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# FACILITATOR GUIDE

for the  
Alameda County Child Care Planning Council  
Statement on High Quality  
ECE Principles and Standards

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ALAMEDA  
Child Care Planning Council  
COUNTY

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These elegantly simple documents, the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council's *Quality Statement and Facilitator Guide* have a degree of depth and thoughtfulness that make the ideas come to life. The materials illuminate the principles and practices for creating a "quality process" through reflective and critical thinking in any program type, size, or pedagogical

approach. Appropriate for family child care, directors groups, staff meetings, workshops, introductory and advanced college courses, the publications are accessible and professional. They can support early childhood education professionals as they reflect on their practice and strive to *Do* what they *Know*. I highly recommend them!

– Linda Brault, Author, Early Childhood Consultant, Specialist in Inclusion and Behavior Support



# INTRODUCTION

In September 2009, the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council adopted its *Statement on High Quality Early Care and Education* (ECE Principles and Standards). In 2010 and 2011, 12 directors, mental health consultants, and college instructors used the *Quality Statement* in facilitating groups of early childhood professionals and students. Their experiences were documented through interviews and focus groups, and their findings are summarized in this *Guide*. The *Facilitator Guide* was approved by the Council on July 19, 2011.

***The Guide contains ideas and examples, rather than a specific curriculum, in order to encourage facilitators to design their work based on the setting, needs, and characteristics of the participants.***

In an effort to secure the adoption of the *Quality Statement's* principles and standards within the ECE community, we ask that facilitators emphasize several areas, including critical thinking, creative discussion, consistent exploration of research and development in our field, and the message that "quality" is a continuous process.

The Alameda County Child Care Planning Council is pleased to share its work on the issue of improving ECE quality, and welcomes your comments and feedback.

*For inquiries about the Facilitator Guide and Statement on High Quality ECE, contact Neva Bandelow at (510) 208-9722 or [neva.bandelow@acgov.org](mailto:neva.bandelow@acgov.org).*

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# INTRO/CONTENTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ALAMEDA COUNTY'S *STATEMENT ON HIGH QUALITY ECE PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS*?

The *Quality Statement* defines the Council's position and values on quality Early Care and Education (ECE) and provides a framework to use in creating a continuing process of quality development.

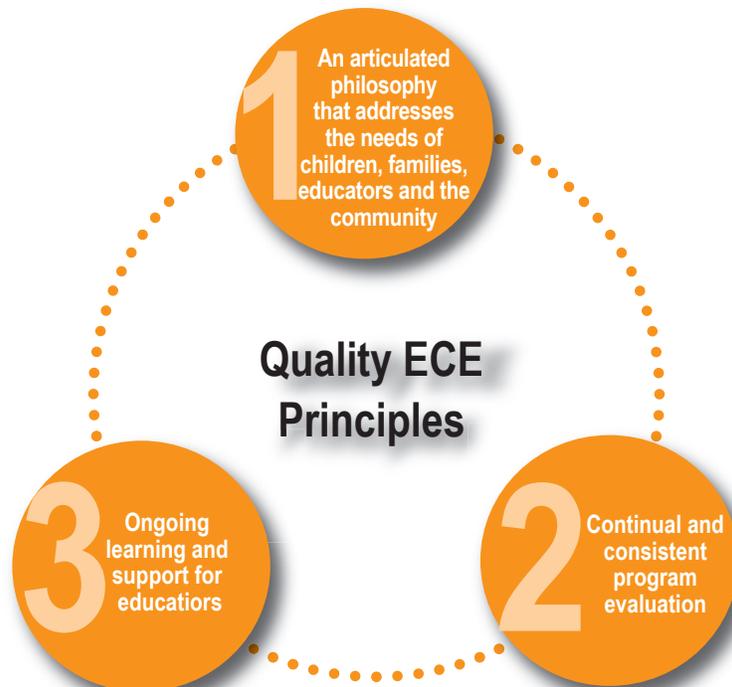
### HOW IS THE COUNCIL'S *STATEMENT ON HIGH QUALITY ECE PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS* DIFFERENT FROM A QUALITY RATING OR IMPROVEMENT SCALE?

