facility QIP and must align with the Early Achievers Quality Standards framework.

v. Allowable uses:
Award funds may only be used in the following categories based on the Early Achievers Quality Standards:

1. Child Outcomes: Funds may be used for materials, tools and resources to support ongoing child assessment and developmental screening.

2. Facility Curriculum and Learning Environment and Interactions: Funds may be used to strengthen and enhance a facility’s capacity to provide high quality, individualized experiences and environments for children in the following areas:
   - Program/classroom materials: Examples of acceptable items include but are not limited to: developmentally appropriate materials, educational toys, and equipment to support learning and basic routines.
   - Curriculum: Examples of acceptable items include but are not limited to: curriculum guides, reference books, and other resources that supplement the curriculum.
   - Observational Assessment resources: Examples of acceptable items include tools that help facilities document children’s growth and development and increase staff ability to individualize programming for
children. Facilities may also use funds to purchase tools and supporting materials for Early Achievers assessments, including Environment Rating Scales (ERS) books and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) guides.

3. **Family Engagement and Partnership:**
   - **Parenting education/support program:** Funds may be used to support implementation of parenting support and education.
   - **Strengthening Families Plan of Action implementation:** Funds may be used to strengthen and enhance the facility's work with families based on the results of their Strengthening Families Plan of Action. Examples of acceptable items include but are not limited to: parent education resources and training materials; program materials to create a welcoming environment for families; and social/educational gatherings/events for families.

4. **Professional Development and Training:**
   - **Staff Development:** Funds may be used for staff professional development including but not limited to staff training and conferences. Note: funds may be used for registration/tuition/materials only, and may not be used for travel, hotel or related attendance expenses.
   - **Wage Enhancements:** Funds may be used to increase or supplement staff salaries. Grant funds are not intended to fund in full teacher, assistant director, or director salaries.
   - **Staff Bonuses:** Funds may be used to provide bonuses to staff.
   - **Release Time:** QI funds may be used for staff to engage in quality improvement activities that are beyond the normal scope of work. Examples include but are not limited to: substitute pay, out of classroom planning time for lead teachers, and participation in family partnership activities.
   - **Continuing Education:** QI funds may be used towards credit-bearing coursework for staff. Facilities should first explore existing staff Early Achievers scholarship opportunities (WA Scholarships and Early Achievers Opportunity Grants) described in this section in *Professional Development Scholarships* before using QI funds for this purpose.
   - **Technology:** QI Awards may be used towards technology that supports facility implementation of QI goals, including computers, software, cameras and video cameras.

vi. **Restrictions:**

---

© Washington State Department of Early Learning

rev. 7.1.13
In addition to the requirements outlined above about allowed fund usage, award funds may *not* be used to purchase items considered to be:

- **Capital Improvements**: From the Child Care and Development Fund: “No funds shall be expended for the purchase or improvement of land, or for the purchase, construction, or permanent improvement of any building or facility. However, funds may be expended for minor remodeling, and for upgrading child care facilities to assure providers meet State and local child care standards, including applicable health and safety requirements.”

- **Religious Activities**: From the Child Care and Development Fund: “Funds provided under grants or contracts to providers may not be expended for any sectarian purpose or activity, including sectarian worship or instruction.”

- **Gift Cards**: Grant funds should not be used to purchase monetary equivalents such as gift cards, gift certificates, traveler’s checks, money orders, or the like.

vii. **Documentation and reporting:**

*DEL is not responsible or liable for any tax reporting or financial liability for the Internal Revenue Service that may be applicable for participants choosing to receive QI awards. It is recommended that Early Achievers participants contact their facility’s accountant, auditor, and/or financial advisor for guidance on fiscal reporting.*

Facilities that receive Early Achievers QI Award funds are required to:

- Work with local lead agency twice a year to provide information about how QI Awards were used towards QIP goals using a provided template.

- Keep all documentation including records, receipts, and paperwork related to spending of QI Awards on-site for a minimum of seven years.

DEL will conduct audits of QI Award expenditures and tracking for randomly selected facilities.

viii. **Fraudulent use of funds:**

Fraudulent use of QI Award funds will result in immediate termination from Early Achievers as outlined in *Participation Requirements and Expectations* (Section 8: parts h, i). Fraudulent use of funds is defined as: use of funds for any purchases *not* included in *Allowable Use of Funds*; use of funds for any purchases included in *Restrictions*; and use of funds for purposes *not* related to coach-approved facility QIP.

f. **Tiered reimbursement**

DEL is currently in discussion to create a tiered reimbursement structure for licensed child care centers and family child care providers within Early Achievers so that child care subsidies are tied to quality early learning programs. Implementation of tiered
reimbursement would mean that facilities that are Early Achievers participants would receive higher subsidy amounts at higher rating levels. Tiered reimbursement for family child care providers is considered a mandatory subject of bargaining with SEIU 925.

g. **MERIT and WELS**
Early Achiever participants will use the MERIT and WELS databases to track and access information about their participation.

i. **MERIT**
MERIT (Washington’s Managed Education and Registry Information Tool) is an online tool used to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care & education and school-age professionals in the State of Washington. Participants will use MERIT to:
- Create a Facility Registration and professional record
- Access the Early Achievers Registration and Application for Level 2
- Access Level 2 activities
- Track facility completion of Level 2 activities
- Document staff education qualifications for facility rating

ii. **WELS**
WELS (Web-based Early Learning System) is the data system for Early Achievers and holds information about coaching and evaluation. The Primary QRIS Contact will access WELS through a link in their MERIT/Early Achievers Tab. The *WELS Provider Portal* allows facilities to:
- View their Early Achievers Rating Report
- View their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that they create with their coach
- Complete the Level 2 self-assessment (link to self-assessment available in Early Achievers Application for Level 2) and view the completed self-assessment once the they have been rated
- Access resources and video content that are assigned by their coach to support QIP implementation

Please see the *WELS Provider Portal Step-by-Step guide* in the Early Achievers Toolkit on the DEL website for more information.

VI. **Moving through Level 2**
a. **Level 2 Overview**
Early Achievers Level 2 is designated for *Professional Growth and Facility Management* and requires facility leadership (family child care primary provider/child care center director) to complete a series of Early Achievers preparation activities and training.
Upon DEL approval of completion of Level 2 requirements (via Application for Level 2 in MERIT), the facility will achieve Level 2 status and be eligible to request an evaluation for facility rating.

b. **Primary and Secondary QRIS Contacts**
The child care center director/family child care primary provider will be designated the *Primary QRIS Contact* and is responsible for oversight and completion of all Level 2 activities. In facilities where there are multiple administrative staff, the director may appoint a *Secondary QRIS Contact* such as a Program Supervisor to support participation and complete the Professional Training Series described below. In this section, *Primary QRIS Contact* will refer to the facility child care center director or family child care primary provider who has registered for Early Achievers.

c. **Getting Started**

i. **MERIT**
Use of MERIT is a requirement to participate in Early Achievers and is necessary to successfully complete the following steps:

- The Primary QRIS Contact will access the Early Achievers Registration and the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 in MERIT
- The Primary QRIS Contact will access all Level 2 activities through MERIT
- MERIT will track and provide evidence of facility completion of Level 2 activities.

Before a facility can access the Early Achievers Registration in MERIT:

- Child care center director/family child care (FCC) primary provider must have a professional record in MERIT
- Child care center director/family child care (FCC) primary provider must have current employment listed in their professional record
- Director/FCC primary provider must complete a Facility Registration in MERIT and list themselves as the current director/FCC primary provider for the facility

There are numerous resources, including step-by-step guides, to support participants through each MERIT application. Please visit the MERIT homepage of the DEL website for links to user manuals.

ii. **Early Achievers Orientation**
The first step of participation in Early Achievers is director/FCC primary provider attendance at an Early Achievers Orientation. Regular orientations will be held in each region and will provide information about the requirements, benefits and available resources for Early Achievers participants. Orientation attendance is required before a facility can register for Early Achievers in MERIT. Facilities interested in orientation can
contact their local lead agency to register for a local orientation or visit the DEL website to view a list of dates and locations across the state.

iii. Early Achievers Participation Agreement
The Primary QRIS Contact must sign an Early Achievers Participation Agreement in order to participate in Early Achievers. The Early Achievers Participation Agreement is an agreement between the participating facility and their local lead agency, and outlines the requirements and responsibilities of Early Achievers participation. Interested participants will receive an Early Achievers Participation Agreement from their local lead agency staff. Participants must return signed agreements to their local lead agency, and keep a copy of the signed agreement on-site.

