

Los Angeles County Office of Education
Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit
Expanded Learning TK/K Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool



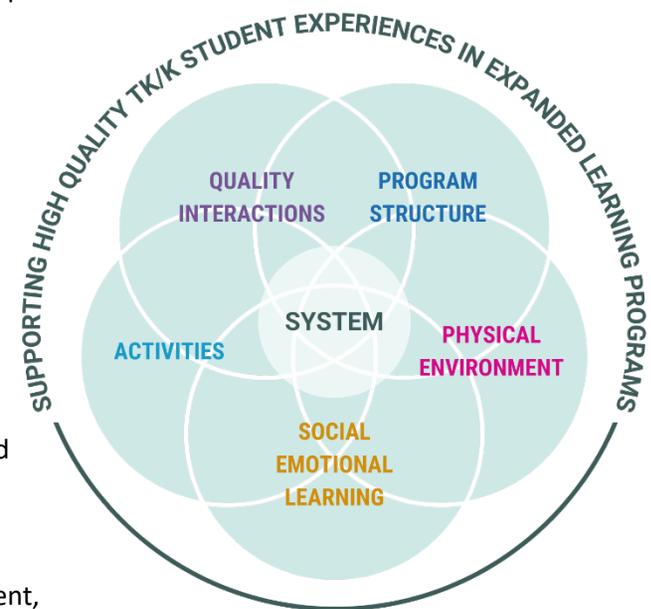
The Expanded Learning TK/K Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool was developed by the Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, with the intent of enhancing program quality for TK/K students in Expanded Learning programs. This tool is designed to provide Expanded Learning programs the ability to highlight current strengths, as well as pinpoint areas for growth. A variety of sources were researched and reviewed for promising practices, which were then used in the development of a self-assessment tool tailored for Expanded Learning. For reference, the sources utilized in developing this self-assessment tool include: [Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California](#); [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised \(ECERS-R\)](#); [Classroom Assessment Scoring System \(CLASS\)](#); [Developmentally Appropriate Practice \(DAP\)](#); [California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks](#).

Five **Focus Areas** stand out when identifying the supports needed for high quality TK/K Expanded Learning programming. These include the following areas and examples of related elements:

- **Physical Environment:** Age-Appropriate Furnishings, Safe Indoor & Outdoor Spaces, Organization of Space & Materials
- **Activities:** Learning through Play, Physical Activity, Child Voice & Choice
- **Quality Interactions:** Positive Relationships, Individualization, Inquiry-Based Engagement
- **Social Emotional Learning (SEL):** Self-Regulation, Social & Emotional Skills, SEL Materials
- **Program Structure:** Schedules & Routines, Supervision, Healthy Practices, Collaboration & Communication

Furthermore, an interconnected **System** is recognized as a crucial foundational element in supporting each Focus Area. The four **Roles** within the Expanded Learning System work in coordination to implement a high-quality Expanded Learning program for TK/K students. These roles and responsibilities include:

- **Administrator:** The individual(s) responsible for developing policies and practices for the System that supports the five Focus Areas, including plans for: staffing, communication, coordination, professional development, equipment, and material procurement.
- **Program Director:** The individual(s) responsible for the training and implementation of the developed policies and practices of the System across the agency.
- **Site Coordinator:** The individual(s) responsible for the training and implementation of the developed policies and practices of the System at the site level.
- **Frontline Staff:** The individual(s) responsible for direct service such as student supervision, engagement, and program delivery.



The Expanded Learning TK/K Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool should be incorporated into the program's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan, including a timeline and strategy for reassessment. For additional resources in support of TK/K programming, please see: [TK/K Implementation Tool Vol. 1: Program Elements](#); and [TK/K Implementation Tool Vol. 2: Calibrating ELO-P and UPK Plans](#).

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Instructions: Review each Self-Assessment Element and indicate, by checkmark, if met. Use the third column to record evidence and notes, and the fourth column to identify follow-up actions and timeline, if necessary.

TK/K PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL — FOCUS AREA: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Providing a safe and enriching, age-appropriate environment for TK/K students promotes meaningful learning and development.