The *Statement* recognizes that validated rating scales and other assessments can be important tools to measure specific outcomes. In contrast, the *Statement* is a comprehensive *approach* to focusing reflective, consistent and deliberate attention to: 1) how our current practices impact children, families, educators, and the community; 2) the philosophy/beliefs on which they are based; and 3) how to move to the next step in the quality process.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "QUALITY PROCESS?"

The quality process means that achieving and maintaining quality is an on-going endeavor; it never ends. The *Quality Statement's* principles and standards are the framework for this process.

*Every high-quality program institutes and adheres to these interdependent principles:*



FAQ

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### IS THE *QUALITY STATEMENT* APPROPRIATE FOR ALL PROGRAMS?

The *Quality Statement* is the Planning Council's position on quality for all ECE licensed and license-exempt group programs, infants through school age. The distinctive value of the *Statement* is that practitioners are able to individualize their approach to the quality process. For example, a family child care provider uses different techniques to implement a principle or standard than does a large center. An infant program has a slightly different philosophy from a school-age program. Some directors use the *Statement* as a periodic review or planning tool; some make it a part of their regular staff meetings. Some instructors use it as an on-going part of a course; some refer to it occasionally.

### WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPT TO LEARN FROM THE *STATEMENT*?

The most important concept to “take away” is the desire to keep asking questions and learning about how to improve ECE!

This is especially important when, in a time of anxiety about “child outcomes” and “productivity,” we are asked to comply with rigid teaching and assessment methods that can ignore the development of self-awareness, peer relationships, family needs, and adult-child relationships. The Council's *Statement on High Quality ECE* is a framework for helping us take a broader look at our purpose, beliefs, and practices, and help us ask significant questions in order to consistently improve the quality of ECE:

- Are we measuring how ECE supports the physical, mental, and environmental health and education of children, families, educators, and the community?
- Are we using the most valid theories and assessments to reflect on our practices?
- Are ECE practitioners given the resources, including compensation, mentoring, and educational support to become critical thinkers and creative, resourceful professionals?
- How can we do it better? What is each individual's role in the process?



FAQ

# BEFORE YOU START

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION

**1. Be comfortable and well acquainted with the *Quality Statement*.** Read all sections carefully. Pay close attention to the principles and standards; think carefully about your goal and purpose in using the *Statement*.

**2. Know your participants.** Are they new to the field; are they resistant to new ideas; are they students who need to connect theory to practice; are there English Language Learners in the group?

**3. Be aware of cultural understandings and experiences.** For example, the *Statement* asks us to question and examine our responses or emotions, as well as our intellectual thinking. This is not always a familiar or comfortable concept for people.

**4. Analyze how to start with strengths.** What is currently being done well; how are participants already engaging with the principles?

**5. Plan for ways to make it real.** Help ECE participants link the *Quality Statement Principles and Standards* to their daily work, build ways to encourage the group to share experiences, support each other, and strengthen observation and recording skills.

**6. Carve out enough time.** Time is challenging and difficult in our work lives, but it is the most important item for success. Plan for discussion, sharing, and re-visiting concepts and ideas.

**7. Consult with other facilitators.** Ask colleagues for help or call the Alameda County Planning Council staff to ask if they know others who have worked with the *Statement* and are willing to share information.



# BEFORE YOU START

**Introduce the *Statement* before asking people to read it:** talk about why it was developed and briefly describe its main points (*examples: quality is a process; core principles*).

**Make it a positive learning experience:** the *Statement's* concepts and vocabulary may be new to many people. Consider ways to “break it down.”

**Work with “parts” or sections:** asking people to absorb all of the principles and standards at once may be overwhelming and discouraging. The principles are interdependent and you can start the discussion with any one of them, depending on the group’s understanding and comfort level.