Local lead agencies are responsible for documenting that a facility has signed a Participation Agreement in MERIT. Facilities that do not have a signed Participation Agreement documented in MERIT within 14 days of Early Achievers Registration will be withdrawn from Early Achievers participation. In the event of withdrawal, facilities will receive email notification from DEL. Facilities may re-apply to Early Achievers by re-submitting the Early Achievers Registration application.

iv. Early Achievers Registration
After Early Achievers Orientation attendance, a director/FCC primary provider who has completed the steps described above will have access to the Early Achievers Registration by accessing the MERIT /Early Achievers Tab. The Early Achievers Registration includes:

- Basic facility information and demographics
- A link to the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines (this document). Applicants must check off that they have read and agreed to the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines before submitting registration. Submission of the Early Achievers Registration is completed with an electronic signature by the applicant.

Upon submission of Early Achievers Registration, the facility Primary QRIS Contact will receive an Early Achievers Registration Confirmation email from DEL. The facility is now considered an Early Achievers Level 2 participant.

d. Completion of Required Activities
The Primary QRIS Contact must first receive an Early Achievers Registration Confirmation in order to gain access to the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 in MERIT. The Early Achievers Application for Level 2 is ongoing and multi-part. It collects facility information and tracks completion of each of the following Level 2 requirements:

- Staff Professional Records in MERIT
• Facility Profile
• Professional Training Series
• Facility Self-Assessment

i. Staff professional records in MERIT:
The Primary QRIS Contact must ensure that all facility staff have entered professional records in MERIT. Staff must associate themselves with a facility by logging into their own MERIT professional records and entering their current employment at a facility. In addition, if a facility wants to earn points towards their rating for staff education, facility staff must verify their education qualifications by completing the following steps:
  • For each Degree/Certificate an educator holds, he or she must submit an Education Application through their MERIT account
  • Official transcripts must be sent unopened, in the original sealed envelope, to:
    o Centralia College CFS, Attention MERIT
      600 Centralia College Blvd.
      Centralia WA 98531-4035.

MERIT is the source of evidence during evaluation for staff education qualifications for facility Professional Development & Training Standard points. It is important that facilities prioritize this task early in Level 2 participation in order to ensure ample time to gather, submit, review and process transcripts.

ii. Facility Profile:
The Primary QRIS Contact will complete the Facility Profile, which is a series of four open-ended reflective questions about facility management practices. The content of the answers will not be judged by DEL based on “right” answers; rather, the profile is intended to prompt facilities to reflect on how their current practices can support successful Early Achievers participation and ongoing quality improvement efforts. Please note: the MERIT system will “time out” after 60 minutes due to security reasons. Users that do not plan to finish the facility profile in one sitting should compile the information in a backup source, such as a Word document.

iii. Professional Training Series:
  • Overview: The Professional Training Series consists of six core trainings that are completed online or in-person depending on the training. Trainings are offered free of charge to the Primary QRIS Contact and will provide STARS hours.
• **Who is required to attend:** The Primary QRIS Contact is responsible for attendance at all six trainings. In the case that a facility has appointed a Secondary QRIS Contact such as a Program Supervisor, the Secondary QRIS Contact may complete the trainings on behalf of the facility. In this case, the Secondary QRIS Contact must complete all six trainings. The Primary QRIS Contact will remain responsible for all other Level 2 requirements. Additional facility staff may participate in the online trainings at: [http://www.wachildcaretraining.com](http://www.wachildcaretraining.com).

• **List of trainings:**

  **Online trainings:**
  - Introduction to the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Overview
  - Introduction to the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines
  - Introduction to the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals

  **In-person trainings:**
  - Introduction to Cultural Competence
  - QRIS Strengthening Families Training for Early Learning Professionals
  - QRIS School Readiness

• **Order of training series:** The Introduction to the ERS/CLASS Overview must be completed before a facility can access the facility self-assessment. The QRIS School Readiness training should be completed as the final training in the series, because it pulls information from all of the trainings together. Other trainings in the series may be completed in an order determined by the facility. However, in-person trainings will be offered on a calendar schedule, so facilities will need to plan attendance based on availability. For more information about the training series, please contact your local lead agency.

  iv. **Facility self-assessment:**
  The Primary QRIS Contact will access and complete the facility self-assessment through the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 in MERIT. The purpose of facility self-assessment is to:
  - Promote reflection about current practice

---

2 Facilities that were 2011-2012 Early Adopters are not required to take the Introduction to ERS and CLASS Overview training.
• Build familiarity with the assessments and standards used in Early Achievers
• Gauge readiness to request evaluation

While the self-assessment scores will not be used by DEL or UW to approve facility evaluation request, the facility is strongly encouraged to complete assessments as accurately and thoroughly as able and use the scores to prepare for evaluation. The facility must complete the ERS/CLASS Overview training in order to gain access to the self-assessment in MERIT. The self-assessment contains two parts:

• **Environment Rating Scales (ERS):** Classroom/family child care home assessment that looks at the materials and practices in the environment that support children. Child care centers are required to complete at least one ERS per age group (Infant/Toddler-ITERS; Preschool-ECERS); however, it is *recommended* that centers complete ERS for each classroom that serves children birth to 5, as the facility will not be notified in advance of which classrooms will be assessed by the evaluators.

• **Washington’s Quality Standards:** Facility-level assessment based on the components of the Early Achievers Quality Standards in the following areas: Child Outcomes; Curriculum and Staff Supports; and Family Engagement and Partnership.

e. **Time limits for Facility Completion of Level 2 Requirements**
   
i. **Length of time allowed to complete requirements:**
      Facilities have **one year** from the time of DEL confirmation of Early Achievers Registration to complete all Level 2 requirements.
   
ii. **Request for extension:**
       Facilities may request a **6 month extension** to remain an Early Achiever participant and finish Level 2 activities. Facilities can request an extension by sending an email to the DEL QRIS inbox (qris@del.wa.gov) with the subject line: *Request for Level 2 Extension*. Extensions will not be granted without a facility request. Facilities will receive email confirmation from DEL that their level 2 application period has been by extended 6 months.

iii. **Failure to complete requirements within time frame:**
       A facility’s Level 2 participation will expire when:
       • Facility does not complete Level 2 requirements within one year and does not request extension
       • Facility is granted a 6 month extension and does not complete Level 2 requirements within extended time
The Primary QRIS Contact will receive notification from DEL that the facility is no longer an active Early Achievers participant.

iv. **Reapplication to Early Achievers after time expiration:**
If a facility becomes inactive due to time expiration, the facility may reapply at any time for Level 2 participation by re-submitting the Early Achievers Registration in MERIT. All prior training attendance will remain in the system, but the facility will be required to complete a new Early Achievers Registration and Application for Level 2. In the case that the Primary QRIS Contact has left the facility, the newly designated Primary QRIS Contact will be required to attend Early Achievers Orientation and complete the Professional Training Series.

f. **Staff Change before completion of Level 2**

i. **Primary QRIS Contact:**
If the Primary QRIS Contact leaves the facility during Level 2 completion and before facility achievement of a Level 2 status:

- The facility must designate a new Primary QRIS Contact to assume responsibility for oversight and completion of Level 2 requirements by completing a new facility registration and accessing the Early Achievers application in MERIT.
- The new Primary QRIS Contact is required to complete all six trainings in the Professional Training Series. It is recommended that the new Primary QRIS Contact also attend Early Achievers Orientation.