This focus area closely relates to the Quality Standards of: Safe and Supportive Environment; Active and Engaged Learning; Healthy Choices and Behaviors.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
1. Age-Appropriate Furnishings	<p>Tables and chairs are the appropriate size for TK/K children. When seated, children’s feet touch the floor, and they can comfortably rest their elbows on the table.</p> <p>Children have access to soft furnishings and materials to promote comfort (cushions, rug, beanbag chairs, soft dolls/ puppets, etc.).</p> <p>Appropriate furniture/equipment is used to enrich learning opportunities for TK/K learners (easel for painting, sand/water table, light table, etc.).</p> <p>Furnishings are used to organize materials for children’s independent use. Materials are well organized, labeled, and accessible to children on low, open shelves or carts.</p>		
2. Safe Indoor & Outdoor Spaces	<p>Indoor and outdoor spaces are clean and well maintained (floors swept, trash and broken items removed, spills cleaned up, etc.).</p> <p>All hazardous items are inaccessible to children.</p> <p>Staff take action to prevent safety problems (cleaning products stored in locked cupboards out of children’s reach, cords do not pose a tripping or pulling hazard, etc.).</p> <p>Indoor and outdoor spaces used by the group are accessible to children and adults in the program with disabilities (ramps, handrails, adaptive furniture provided if needed).</p> <p>Outdoor space and equipment used for TK/K children is age-appropriate (play area fenced in, playground structures are age-appropriately designed).</p> <p>Appropriate restrooms, eating areas, rest areas, and play areas are available to support the needs of TK/K children.</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
3. Organization of Space & Materials	<p>Children have a designated space to store their belongings. Staff have a place to store their personal belongings out of children’s reach. Children have access to active and quiet spaces/activities that are placed to not interfere with one another (block building area separate from dancing area).</p> <p>Children have access to at least one indoor and one outdoor space daily to provide a variety of experiences that support their development and wellbeing (fine and gross motor development, access to nature, and active physical play).</p> <p>Learning materials are rotated or enhanced monthly to maintain children’s interest (puzzles rotated, painting tools added, new theme in dramatic play, etc.).</p>		



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TK/K PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL — FOCUS AREA: ACTIVITIES

TK/K students are engaged in self-initiated learning through play and have access to opportunities for physical development.
 This focus area closely relates to the Quality Standards of: Safe and Supportive Environment; Active and Engaged Learning; Youth Voice and Leadership; Healthy Choices and Behaviors; Diversity, Access, and Equity.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
1. Learning Through Play	<p>Children have access to a variety of developmentally appropriate, hands-on materials that promote learning through play and active exploration (building materials, dramatic play, art, writing, science/nature, music/movement, sand/water, manipulatives, books, and language materials).</p> <p>Children have frequent opportunities to engage in creative exploration of open-ended materials and create their own individualized work (using materials in their own way without being required to follow an example).</p> <p>Children have opportunities to access reading and writing materials to enhance their play (writing tools to plan out block structure, books with props for acting out stories during dramatic play, etc.).</p> <p>Staff extend learning opportunities during play through meaningful involvement (talking to children about what they are doing, asking questions, modeling language, facilitating peer interactions).</p> <p>Staff embed key knowledge and skills (mathematics, language & literacy, etc.) in the context of children’s play (counting, measuring, discussing shapes while building with blocks).</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
2. Physical Activity	<p>Children have daily access to space and equipment that supports physical development, active physical play, and gross motor skills (climbing, sliding, balancing, catching, throwing, pedaling, pulling, jumping, kicking, etc.).</p> <p>Children have enough indoor and outdoor space to move and play freely while using the materials and equipment provided.</p> <p>Children have access to enough gross motor equipment and physical activity choices (balls, trikes, shovels, bean bag toss, obstacle course, etc.) to engage the number of children in the group simultaneously.</p> <p>Children have protection from the elements (shade structure or trees to get out of the hot sun, indoor areas are available to engage in active physical play when it is raining, etc.).</p>		
3. Child Voice & Choice	<p>Staff allow children to make choices and incorporate time into the daily routine for children to freely choose their learning experiences.</p> <p>Staff incorporate children’s ideas and demonstrate flexibility to support child-initiated activities and learning.</p> <p>Staff support children’s independence by providing appropriate responsibilities/ helper jobs.</p> <p>Children’s diversity is reflected throughout the environment with materials that celebrate differences and promote inclusivity (dolls, books, pictures reflect people from diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities).</p>		



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TK/K PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL — FOCUS AREA: QUALITY INTERACTIONS

Meaningful interactions are essential to promote learning and support the development of the whole child.