**Ask questions such as:**

- What is the importance of quality?
- Why do we think about it?
- What do you think it means?
- What does it look like?
- What does it look like to you at your workplace?
- Who determines it?
- Who should be involved in creating quality?
- What are the dimensions or “parts” of quality?

**Take small steps instead of big leaps** when introducing concepts and theory; use examples and stories to support and lead, not scare!

**Reinforce strong observation skills.** Discuss how to conduct observation of children, program activities, and interactions, and why it is important in the quality process; use videos or readings that explain observation techniques.

**Clarify disequilibrium.** If participants are feeling uncomfortable about the *Statement* or the concepts (for example, “reflecting on their own work”), assure them that it’s a sign that change is beginning; resolution will come later after exploration and dialogue.

**Explain critical thinking.** It means to be able to look at a different perspective and engage in what other people are saying as well as what you believe (dialogue not argument) and to test new ideas and activities. It is vital to the quality process.

**Weave the concept of quality into all aspects of professional development** (*for example, how can an in-service on language development impact the quality of our work?*)

**Use the *Statement* to emphasize that ECE is a PROFESSION,** and should meet certain standards of practice based on research and evidence.

**Emphasize the importance of keeping current.** If people are confused about concepts and standards in the *Statement*, remind them that they are developed from current ECE research and best practice, and we need to acquaint ourselves with contemporary language and ideas of our profession.

**Involve participants:** For example, pair up people to identify how a program does or does not follow the principles. One director used it to provide a way for staff to conduct long term planning.

**Build an awareness of how the *Statement* can be used for advocacy.** It is a unified *Statement* developed by a County-wide Council, based on research, best practices, and experiences of educators and parents. It can be shared with policy makers, legislators, funders, higher education faculty, and the wider community of early childhood.

## EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

*Please mix, match and create your own.*

**Read the first page together.** Identify and clarify words/concepts that are confusing; deconstruct and discuss them; read it again and get feedback and discussion on participant thoughts. Discuss the main concepts (e.g.: What is meant by “core principles”? What is “interdependent”? Why use circles?).

**Break into small groups.** Have each group discuss one principle and talk about what they think it means. Report back and ask for linkages among the principles – ask if any of the principles work on their own.

**Demonstrate the difference between “mission,” “goals,” and “philosophy.”** Ask for samples from workplaces; small groups can develop philosophy, mission, and goals for fantasy programs (e.g.: bakeries or shoe shops).

**Explore the concept of “self-reflection.”** Emphasize that reflections are not self-criticism or self judgment; they are a way to explore what you think and feel about something and why. For example, ask participants to think of a time when it was difficult (or comfortable) talking to a child or parent and consider the following:

- Why do you think it was difficult or comfortable?
- What did it show you about your feelings?
- What did it show you about philosophy or standards?
- How do you think the child or parent felt or thought?
- What would you do differently next time?

**Discuss the Standards:** After discussing one or more of the principles, go through a set or several sets of the Standards (may be easiest to start with Child, but don't forget the rest). In small groups, each participant states if they agree or disagree with each standard and WHY.

**Provide case studies** (for example, give an example of a dilemma; ask participants to think about how a clearly articulated program philosophy would help to resolve it).

**Use role play.** One member plays the part of a teacher; one of a parent. Discuss how the program conducts on-going evaluation of its practice to help in building a quality program.

**Link Statement to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO).** In an academic setting, inform students that assignments related to the *Statement* will be evidence of meeting certain SLO's.

**Promote dialogue with the “round robin” technique in small groups for example:**

- Each participant has five minutes to discuss her/his perception of “Community” as a part of the quality process;
- When all are finished, each has three more minutes to add to his/her original presentation if needed;
- The final 15 minutes is for each person to ask questions of the other participants.

**Keep journals:** assign the group to keep individual journals throughout a period of time and identify how their own practices relate to their personal or program's philosophy. Participants must include a description of something they learned about themselves or their work place that relates to the three principles.