In the case that the facility has a designated Secondary QRIS Contact that completed the Professional Training Series and is still employed at the facility, the new Primary QRIS Contact will not be required to complete the Professional Training Series.

ii. **Secondary QRIS Contact:**
If the Secondary QRIS Contact leaves the facility during Level 2 completion:

- If Secondary QRIS Contact was designated training participant in QRIS Application, all six trainings will need to be taken by Primary QRIS Contact or by newly designated Secondary QRIS Contact.
- If Secondary QRIS Contact was not the designated training participant no action is needed.

iii. **Facility information:**
The facility Early Achievers Registration and Application will remain active in MERIT regardless of staff change. Thus, facility information including demographics and
program information, Facility Profile, self-assessment, and staff professional records will remain in the system and are not required to be entered again.

g. **Staff Change after Completion of Level 2**
If the Primary QRIS Contact leaves the facility after the facility has achieved Level 2 status, the facility will not be required to redo Level 2 activities. However, it is the responsibility of the facility to ensure that new leadership staff is informed of facility participation status and is equipped to participate in Early Achievers. It is recommended that new directors attend an Early Achievers orientation. The new director is also required to submit a new facility registration application in MERIT.

h. **Achievement of Early Achievers Level 2 Status**
Upon completion of all Level 2 requirements, facilities will apply for and achieve Level 2 status as outlined below.

i. **Submission and Review of Application for Level 2:**
Upon completion of Level 2 requirements, the Primary QRIS Contact will submit the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 in MERIT. The Application cannot be submitted until all requirements are complete as indicated in MERIT. Upon submission, facilities will receive an email confirmation from DEL stating that Early Achievers Application for Level 2 has been received and is in the process of review.

ii. **Notification of Level 2 status:**
Upon application approval, facilities will receive an email from DEL stating that application has been approved and that facility has been awarded Early Achievers Level 2 status. If an application was not approved, DEL will provide the reasons for denial and steps that a facility can take to address issues.

i. **Facilities that remain Level 2**

i. **Scenarios:**
Upon completion of Level 2 requirements, facilities may remain a Level 2 in the following scenarios:

- Facility chooses to remain a Level 2 (no evaluation)
- Facility does not request an evaluation within one year of achievement of Level 2 status and is automatically assigned a Level 2 rating by DEL
- Facility participates in on-site evaluation and is awarded a Level 2 rating because facility does not meet minimum thresholds for Levels 3 through 5

ii. **Responsibilities of facilities that remain Level 2:**
Level 2 facilities as described in the above scenarios are required to access the Early Achievers page on the provider tab in MERIT to:
• Submit an annual facility update by accessing the MERIT/Early Achievers Tab to confirm that the facility is still an active participant
• Complete and submit annual ERS and Washington Quality Standards Self-Assessments
• In the future facilities may be required to participate in additional quality improvement activities

VII. Evaluation and Rating

a. Overview

On-site evaluation based on the Early Achievers Quality Standards is conducted by the University of Washington (UW) in order to assign facility ratings. The UW evaluation team includes Data Collectors and Community Liaisons as described below. Participation in evaluation is a requirement to achieve rating Levels 3, 4, and 5. Facilities that wish to be rated will work with their local lead agency staff to prepare for evaluation. The following section describes the process to request and participate in evaluation, how evaluation data is used to create a facility rating, and how ratings are distributed and posted.

b. Request for evaluation

i. Eligibility:

In order to be eligible to request an evaluation for rating, facilities must:
• Complete all Level 2 requirements and be awarded Level 2 status by DEL
• Have a minimum of three children birth to five enrolled and present at the time of on-site evaluation
• Work with their local lead agency staff to prepare for evaluation, including completion and approval of the Rating Readiness Tool
• Have a completed, approved, Rating Readiness Tool on-site

ii. Facilities that do not request an evaluation:

After one year from the date of achievement of Level 2 status, facilities that do not request an evaluation will be automatically assigned a rating of Level 2. Facilities that are assigned a rating of Level 2 without evaluation may choose to request an evaluation at a later time or remain a Level 2 as described in Moving through Level 2: Facilities that remain a Level 2 (Section 6: part i).

c. Evaluation preparation

i. Rating Readiness Tool

As part of evaluation preparation, facilities will work with their local lead agency staff to complete a Rating Readiness Tool. The tool is a checklist created by the UW that
helps facilities and the evaluation team plan for a successful, efficient on-site evaluation visit. The tool collects facility information for use of the evaluation team including:

- Site map, classroom schedules, and other relevant facility details
- Confirmation that facility has collected consent from all families (described in Parent Consent below)
- Location of documentation and files for Data Collector review
- Which Quality Standard components the facility plans to demonstrate during the on-site evaluation visits

Facilities may indicate on the tool that they choose to “opt out” of certain components of the Quality Standards. Facilities might choose this option when a component does not align with their program philosophy or if their facility does not have plans to implement the component at this time. Marking a component opt out means that the raters will not look for documentation for that component during the on-site rater visit. All components will be used to determine total facility points, regardless of whether a facility opts out, so scores may be negatively impacted by opting out.

The Primary QRIS Contact will submit their completed Rating Readiness Tool to their Regional Coordinator for review. A copy of the completed Rating Readiness Tool should be kept on-site at the facility.

The Regional Coordinator will review the Rating Readiness Tool to determine the facility’s readiness for evaluation based on the following key questions:

- Does the facility have the minimum pieces in place required for on-site evaluation visits, i.e., parent consents?
- Does the facility have documentation and other evidence available and ready for the evaluation team?
- Does the completed tool indicate that a facility is likely to meet a rating of Level 3 or above?*

*Please note: Regional Coordinators and other local lead agency staff cannot guarantee a facility rating. The Rating Readiness Tool alone does not account for future facility ERS and CLASS assessment scores, which will determine a large portion of the facility rating.

The Regional Coordinator will approve the Rating Readiness Tool when a facility is ready to move forward with evaluation. If the Regional Coordinator determines that the facility is not ready, the facility will continue to work on the Rating Readiness Tool.

---

rev. 7.1.13
d. **Parent Consent**

Facilities are responsible for notifying families of their Early Achievers participation in on-site evaluation. Although no individual child will be assessed, child files will be reviewed by Data Collectors to measure whether a facility meets certain Quality Standards components, such as completion of child assessment and developmental screenings. In addition, classrooms/family child care home will be observed live for CLASS and ERS assessments. Therefore, families are required to give consent in order for their children’s experiences in the facility to be included as part of the facility rating process. Consent is between the facility and the family.

A consent form template will be provided as part of Level 2 participation that:

- Describes the purpose of Early Achievers on-site evaluation for facility rating and quality improvement
- Describes how facility information will be gathered including review of child files
- Allows families to indicate if they are willing to participate in an interview as part of the data collection process *(optional)*

Facilities are required to:

- Distribute and collect signed consent forms from parents or guardians for each child in care (family child care) or each child in a classroom serving children birth to five (centers).
- Document families that do not give consent for their children to participate. Data Collectors will not review files of children without parent consent in place
- Show evidence of signed consents during Community Liaison site visit (consent forms will stay on-site at the facility and should be sorted by classroom)
- Notify Community Liaison if there are families that did not sign consent

In the case that a facility uses videotaping as an option for CLASS observations due to language accommodations or other special circumstances, the facility is required to include language about videotaping in their parent consents, and to notify Community Liaisons of children that may not be videotaped.

e. **Process to submit request for evaluation**

i. **Request for On-site Evaluation in MERIT:**

After DEL approval of Early Achievers Application for Level 2, a facility can request an evaluation for rating using the *Early Achievers Request for On-Site Evaluation* application. The application is located in the MERIT /Early Achievers Tab and includes:

- Update of facility demographic information
- Normal facility operating hours and days of the week
- Choice of Applicant Cohort (described below)
- Option to choose block-out dates

Facilities will receive unannounced on-site evaluation visits during a 3-month window of time based on their chosen Applicant Cohort. Facilities have an option to indicate up to 2 “block-out” dates per month that they are not available for evaluation visits within the selected window due to holiday closures, field trips, etc.