This focus area closely relates to the Quality Standards of: Safe and Supportive Environment; Active and Engaged Learning; Skill Building; Diversity, Access, and Equity.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
1. Positive Relationships	<p>Staff contribute to a positive climate with respectful communication, a warm, calm voice, polite language, and positive comments or signals (high-fives, thumbs up, smile, and eye contact). Staff greet children warmly by name upon arrival to the program and support children to become involved in activities. Staff demonstrate that they enjoy spending time with children by smiling, showing enthusiasm, and joining in activities together. Staff support positive peer interactions and provide frequent opportunities for children to work and play together. Staff get to know children by engaging them in conversations about their interests, experiences, and families. Interactions between staff members convey respect and cooperation (staff greet one another, speak calmly, and use positive, respectful language). Staff communicate regularly with families to learn about children’s strengths, interests, and needs.</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
2. Individualization	<p>Staff intentionally plan activities and learning experiences that build on children’s strengths, interests, and support individual needs.</p> <p>Staff include all learners by providing a variety of ways for children to participate during group activities and throughout the daily routine (verbally, nonverbally, using gestures and visuals).</p> <p>Staff demonstrate that they value children’s home languages (learning a greeting in the home language, incorporating a song or story in the home language, pronouncing children’s names correctly).</p> <p>Staff acknowledge children’s emotions and provide individualized comfort and support.</p> <p>Staff build on children’s individual communication skills by modeling language and repeating and extending what children say.</p> <p>Staff listen carefully to children and position themselves at children’s eye level when communicating.</p>		
3. Inquiry-Based Engagement	<p>Staff provide opportunities for children to observe, wonder, predict, experiment, compare and problem solve (What do you notice/wonder? What do you think would happen if...? How are they similar/different...? How did you figure that out?).</p> <p>Staff ask open-ended questions and provide frequent opportunities for children to engage in discussions and share their ideas.</p> <p>Staff use a variety of strategies to promote active participation and learner interest during small and large group times (visuals, movement, hands-on materials, questions that connect the topic to children’s real experiences).</p> <p>Children have access to natural materials and collections to observe, compare, and explore (leaves, seeds, pinecones, shells, rocks, etc.).</p> <p>Staff provide opportunities for children to find answers to their questions through first-hand investigations related to topics of interest (What happens when...? How can I make...?).</p>		



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TK/K PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL — FOCUS AREA: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)			
Supporting the Social and Emotional Development of TK/K students contributes to building life-long skills for success in school and resiliency in life. This focus area closely relates to the Quality Standards of: Safe and Supportive Environment; Active and Engaged Learning; Skill Building; Youth Voice and Leadership.			
Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
1. Self-Regulation	<p>Staff support children to name their emotions and use calm down strategies (deep breathing, sensory activities in the cozy area, etc.).</p> <p>Staff clearly and positively state behavior expectations by telling children what to do instead of what not to do (“Climb up the stairs and slide down the slide.” vs “Don’t climb on the slide!”).</p> <p>Staff provide specific positive feedback to acknowledge children’s efforts (“You are working together to put away the blocks. You are sitting down safely while eating.”).</p> <p>Staff involve children in developing behavior expectations with the group. Positive behavior expectations are posted and reviewed with children.</p> <p>Staff are proactive and closely monitor to prevent unsafe behaviors from occurring (guiding and spending time with a child who demonstrates challenging behavior, preparing a child who struggles during transitions, etc.).</p>		
2. Social & Emotional Skills	<p>Staff support children to learn and practice conflict-resolution skills and to engage in problem-solving with peers (listening to each perspective, coming up with solutions, trying it out, use of solution kit, etc.).</p> <p>Staff support children to learn friendship skills and group entry skills (asking to play, taking turns, working together).</p> <p>Staff encourage children to ask for help when needed and support children to communicate their needs.</p> <p>Staff model how to label and respond to emotions (“I’m feeling frustrated because I dropped the markers. I am going to take three calming deep breaths.”).</p> <p>Staff teach children vocabulary words related to emotions (using visuals with facial expressions, books about feelings, etc.).</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
3. SEL Materials	<p>Children have access to a space or activity designed for just one or two children where they can go when feeling overstimulated (flannel board activity, painting at an easel, a cushion with some books, a game for two children, etc.).</p> <p>Staff use a variety of materials and strategies to support social-emotional learning (books about emotions, puppets to problem solve, feelings posters, etc.).</p> <p>Children have access to cooperative materials that increase opportunities to interact with peers and develop friendships (two telephones, balls, dramatic play materials, puppets).</p> <p>Children have access to calming materials and/or visuals that support them to know what to do when experiencing strong emotions (breathing poster, sensory materials, soft toys to hug).</p>		



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TK/K PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL — FOCUS AREA: PROGRAM STRUCTURE

An effective program structure contributes to a consistently safe, healthy, and collaborative learning environment.