**Practice observation skills.** Create scenarios and vignettes where participants act out an observation of a classroom or an interchange between staff, etc. Connect the observation to a specific Principle(s) or Standard(s).

# ACTIVITIES

*Examples only. Please plan for the unique needs and setting of each group.*

## SAMPLE ONE Workshop/College Course Series

### **Purpose of series is to support participants to:**

- Gain an understanding of the *Quality Statement* principles and standards, and their application in diverse settings; and
- Gain competence in reflective and critical thinking skills, as well as child and program observation techniques.

### **Timeline, format, and content:**

- Series of two to three hour meetings/workshops/classes; once a week for four to six months.
- Content includes the *Quality Statement*, selected readings and videos, and active involvement of the students, stimulating activities, dialogue in small groups, presentations, role play, journal keeping, and practice in sharing the *Statement* with colleagues.

At the end of the series, the participants will demonstrate the following:

### **Principle 1**

**1** An articulated philosophy that addresses the needs of children, families, educators and the community

- Explanation of the meaning of “philosophy” as it applies to ECE.
- Clear explanation (articulation) of philosophy and standards of the program within which they work.
- Draft of a philosophy based on program practices (non-working participants partner with working members of the group).
- Examples of how that philosophy impacts the children and educators, and how it extends to relationships with families and the community.
- Description of how the program does or could fulfill Principle 1.

### **Principle 2**

**2** Continual and consistent program evaluation

- Definition and examples of on-going program evaluation and how it differs from child, teacher, or environmental assessment.
- Identification of types of consistent program evaluation used in her/his program, and whether they are the types meant in the *Quality Statement*.
- Description of the relationship between Principle 1 and Principle 2.
- Clarification of how the practices of Principle 2 impact children, families, educators, and the community.

### **Principle 3**

**3** Ongoing learning and support for educators

- Examples of educator support, education goals, and learning goals, and their differences.
- Articulation of ideal forms of support and learning for educators.
- Articulation of the ways his/her program does/could fulfill this principle.
- Articulation of the relationship between Principle 3 and the other principles.
- Understanding of how the capacity of individual program support for educators is linked to the larger issues in ECE and social/political issues in this country.

## SAMPLE TWO

### Center-based Professional Development Series

*Please note: The Director needs to decide whether s/he should facilitate the series or use an outside facilitator, and how much involvement and influence staff will have in decision making. This work calls for honesty and free expression in order for it to be helpful. Sample Two assumes that staff has a relatively sophisticated understanding of the concepts and language in the Statement.*

#### **Purpose of the Professional Development Series is to:**

- Familiarize a staff group with the comprehensive quality process.
- Encourage stronger involvement among staff in developing practices that reflect our philosophy.
- Build strong working relationships and reflective thinking among staff.
- Assist in empowering staff to continue learning and to support each other.
- Assist administration and teaching staff with planning.

#### **Setting the Stage**

- Director announces that the County Child Care Planning Council has developed a position paper on quality, including principles and standards that are exciting and very appropriate for the center's work; she includes the following information:
  - At the next Staff Meeting an introductory presentation will be given by one of the Council Committee members (or staff) who developed the *Statement*.
  - Assures staff that the *Statement* is not an assessment or a rating scale, but a guide for different types of programs to develop their own path to building quality, and it requires a great deal of participation and input from staff.

***Assure staff that the Quality Statement is not an assessment or a rating scale, but a guide for different types of programs to develop their own path to building quality, and it requires a great deal of participation and input from staff.***

#### **Meeting One:**

The introductory presentation provides an overview of the *Statement* and its purpose and main points, creating an interest on the part of the staff. Staff is asked to read the *Statement's* first page and the information on Principle 1 before the next meeting. Director/facilitator sets an agenda for the next eight months.



## **Meeting Two:**

Staff review center's mission statement and philosophy; discuss their perceptions of the documents; what do they think is meant by them?; what are they based on? Everyone is asked to practice articulating them in "every day" language. Review Standards of Principle 1; assignment for next meeting is that each staff member will observe how their PRACTICE meets standards (or could do it better), including the full spectrum of child, family, educator and community. Each must write a minimum of one example (could also start journals). Facilitator reminds staff of observation skills – they need to be reflective and non-judgmental.