Facilities should be completely ready to receive on-site evaluation visits at the point that they submit the Request for On-Site Evaluation, including the approval of all staff education in MERIT.

ii. Applicant Cohorts:

Facilities will choose an Applicant Cohort\(^3\), or a three month window of time in which to begin the evaluation process. Facilities will have the option to choose one of two available Applicant Cohort periods, based on the date that they access the Request for On-Site Evaluation application in MERIT. The Applicant Cohort period determines the timeline for receipt of on-site evaluation visits and the date the rating is available to the facility. Availability of Applicant Cohorts is based on the date that the facility accesses the Request for On-Site Evaluation application in MERIT as follows:

Figure 7: Request for on-site evaluation in MERIT: Choice of applicant cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility accesses application in MERIT:</th>
<th>Facility can choose:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 12/2-3/1</td>
<td>Period 1 or Period 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 3/2-6/1</td>
<td>Period 2 or Period 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 6/2-9/1</td>
<td>Period 3 or Period 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 9/2-12/1</td>
<td>Period 4 or Period 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: Applicant Cohorts were designed to efficiently process a high volume of Early Achievers ratings requests across the state. As Early Achievers ramps up, if there is a lower number of rating requests than anticipated, rating requests may be accepted on a rolling basis outside of the Applicant Cohort schedule. Please contact your Regional Coordinator for more information and to check if this option is available.

---

\(^3\) Request for On-Site Evaluation must be approved by Regional Coordinator before facility is referred to UW for evaluation. If request is not initially approved and facility has to complete additional steps, the facility evaluation period may be bumped to a later cohort. In addition, in the case of higher than anticipated evaluation request volumes, the evaluation team may be required to assign the facility to a later cohort.
Figure 8: From Request for on-site evaluation to rating: visual

On-site evaluation
- Facility receives unannounced on-site evaluation visits during regular business hours, not including block-out dates

Rating Release Date
- Facility receives access to their rating in WELS via the MERIT/Early Achievers Tab

QI Awards begin distribution
- Facility participation status posted on Child Care Check
- Facility receives rating certificate from DEL (allow 30 days)
- Quality Improvement Award amounts assigned; payment process begins (allow 30 days)

Applicant Cohort: PERIOD 1
- April – June

Applicant Cohort: PERIOD 2
- July – September
- November 15th
- December 15th

Applicant Cohort: PERIOD 3
- October – December
- February 15th
- March 15th

Applicant Cohort: PERIOD 4
- January – March
- May 15th
- June 15th
iii. **Approval of evaluation request**

After a facility submits their Request for On-Site Evaluation in MERIT, the facility’s Regional Coordinator is responsible for approving or denying the request. The facility’s Rating Readiness Tool must be approved before the Regional Coordinator will approve the request for evaluation.

If the Regional Coordinator determines that the facility is ready to move forward with the evaluation process:

- Regional Coordinator will approve the evaluation request
- Facility will be referred to the UW evaluation team and the evaluation process will begin

If the Regional Coordinator determines that the facility is not ready to move forward with the evaluation process:

- Regional Coordinator will deny the evaluation request and provide the reasons the facility was deemed not ready
- Facility is responsible for addressing reasons for denial before submitting another request for evaluation

f. **On-site Evaluation**

The on-site evaluation includes 2 stages, each with distinct purposes described below.

i. **Step 1: Community Liaison visit:**

In order to ensure that the on-site evaluation is conducted as efficiently and unobtrusively as possible, the UW will send out a Community Liaison *prior* to the on-site data collection visit. The Community Liaison is a member of the UW evaluation team but serves a different purpose than the Data Collectors. The Community Liaison’s role is to support the facility and the Data Collectors to have a successful visit by:

- Explaining the on-site visit and answering any facility questions and concerns
- Reviewing the completed Rating Readiness Tool with the facility
- Confirming that all facility documentation and files are ready and in place for data collection (Note: *the Community Liaison does not approve the content of the documentation, but rather confirms and documents the availability and location of the materials so the raters are able to easily locate and review during visit.*)
- Gathering information for Data Collectors about the facility layout, including classroom/facility maps, classroom schedules, and other pertinent logistical information
The Community Liaison will review the RRT with the Primary QRIS Contact, sign it, and take a picture of the front page to serve as a record of their visit to the facility. Upon successful completion of the visit, the Community Liaison will notify the Data Collectors that the facility is ready for the on-site evaluation visits.

ii. **Step 2: Data Collector visit:**

After completion of the Community Liaison visit, UW Data Collectors will visit the facility to conduct on-site evaluation. The visits will be unannounced and will occur within the facility-selected cohort as described above. Facility information, or data, will be collected by the Data Collectors through a variety of methods including:

- FCC/classroom observations
- Director/FCC/staff/parent interviews
- Review of facility records and documentation including child files

The data collection visit will take place over three days for centers, and 1-2 days for family child care, **on average**, depending on facility size. In child care centers, up to 100% of classrooms serving children birth through age five will be observed using one or more measures of quality, depending on facility size. The facility will not be notified in advance about which classrooms will be observed.

The data collection team will use the facility’s RRT to understand which components of the Early Achievers Quality standards the facility is attempting to meet. The RRT also serves as a reference for Data Collectors, helping them locate and access materials in a way that works best for the facility. The Data Collectors will make notes in the designated area on the front page of the RRT about any items that were listed but not in place during the data collection visit. Both the Data Collector and the Primary QRIS Contact will sign and date the document. The Data Collector will take a picture of the front page of the document and upload the image into WELS. The completed RRT will provide a history of the facility’s evaluation process.

iii. **Post-Visit Surveys:**

A Post-Visit Survey link will be provided to teachers, by Data Collectors, following each CLASS or ERS observation that occurs in their classroom. Teachers should complete this online survey within three business days following the observation.

An additional survey link will be provided to all facilities via email after their final on-site evaluation visit. This survey should be completed by the primary QRIS contact. A paper copy of either survey can be requested from the facility’s Community Liaison.
The purpose of these surveys is to document any concerns or feedback about the visits immediately after the visits. The surveys must be completed and submitted online within three business days of receipt of survey. The UW evaluation team will consider concerns documented in the survey and contact the Primary QRIS Contact directly to address concerns if applicable.

**g. Rating Assignment**

i. **Creation of ratings:**

Early Achievers ratings are created based on facility data collected in the four categories of the Quality Standards: Child Outcomes; Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions; Professional Development & Training; and Family Engagement & Partnership. The UW Evaluation team is responsible for compiling and analyzing facility data to determine total facility points and make a rating recommendation. The Department of Early Learning will assign the final Early Achievers rating level based on UW recommendation.

ii. **Rating notification:**

Upon completion of evaluation, facilities will receive access to their Early Achievers Rating Report based on the quarterly rating release date of their assigned Applicant Cohort (see Figure 8: From Request for On-Site Evaluation to Rating: Visual). Ratings Reports list overall facility rating, facility-level ERS and CLASS assessment score averages, and points earned in each Quality Standard area. Ratings Reports will be available to participants in the WELS Provider Portal accessed via the MERIT/Early Achievers Tab.

In addition, DEL will mail Early Achievers Rating Certificates to facilities. Certificates will highlight the facility’s Early Achievers Level and additional information about facility strengths, or Area(s) of Specialization. Areas of Specialization provide additional recognition of high quality and provide more substantive information to families. Areas of Specialization are based on total points earned in each Quality Standard area:

- **Child Outcomes**: facilities that receive 8 of a possible 10 points
- **Interactions and Environment** (ERS/CLASS): facilities that receive 35 of a possible 55 points

---

4 Staff Education information is not collected by evaluation team during on-site visit. All family child care and child care center staff education qualifications will be verified through the existing MERIT verification process. Facilities are responsible for ensuring that all staff information is complete prior to requesting an on-site evaluation.

5 Release date of rating reports subject to change based on unexpected volumes or other factors.
• **Curriculum and Staff Supports**: facilities that receive 12 of a possible 15 points
• **Professionalism** (Professional Development): facilities that receive 7 of a possible 10 points
• **Family Engagement and Partnerships**: facilities that receive 8 of a possible 10 points

Ratings results will help facilities identity and prioritize areas for quality improvement as they develop Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) with their coaches. Rating Levels also determine facility eligibility to receive coaching services and Quality Improvement Awards, and are tied to Quality Improvement Award amounts (Levels 3-5 only).

iii. **Publication of Early Achievers participation status**:
A key goal of Early Achievers is to provide information to families about child care quality in order to help them make informed choices. Facility Early Achievers participation status will be posted on the Department of Early Learning Child Care Check website to acknowledge the commitment of participating facilities and provide information to families. In addition, Child Care Aware of Washington will share Early Achievers participation status as part of the child care referral process.