This focus area closely relates to the Quality Standards of: Safe and Supportive Environment; Healthy Choices and Behaviors; Collaborative Partnerships; Program Management.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
1. Schedules & Routines	<p>A visual schedule is on display and used with children to create a predictable daily routine. Staff prepare children for transitions and engage children while moving from one activity to another (five-minute warning and signal before clean-up time, song/movement activity during transition, etc.).</p> <p>Whole group gatherings are limited to short periods and adjusted based on the children’s level of interest and involvement. Many play activities are done in small groups and individually.</p> <p>The daily schedule is balanced with child-initiated, and staff guided activities throughout the day. Staff frequently interact with children throughout the daily routine and encourage children to discuss their work (“Tell me about your painting...”).</p>		
2. Supervision	<p>Staff-to-child mandated ratio is consistently maintained to promote safety and appropriate supervision of TK/K children.</p> <p>Staff position themselves to visually supervise all children in their care. Staff show awareness of the whole group even when working with one child.</p> <p>Staff help children safely transition between the various program environments.</p> <p>Staff help children who are wandering to become involved in activities.</p> <p>Staff position themselves closer to areas and children who may need more support (staying nearby after resolving a conflict, standing next to the climbing structure or water table, etc.).</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
3. Healthy Practices	<p>Staff model appropriate hand washing procedures.</p> <p>Children are guided to wash or sanitize their hands before eating, after toileting, after blowing their nose, and as needed.</p> <p>Tables used for meals and snacks are cleaned and sanitized prior to eating.</p> <p>Health, safety and emergency procedures are aligned with the instructional day.</p>		
4. Collaboration & Communication	<p>Effective systems of communication and collaboration are in place across all roles in Expanded Learning (Administrator, Program Director, Site Coordinator, Frontline Staff, etc.) to support program quality.</p> <p>Staff communicate and collaborate with TK/K instructional staff to support the needs of children and promote program quality.</p> <p>Staff communicate and collaborate with families and provide opportunities for families to share their questions, concerns, or suggestions.</p> <p>Staff build on collaborative partnerships within the local community to support the Expanded Learning program (local library, museums, etc.).</p>		



Program Quality Self-Assessment Elements		Observable Evidence	Follow-Up Action & Timeline
<p>5. Supporting Staff</p>	<p>Staff are aware of their LEA's and program's mission and vision and their roles in contributing to goals and outcomes.</p> <p>Staff participate in professional development opportunities that contribute to program quality and collaboration with families (support for multilingual learners, serving children in inclusive settings, engaging culturally diverse families, trauma-informed practice, etc.).</p> <p>Staff participate in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process to include goals and implement action plans specific to supporting TK/K learners.</p> <p>Substitute staff are provided with the information, training, and support needed to maintain program quality for TK/K learners in the absence of regularly scheduled staff members.</p> <p>Staff meet regularly to promote effective communication and collaboration among the Expanded Learning team.</p> <p>Staff are provided with designated planning time to support effective implementation of developmentally appropriate activities and learning experiences for TK/K children.</p>		



Credits and References

The LACOE Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit (ELTAU) TK/K Learning Environment Self-Assessment was developed by the LACOE ELTAU Team using the following references:

- California Department of Education. (2010). **California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1-3**. Sacramento, CA: CDE Press.
- Harms, T., Clifford, R.M., and Cryer, D. (2015). **Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 3rd Edition**. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2022). **Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8, 4th Edition**. Washington, DC
- Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., and Hamre, B. K. (2008) **Classroom Assessment Scoring System – Pre-K Manual**. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Resources

- [Supporting Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program \(ELO Program\), Implementation Tool Volume 1: Program Elements](#)
- [Supporting Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program \(ELO Program\), Implementation Tool Volume 2: Calibrating ELO-P and UPK Plans](#)
- [Expanded Learning Opportunities Program \(ELO Program\) Funding Requirements](#)
- [Expanded Learning Opportunities Program \(ELO Program\), After School Education and Safety \(ASES\), and 21st Century Community Learning Center \(CCLC\) Program Requirements Matrix](#)
- [Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California: Creating and Implementing a Shared Vision of Quality](#)
- California Education Code as it pertains to Expanded Learning: [ASES EC 8482](#) , [21st CCLC EC 8484.7](#), and [ELO Program EC 46120](#)