## **Meeting Three:**

Staff reviews findings re: Principle 1 and its standards; emphasis is on observation (there are no "good or bad reports"). Discussion on how effective observation skills can build a respectful and safe environment for discussion and growth; last half hour dedicated to suggestions for change in philosophy and/or practice. Assignment is to read Principle 2 and its Standards.

## **Meeting Four:**

Staff reviews Principle 2. Use similar activities and homework assignments as Meetings One and Two; discussion of how Principles 1 and 2 are related.

## **Meeting Five:**

See Meeting Two. Try new activities – role play, small groups, drawing or graphing staff observations. Decide on one or two changes in practice that are based on staff's findings. Homework is to read Principle 3 and its Standards.

## Meeting Six:

Review Principle 3; discuss how and why this principle relates to the other two and how it can determine the quality of a program. Make a list of “what exists” and “ideal supports” in the program. Examine the connection between public and social support for early childhood educators and the program’s capability to meet the ideal; brainstorm how to work toward the ideal. Discuss staff standards and supports in other professions and how they relate to ECE standards.

## Meeting Seven:

Review the work and findings of the past six sessions; chart everyone’s most surprising issue, the most helpful, and most confusing, and what changed because of the series. Assign small groups homework to develop an explanation of the importance and examples of a Principle for parents or others (brochures, displays, etc.).

## Meeting Eight:

Review assignments from meeting seven; decide on next steps – what would staff like to explore further; projects or activities relating to the *Statement*.

## Meeting Nine:

Finalize plans for next steps; submit confidential evaluations of the series; **have a party**.

*Review work from the past six sessions. Chart everyone’s most surprising issue, most helpful, and most confusing, and what changed because of the series.*



## GLOSSARY

*Also, see explanations in the Quality Statement.*

**Evaluation:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. to determine the significance or worth of something by careful appraisal and study  
Evaluation is not a punitive action; it is an on-going reflection and effort to determine “what works and why, and what should be changed.”

**Pedagogy:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. the art and science of teaching
2. the profession of teaching/education

There are different styles and theories of teaching (pedagogy) such as Montessori, Reggio-Emilio, Faith-Based, etc. The Planning Council recognizes that quality can be realized in all of them.

**Philosophy:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. theory underlying a sphere of activity or thought
2. a pursuit of wisdom

“Philosophy” is the belief system or rationale upon which an ECE program is built; it explains the “why” of practices and activities, and is the basis for reflection and evaluation.

**Principle:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. a comprehensive and fundamental law or doctrine
2. role or code of conduct

The *Quality Statement’s* Principles are founded on ECE research, best practices, parent opinion, and practitioner knowledge and experience; they are crucial to building positive environments for children, families, educators, and the community.

**Quality:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. the nature or inherent feature of something;
2. a degree of excellence

The Planning Council defines ECE quality as on-going practice that follows the *Quality Statement’s* three Principles and their Standards.

**Reflection:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. the return of light or sound waves (mirror)
2. consideration of subject matter, idea, or purpose
3. syn: the act of being thoughtful, deliberative

“Reflection” is a consistent and continuous cycle of: 1) observation (what is); 2) questioning (why and what do I think about what is); and, 3) action (what if we tried this?).

See *Statement*, Examples 1 & 2.

**Self-Awareness:**

Being clear about what YOU bring to a situation, including your values, culture, upbringing, etc., and how it influences the way you perceive or “see” the situation or issue.

**Standard:** noun (*Merriam-Webster*)

1. something established by authority or general consent as a rule for the measure of a value, quantity, weight, or quality
2. syn: yardstick, criterion, gauge, measurement

The *Quality Statement Standards* clarify how the Principles are measured in any ECE program type, size, or pedagogical practice.

# GLOSSARY