Participation status will be displayed publically as follows:

- **Status: Participating in Quality Improvement**:
  - Displayed when:
    - Facilities have registered for Early Achievers
    - Facilities are in the process of completing Level 2 activities
    - Facilities have achieved Level 2 status but have not been rated
    - Facilities are rated Level 2 after an on-site evaluation

- **Status: Quality Level of Excellence**:
  - Displayed when:
    - Facilities are rated Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5

While Early Achievers rating levels will not be publically posted at this time, facilities are encouraged to share their ratings with families and staff to show their hard work and commitment to quality.

iv. **Length of time that rating is valid**:
Facility ratings are valid for three years from the date of issue of Early Achievers Rating Report. At the end of three years, facilities are required to participate in an on-site evaluation for re-rating in order to receive another rating. In order to maintain facility rating for the full three year period, the facility Primary QRIS Contact will be required
to submit an annual facility update by accessing via the MERIT/Early Achievers Tab to confirm that the facility is still an active participant.

v. Request for Re-Rating:
Facilities that are ready to be rated by December 31, 2013 will have the option to be re-rated within one year of their initial rating. Request for On-site Evaluation must be approved by December 31, 2014. This policy will be reexamined to determine financial sustainability and is subject to change.

Facilities that are interested in re-rating should contact their local lead agency for more information about eligibility and process. Please note: choosing to be re-rated is different from appealing an existing rating due to suspected errors or dispute in calculation. The Rating appeal process is addressed below (part h).

Rated Level 2:
- Facilities that do not meet the Level 3 threshold on ERS and/or CLASS during their initial rating will have one opportunity to re-rate after one year.
- Level 2 re-rating is not a full re-rating: the re-rating will be conducted in the facility area that did not meet minimum thresholds only: Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and/or Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assessments. No additional facility information will be considered beyond the information needed to address the minimum thresholds.
- Level 2 re-rating is free of charge to the facility.

Rated Level 3-4:
- Facilities that rate a Level 3 or Level 4 are eligible to request a re-rating.
- Level 3 and 4 facilities that wish to be re-rated will pay a fee to cover the cost of re-rating.

h. Ratings Appeals
i. Overview:
The following section describes what Early Achievers rating information can be appealed, what steps a participant must take, and what DEL will do to address the appeal. Please note: Rating appeal is different from requesting a re-rating. Rating Appeal should only be used as described below in, Purpose of Rating Appeal Process (section iii).

ii. Eligibility:
The Early Achievers Ratings appeals process applies only to Early Achieves participants that have participated in on-site evaluation and received a facility
rating on or after July 1, 2012. Ratings received during the QRIS field test or Early Adopters year may not be appealed.

- Facilities may pursue one rating appeal per Early Achievers rating cycle.

iii. Purpose of rating appeal process:

Facilities may pursue a rating appeal after the receipt of their Early Achievers Rating Report for the following reasons:

- Facility suspects errors in calculation of points or other technical errors
- Facility claims that their practice at time of on-site evaluation should have earned at least one Level higher (e.g., from Level 3 to Level 4) based on the Early Achievers Quality Standards

The Early Achievers Rating Appeals process does not address the following scenarios:

- Facilities may not pursue a rating appeal in order to provide new evidence or documentation of facility practice.
- Facilities must address all concerns about on-site evaluation visits such as inappropriate or unprofessional behavior by on-site evaluators or perceived conflict of interest between Data Collectors and facility through the University of Washington’s (UW) Post-visit Survey, described in above in Post Visit Survey (Section 7: part e).

iv. Criteria for appeal:

Facilities that wish to pursue a rating appeal must demonstrate through the use of the DEL-provided Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form that that a successful appeal would result in a rating increase of at least one rating level, e.g., an increase from Level 3 to Level 4.

Facilities may not appeal ratings based on the following:

- Additional information gathered by facility after on-site evaluation visits
- Components that facility marked “opt out” on the completed Rating Readiness Tool provided to Regional Coordinators and/or TA Specialists.
- Self-Assessment scores were higher than official assessment scores
- ERS and CLASS scores from past assessments were higher than Early Achievers evaluation scores
- Date/time of on-site visits if visits occurred during timeframe provided by facility on their Request for On-Site Evaluation in MERIT, including: facility hours/days of operation; three month evaluation window requested by facility; facility-chosen black-out dates (up to two per month). Visits are rescheduled only in the case of facility emergency/natural disaster.
• Selection of classrooms for observations
• Variability of time spent in classrooms
• Typical staff not present during visit
• Classroom or family child care home had new children, sick children, or an otherwise “non-typical” day, including disruptions to regular schedule
• Occurrence of evaluation processes as outlined in the Participation Agreement and Operating Guidelines
• Information was not ready for review by data collectors at time of on-site evaluation visits
• Professional Development and Training Quality Standard Area (Staff Qualifications). Concerns about staff education verification must be appealed using existing MERIT processes before on-site evaluation for rating.
• Facilities with licenses that are on probation, suspended or revoked may not appeal rating.

v. How to initiate a rating appeal:
Facility must complete the following steps within 30 days of receipt of Early Achievers Rating Report. Receipt of Early Achievers ratings is defined as the date that Early Achievers Rating Reports are released to facilities through the WELS Provider Portal. The Primary QRIS Contact will access the Rating Report in the WELS Provider Portal through their MERIT/Early Achievers Tab (Section 5; part g).

Please note: In order to protect the integrity of the rating appeal process and ensure that all facility information is fully considered, all communication with the Department of Early Learning regarding a specific facility rating appeal must be handled through the formal rating appeal process outlined below.

1. Facility Primary QRIS Contact communicates concerns with Regional Coordinator. The Regional Coordinator will review the Early Achievers Quality Standards with the facility to address misunderstandings or questions about general ratings calculations.

Note: Regional Coordinators cannot address specific concerns about facility’s Rating Report. This initial step is intended to help facilities clarify how ratings are calculated in general based on the Quality Standards, which may prevent the need for rating appeal.

2. If the facility still has concerns, the Primary QRIS Contact will complete the Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form and attach detailed written information including:
• Description of why the facility practice at the time of evaluation should have earned at least one Level higher based on Early Achievers Quality Standards components (e.g., from Level 3 to Level 4)
• Documentation and evidence of facility practice specific to each Quality Standard component under dispute
• Date(s) of communication with Regional Coordinator
• A copy of completed Post-Visit Survey, and if applicable, date(s) of communication with UW, and outcome of survey feedback. Participants may request a copy of their completed survey from their Community Liaison.

3. Primary QRIS Contact will submit completed Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form to the DEL QRIS Manager.

iv. DEL’s Rating appeal resolution process:
1. The QRIS Manager will review facility Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form and may request additional documentation from facility and/or partners including UW Evaluation Team and facility’s Regional Coordinator.
2. The QRIS Manager will make an initial decision within 10 business days of receiving all necessary documents and information to make decision. Written notification of decision will be sent to facility.
3. If facility disagrees with decision, facility must respond in writing within 10 business days from date of DEL decision.
4. The QRIS Manager will summarize facility appeal and initial DEL decision and submit to the QRIS Administrator and the DEL Assistant Director of Quality Practice and Professional Growth for review within 10 business days.
5. DEL will notify facility of final decision in writing.
6. If Rating Appeal is granted:
   • If it is determined that an error was made in calculation, the scores will be adjusted and the facility will be issued an updated Rating Report. Facility participation status on DEL’s website will be updated if applicable.
   • In the case that the appeal outcome requires a re-rating, DEL will contact the UW Evaluation Team to initiate an on-site evaluation for a re-rating. **Note: In case of re-rating due to founded rating appeal, no new facility documentation or evidence that was not available during original on-site visits will be reviewed.**
7. If appeal is denied:
• Facility will be notified in writing of decision including information about why the appeal was denied. Facility rating will remain valid for three years from the date rating was issued.

8. While a facility is in process of rating appeal:
• All Early Achievers services including coaching and distribution of Quality Improvement Awards will be put on hold until final rating appeal decision.

VIII. Participation Requirements & Expectations
The following section details facility responsibilities and expectations of participation. In addition, facilities should refer to the Early Achievers Participation Agreement for program participation expectations.

a. Recordkeeping
The following records must be kept on-site by facilities:
• All signed agreements including the Early Achievers Participation Agreement and the Coach/Participant Agreement provided by coach
• All receipts, records, and documentation of use of Quality Improvement Awards (must be kept on-site for seven years)
• All parent/caregiver consents for children to participate in evaluation
DEL and the local lead agency reserve the right to request and review records pertaining to participation in order to verify enrollment, use of funds, or adherence to the Operating Guidelines at any time.

b. Notification Requirements
Facilities are required to notify local lead agency of significant changes that affect participation within seven business days including but not limited to:
• Address change
• Facility closure
• Change in licensing status: suspension, probation or revocation
• Low enrollment: fewer than three children enrolled
• Voluntary withdrawal from Early Achievers
• Change in Primary QRIS Contact
• Change in licensed capacity: facility no longer serves children birth to age 5
• Changes in ages served (provider preference): facility no longer serves children birth to age 5
• Temporary change in facility circumstances, including but not limited to: temporary closure; and extended absence of Primary QRIS Contact.
c. **How address change affects Early Achievers participation**
   Facilities that move during any stage of Early Achievers participation must re-register to participate in Early Achievers after the facility is re-licensed at the new address. The provider will be withdrawn from participation and the Early Achievers Registration will become available again. The Primary QRIS Contact will still have their orientation attendance and training completions documented in MERIT and will not have to re-complete these activities. Because a large portion of a facility’s Early Achievers rating is based on environment, facilities that re-register to participate after moving will be required to be re-rated.

d. **Information Sharing**
   The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the University of Washington are subject to chapter 42.56 RCW, the Public Records Act. Early Achievers Facility records in the possession of DEL or the UW may also be subject to disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW.

e. **Internet Usage/Security**
   Participation in MERIT and the WELS Provider Portal is required as part of Early Achievers participation. These web-based data systems are secure and require user login to access the information. All data entered in MERIT and WELS can be accessed by DEL, Child Care Aware of Washington, and UW for the purpose of supporting quality improvement work and the long-term evaluation of the Early Achievers program. Additionally, all information entered into the data systems are subject to public disclosure requests as described above in Information Sharing.

f. **Use and Development of Early Achievers Marketing and Outreach Materials**
   DEL encourages Early Achievers participants to showcase their participation with families and the community online and in their business brochures and flyers. DEL has created materials, including a sample letter to families and a rating certificate, to assist facilities with communication, and will develop additional materials in the future. Facilities are welcome to use their Early Achievers participation in their own marketing materials with the follow guidelines:

i. **Facility website:**
   Early Achievers participants may place the Early Achievers logo on their business website provided they:
   - Use the logo and the phrase, “We are an Early Achievers Participant” along with the link to DEL’s Early Achievers section: www.del.wa.gov/care/qris. This is the only logo use approved for a facility’s website.
DEL must be notified when the Early Achievers logo is used on a facility business website. The Early Achievers participant and their regional coordinator should coordinate DEL notification by contacting the QRIS Inbox (gris@del.wa.gov) before the logo is live on the website. Please mark, *Use of Early Achievers Logo* in the email subject line.

ii. **Facility business brochure/flyer:**
When an Early Achiever participant wishes to include the Early Achievers logo on brochures and/or flyers to market their facility, the following guidelines are to be followed:

- The logo *must not* be on the title page of the child care facility promotional brochure; and
- The logo must be accompanied only with the phrase “Ask us how are demonstrating our commitment to high quality early learning by participating in Early Achievers, Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System!”

The family and community letter as well as the “parent” (family/community) brochure are both valuable tools that Early Achievers receive in their welcome toolkit and which may be accessed via our website [http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qris/toolkit.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qris/toolkit.aspx). The letter is modifiable so that Early Achiever participants can customize this as best needed.

iii. **Custom created marketing materials:**
If Early Achievers participants would like to create marketing materials beyond the materials that DEL provides, they must contact their Regional Coordinators for information about guidelines.

All outreach, marketing and informational materials (newsletters, flyers, FAQs, PowerPoint presentations and any other tools/resources used to provide information about Early Achievers) developed by participants must use and follow the branding guidelines/style guide provided by DEL to Regional Coordinators.

All outreach, marketing and informational materials developed by participants must be approved by DEL prior to distribution. Please allow two business days for review and approval by the QRIS Project Specialist. Interested facilities should work with their Regional Coordinator to send materials to DEL for approval.
g. **Conflict of Interest**

Early Achievers participants may not also be employed as an Early Achievers coach, TA Specialist, Regional Coordinator, DEL staff, or a member of the UW Evaluation team during their participation in Early Achievers.

h. **Criteria for Termination**

The local lead agency reserves the right to initiate termination from Early Achievers process at any time if a facility fails to meet any of the expectations outlined in the Early Achievers Participation Agreement and the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines.

Criteria for termination include:

- Failure to maintain good standing with licensing defined as having an active license that is **not** suspended, revoked or on probation
- Changes in facility licensed capacity: facility no longer licensed to serve children birth to age five
- Changes in ages served (provider preference): facility no longer serves children birth to age five
- Changes in facility enrollment: no children ages birth to age 5 enrolled for 60 calendar days
- Provision of false information on Early Achievers application or any participation documents
- Failure to complete Early Achievers Level 2 participation requirements within allowed timeframe
- Failure to meet Early Achievers participation expectations including failure to return calls, keep appointments, and submit required paperwork including Quality Improvement Award Funds Use report
- Failure to fully participate in Early Achieves coaching services, including participation in on-site coaching and creation of a Quality Improvement Plan based on evaluation data and Early Achievers Quality Standards
- Fraudulent use of Quality Improvement Award funds
- Failure to maintain all records, receipts and documentation of use of Quality Improvement Awards on-site for seven years
- Failure to report changes to local lead agency that may render facility ineligible for Early Achievers participation
- Failure to adhere to professionalism in conduct and behavior with coaches, regional coordinators, trainers and DEL staff
• Facility is unwilling to adhere to changes made to the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines or administrative and statutory guidelines issued by any state, federal or local government agency

i. Procedure for Termination

In the event that a facility has not met the requirements outlined in the Early Achievers Participation Agreement or the Operating Guidelines, or if the facility has committed any acts that may result in Early Achievers termination*, the local lead agency shall:

1. Notify the facility in writing of the need to take corrective action.
   • The facility has **30 days** to comply with the request for corrective action.
   • The local lead agency may request additional documentation from the facility
   • The local lead agency reserves the right to suspend all or part of Early Achievers activities during the review process.

2. Notify DEL that the facility has had corrective action initiated.

3. Review all information provided by facility, including steps that the facility has taken to remedy the issue, in order to determine if there is sufficient evidence that the facility has violated any aspect of Early Achievers participation or has otherwise acted in a way that is unethical to warrant termination of participation.

4. Determine if the facility should be terminated from Early Achievers or allowed to continue as an Early Achievers participant

5. Notify DEL of recommendation to terminate: DEL will approve all final decisions about facility termination from Early Achievers.

6. Notify the facility of final decision in writing within 30 days of receiving all necessary documentation to make a final decision.

*Please note: In the event that Early Achievers termination is triggered by facility licensing status, DEL is responsible for termination as outlined in Eligibility: How Licensing Status affects registration and participation (Section 3: part c).

j. Obligations of Participants Upon Termination or Withdrawal from Early Achievers

Facilities that are terminated or voluntarily withdraw from Early Achievers must:
• Provide local lead agency with all outstanding reports and participation information
• Facilities that are no longer Early Achievers participants should not display their Early Achiever Rating Certificate or otherwise use Early Achievers for marketing purposes.
In the event of termination due to suspected fraudulent use of funds, or failure to keep records, receipts and documentation of fund use, the facility may be liable for damages as authorized by law including, but not limited to, Quality Improvement funds paid to the facility.

k. **Reapplication to Early Achievers**
   This section addresses the steps that a facility must take to reapply for Early Achievers after voluntary withdrawal or termination from Early Achievers. In the case of termination, the steps a participant must take to reapply are based on the reasons for termination.

i. **When can a facility reapply immediately to Early Achievers?**
   Facilities in the following scenarios may reapply to Early Achievers at any time if they meet all of the eligibility criteria outlined in *Eligibility* (Section 3).
   - Voluntary withdrawal from Early Achievers
   - Participation withdrawn because Primary QRIS Contact did not submit Participation Agreement to local lead agency by deadline
   - Facility terminated due to:
     - Address change
     - Facility Closure—non licensing reasons
     - Low or no enrollment
     - Change in licensed capacity or ages served
     - Failure to complete Level 2 requirements within allotted time frame

   In order to reapply, facilities will complete the Early Achievers Registration and the Early Achievers Application for Level 2. Facility information will not be saved from prior participation, but the Primary QRIS Contact will still have their orientation attendance and training completions documented in MERIT and will not have to re-complete these activities.

ii. **When must a facility wait one year to reapply to Early Achievers?**
   In the case that a facility is terminated from Early Achievers for the following reasons, the facility must wait one year to reapply and follow the procedures for re-application outlined below.
   - Failure to maintain good standing with licensing defined as having an active license that is not suspended, revoked or on probation
   - Provision of false information on Early Achievers application or any participation documents
• Failure to meet Early Achievers participation expectations including failure to return calls, keep appointments, and submit required paperwork including Quality Improvement Award Funds Use report
• Failure to fully participate in Early Achieves coaching services, including participation in on-site coaching and creation of a Quality Improvement Plan based on evaluation data and Early Achievers Quality Standards
• Fraudulent use of Quality Improvement Award funds
• Failure to maintain all records, receipts and documentation of use of Quality Improvement Awards on-site for seven years
• Failure to adhere to professionalism in conduct and behavior with coaches, regional coordinators, trainers and DEL staff
• Facility is unwilling to adhere to changes made to the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines or administrative and statutory guidelines issued by any state, federal or local government agency

iii. Process to reapply to Early Achievers after one year:
   1. Facilities must wait 12 months from date of termination from Early Achievers before reapplication to Early Achievers.

   2. After 12 months, facilities interested in reapplication are required to submit written documentation using a DEL approved template to the DEL QRIS Program Manager stating how issues that resulted in termination or withdrawal have been resolved and how facility is prepared for successful future participation. Note: facilities that reapply to Early Achievers are subject to re-ratings timeline outlined in Evaluation and Rating: Rating Assignment (Section 7: part g).

   3. The DEL QRIS Program Manager will convene the DEL QRIS Review Team who will review the cause of facility termination or withdrawal, documentation submitted by facility, and information from partners including Regional Coordinators and local lead agencies if applicable to make a final decision about facility eligibility for participation. DEL may request additional information from the facility during review process. In the case that a facility was terminated due to licensing suspension, revocation, or probation, DEL will consult with the Regional Administrator for recommendations before making final decision.

   4. DEL will notify facility of final decision in writing within 10 business days of receiving of all necessary documentation to make decision.
5. DEL reserves the right to make final decision about reapplication after termination or voluntary withdrawal.

IX. **Glossary of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Child Care Aware of Washington</strong></th>
<th><strong>Child Care Aware of Washington</strong> is the lead agency for coordinating improvement activities including coaching, technical assistance, professional development and training.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLASS</strong> is an observation-based assessment tool that measures how teachers/providers interact with children to create supportive, nurturing relationships, enhance learning, and provide instruction. <strong>CLASS</strong> looks at interactions in three domains: Emotional Support; Classroom Organization; and Instructional Support. The <strong>CLASS</strong> will be conducted in classrooms and family child care homes by UW as part of the facility on-site evaluation for rating. Facility <strong>CLASS</strong> scores make up 40% of the total Early Achievers Quality Standards points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Coach** | All Level 3-5 facilities will be assigned a **coach** who will work with them to:  
  * Identify goals based on evaluation data and Early Achievers Quality Standards  
  * Make plans to achieve goals  
  * Access resources  
  * Implement quality improvements  
  * Navigate Early Achievers  

  **Coaches** are highly trained early learning professionals with experience and education in early childhood education, and participate in ongoing professional development and consultation with the University of Washington |
| Community Liaison | The **Community Liaison** is a member of the UW evaluation team that supports the facility and the Data Collectors to have a successful visit. The **Community Liaison** visits before the Data Collectors, and works with the Primary QRIS contact to:  
- Explain the on-site visit and answering any facility questions and concerns  
- Review the completed Rating Readiness Tool with the facility  
- Confirm that all facility documentation and files are ready and in place for data collection  
- Gather information for Data Collectors about the facility layout, including classroom/facility maps, classroom schedules, and other pertinent logistical information |
| --- | --- |
| Data Collector | The **Data Collector** is a member of the UW evaluation team responsible for data collection. **Data Collectors** visit facilities to:  
- Conduct observations including ERS and CLASS  
- Review records and documentation  
- Conduct staff interviews |
| The Department of Early Learning (DEL) | The **Department of Early Learning** is a state agency dedicated to helping ensure our state offers world-class, developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning opportunities for all of Washington’s youngest learners, so each child enters kindergarten with a solid foundation for success in school and life. Washington's children realize their full potential. **DEL** is the lead administrative agency for Early Achievers. |
| Early Achievers | **Early Achievers** is Washington’s QRIS, and is a voluntary program designed to:  
- Support child care providers to provide high-quality care by providing resources including training, coaching and incentives  
- Help parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs  
- Ensure that children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment Rating Scales (ERS)</th>
<th>The <strong>ERS</strong> is an observation-based assessment that measures classroom/family child care environment quality in the following categories: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language and Reasoning/Listening and Talking; Activities; Interactions; Program Structure; and Parents and Staff. The <strong>ERS</strong> will be conducted in classrooms and family child care homes by UW as part of the facility on-site evaluation for rating. Facility <strong>ERS</strong> scores make up 15% of the total Early Achievers Quality Standards points.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>In this document, <strong>facility</strong> refers to the participating child care center or family child care home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERIT</td>
<td><strong>MERIT</strong> (<em>Washington’s Managed Education and Registry Information Tool</em>) is used to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education and school age professionals. Facilities use MERIT to access and complete the Early Achievers Registration and Application for Level 2. <strong>MERIT</strong> is the source of evidence during evaluation for staff education qualifications for facility Professional Development &amp; Training Standard points. Use of <strong>MERIT</strong> is a requirement for Early Achievers Participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum thresholds</td>
<td>A facility must achieve designated minimum CLASS and ERS scores in order to achieve a rating of Level 3, regardless of total facility points earned. Each assessed facility/family child care home must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support/Classroom Organization, and a 3.5 on the ERS. These scores, or <strong>minimum thresholds</strong> represent the foundational level of quality that all facilities must have in order to be rated Levels 3-5. Facilities that do not meet the minimum thresholds will receive a rating of Level 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site evaluation</td>
<td>Facilities participate in <strong>on-site evaluation</strong> conducted by the University of Washington in order to earn a facility rating. On-site evaluation includes ERS and CLASS observations, review of records and documentation, and staff interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary QRIS Contact</td>
<td>The <strong>Primary QRIS Contact</strong> is the facility child care center director or family child care provider who is responsible for oversight and completion of all Level 2 activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)</strong></td>
<td>All Level 3-5 facilities will create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in partnership with their coaches based on facility evaluation results, ERS and CLASS scores, components of the Quality Standards, and overall facility rating. The QIP is a plan that includes goals, action steps to achieve goals, timelines and resources needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Standards</strong></td>
<td>The Early Achievers Quality Standards is a comprehensive, research-based framework to support positive outcomes in early learning settings. There are four Quality Standard Areas: Child Outcomes; Curriculum &amp; Learning Environment &amp; Interactions; Professional Development &amp; Training; and Family Engagement &amp; Partnership. Each Quality Standard area is worth a set number of points. Facility ratings are based on total points earned during evaluation on the Quality Standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rating Readiness Tool (RRT)</strong></td>
<td>The Rating Readiness Tool (RTT) is a document that helps facilities prepare for evaluation and ensure that all requirements are in place before on-site evaluation visits occur. Participants will receive the RRT from their local lead agency; local lead agency staff will help participants complete the tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary QRIS Contact</strong></td>
<td>Facilities may appoint a Secondary QRIS Contact to participate in the Professional Training Series on behalf of the Primary QRIS Contact. Designation of a Secondary QRIS Contact is optional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist</strong></td>
<td>All facilities in Level 2 will be assigned a Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist through their local lead agency who will work with the program to develop a work plan and timeline for completion of Level 2 activities and connect them to resources that will help them meet the Quality Standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University of Washington (UW)</strong></td>
<td>The University of Washington (UW) is the lead agency for evaluation, assessment and rating assignment. Data Collectors from UW conduct facility on-site evaluation visits. UW is also responsible for the development of the Early Achievers Coach Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WELS data system</strong></td>
<td>WELS is a web-based early learning data system that will be used by Early Achievers partners including DEL, UW and Child Care Aware/local lead agencies to track and maintain data including facility participation, evaluation information, and quality improvement progress. Facilities will use the WELS “Provider Portal” to view their QIP, track their progress, and access resources to support their goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EARLY ACHIEVERS, Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards
A Framework to Support Positive Child Outcomes
**LEVEL 1:** Licensing or Certification

Facility must be licensed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning or have recognized, approved certification (Military, Head Start, ECEAP, Tribal).

**LEVEL 2:** Professional Growth and Facility Management

Facility must meet all Level 1 requirements and serve children birth to age 5 in order to register for Level 2.

**LEVEL 2 APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applicants must complete prior to beginning Level 2 activities:

- Attend Early Achievers Orientation.
- Complete and submit facility registration in MERIT.
- Complete and submit Early Achievers Registration.

**LEVEL 2 ACTIVITIES**

**Documentation (in MERIT, Early Achievers Application Level 2)**

- Complete Facility Profile
- Complete and submit Early Achievers self-assessment*
  - Environment Rating Scale (ERS)
  - State standards

**Complete Professional Training Series** (director/owner/program supervisor)

- Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines
- Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals
- Introduction to Cultural Competence
- QRIS Strengthening Families for Early Learning Professionals
- Introduction to the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- QRIS School Readiness

**REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE LEVEL 2 STATUS**

- Ensure all facility staff caring for children have an active professional record in MERIT.
- Complete and submit Early Achievers Application for Level 2 within one year.
- Must be fully licensed (no initial licenses).
- License cannot be suspended, revoked, or on probation.

*The ERS/CLASS Overview must be taken prior to completing the Early Achievers Self-assessment.

**Facility must meet all of the below requirements and have achieved Level 2 status prior to applying for an evaluation to earn a Level 3 to 5 rating.
Levels 3 to 5 are based on points. Your facility rating is determined by the number of points you earn during your independent evaluation. Each assessed facility/family home child care must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support in the CLASS and a 3.5 on the ERS to achieve a Level 3 to 5 rating. Facilities that do not meet these minimum thresholds will receive a Level 2 rating.

**POINTS AWARDED FOR THESE AREAS:**

- Child Outcomes
- Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions
- Professional Development & Training
- Family Engagement & Partnership

Your overall points will determine your final rating. Degrees and credentials must be verified in MERIT in order to earn professional development points. The points are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Outcomes</td>
<td>+10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility Curriculum and Learning Environment and Interactions (70 points total)</td>
<td>+55 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom/FCC Home Environment (CLASS/ERS)</td>
<td>+15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Training</td>
<td>+10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement and Partnership</td>
<td>+10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Child Outcomes / 10 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Sub-Component One</th>
<th>Sub-Component Two</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental screening is conducted within 90 days of enrollment and results are shared with parents</td>
<td>Records Review (1 point)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Individual Child Experience of Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing assessment of children’s strengths and needs to monitor progress (e.g., child portfolio/work sampling assessments) and inform instruction</td>
<td>Records Review (1 point)</td>
<td>Focal Child Analysis (1 point)</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share individualized child data with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of family engagement, data sharing, and transition supports for individual children (as measured by Focal Child)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of WaKIDS Assessment Tool or demonstration/documentation of alignment to WaKIDS Assessment process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Instruction for all children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic review and use of child assessment data for continuous program improvement (e.g., analyze group patterns and behaviors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facility Curriculum, Learning Environment, Interactions / 70 points

Classroom/FCC Home Environment / 55 Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurements</th>
<th>Point range options, based on average facility score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASS: Instructional Support/ Engaged Support for Learning</td>
<td>2 to 3.4 (10 points) 3.5 to 4.4 (15 points) 4.5 &amp; higher (20 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS: Emotional Support &amp; Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support</td>
<td>3.5 to 4.9 (10 points) 5.0 to 5.9 (15 points) 6.0 &amp; higher (20 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERS</td>
<td>3.5 (5 points) 5 (10 points) 6 (15 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each assessed facility/family home child care must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support in the CLASS and a 3.5 on the ERS to achieve a Level 3 to 5 rating.

Curriculum and Staff Supports / 15 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Sub-Component One</th>
<th>Sub-Component Two</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Profile</td>
<td>Show evidence of Program Curriculum Philosophy (1 point)</td>
<td>Demonstrate alignment with Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines (2 point)</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Lead Teaching Staff* or FCC Owner trained on Program Curriculum Philosophy (2 points)</td>
<td>Lead Teaching Staff* or FCC Owner trained on Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines (3 points)</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing mentoring of teaching staff** to support improvement in curriculum and teacher child interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated time for teaching staff** planning time on a weekly basis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated time for teaching staff** to engage in reflective practice with peer group on a monthly basis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes family child care assistants
** Includes FCC primary educator/care provider
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development and Training / 10 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center Director or Program Supervisor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA in ECE or related field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA in ECE or related field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in ECE or related field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Center Designated Lead Teaching Staff**  
(at least one staff person per classroom must be designated lead)

| 25% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher) | Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 1 point |
| 25% have AA or higher in ECE or related field | Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 2 points |
| 25% have BA or higher in ECE or related field | Level 4 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 3 points |

**Center - All Other Teaching Staff**  
(assistants and aides)

| 25% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher) | Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 1 point |
| 50% have CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher) | Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 2 points |
| 25% have AA or higher in ECE or related field | Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 3 points |

**Family Child Care Provider or Primary Worker**

| CDA or approved certificate or credential (12 credits or higher) | Level 2 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 3 points |
| AA in ECE or related field | Level 3 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 5 points |
| BA in ECE or related field | Level 4 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 7 points |
| MA in ECE or related field | Level 5 of the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals | 10 points |
## Family Engagement and Partnership / 10 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete modified Strengthening Families Self-assessment (Director/Owner)</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Plan of Action based on Strengthening Families Self-assessment</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide evidence of continuous feedback and improvement (Plan of Action)</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a parenting support and education program in place (e.g. Incredible Years, Triple P Parenting, CSEFEL Parenting Modules, Parents as Teachers etc.)</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information about community based programs available for parents in languages represented in the facility (e.g. community mental health, child nutrition, physical fitness, food banks, Child Find, medical/dental resources etc.)</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of transition plans/policies in place for changes in settings and providers</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner with parents to determine perception of child strengths and needs</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Achievers, Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards

- Engaging interactions and Environments
  - Well organized
  - Social Emotional Support
  - Instructional Interactions

- Individualized Teaching and Learning for Every Child
  - Curriculum & Learning Opportunities aligned with Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines
  - Family Engagement and Partnership
  - Screening and Ongoing Child Assessment in collaboration with families

- Professional Development and Training
  - Mentoring
  - Planning
  - Communities of Practice

Adapted from National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning