



Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs

Guide to Self-Appraisal and Accreditation / Validation

**Center-based Child Care/Head Start
Prekindergarten and Kindergarten**

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The 2004 Early Learning Standards Revision Committee

MISSION

➤ The Early Learning Standards Revision Committee was formed in December 2003 to revise the 1998 “MSDE *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Learning Programs: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten*”, and the 2000 “MSDE *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Center-based Child Care/Head Start Programs*”.

➤ The goals of the Early Childhood Standards Revision Committee

1. To revise the 1998 *Standards* to reflect current research, the MSDE Voluntary State Curriculum, the Maryland Reading First Initiative, No Child Left Behind, and local school systems’ master plans.
2. To provide clear, concise, and user-friendly documents that will assist programs in implementing and maintaining quality early care and learning facilities.
3. To identify specific areas of the current *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Center-based Child Care and Head Start* and the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten* where edits, changes, and revisions were needed.
4. To combine the *Guides for Self-Appraisal and Validation* from the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Center-based Child Care and Head Start* and the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten* into one document.
5. To combine the best practices from *The Manual of Best Practices* into the two instruments: *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation in Center-based Child Care and Head Start* and *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten* programs.

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In memory of the late Judy Hoyer, Prince George's County Public Schools

INTRODUCTION

Higher quality early care and education programs produce better outcomes for children. Positive outcomes for children include higher cognitive development, foundations for academic achievement, overall better health status, and more mature social skills (Frede, 1995; Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Peisner-Feinberg et al, 1999; Maryland State Department of Education, 2004). Other studies document “sizeable long-term effects on school achievement, grade retention, placement in special education, and social adjustment” (Barnett, 1995). In Maryland, expanding the number of high-quality early care and education programs will impact the school readiness skills of children entering kindergarten, as measured by the Work Sampling System (WSS) ®, the assessment component of the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR).

Voluntary accreditation and validation of early care and education programs provide consumers of services and the general community additional assurances of program quality. This information is useful to parents who must evaluate various programs and make decisions about the best program for their child. Voluntary accreditation and validation is also a marketing tool to promote standards of high quality for public schools and non-public school programs alike.

In Maryland’s current early care and education system, the elements of quality are manifested differently among the various types of providers. Early childhood programs at public schools, namely, prekindergarten for four-year-olds and kindergarten, are governed by State regulations and operated by local boards of education. Head Start programs for children (birth to five) are governed by the Federal government and operated by local organizations, most of them not-for-profit agencies. Child care and nursery programs are operated privately and are licensed and/or receive a certificate of approval by MSDE.

As a result of the different regulations, early care and education programs tend to be perceived by consumers and policy-makers as a fragmented, inconsistent, and conflicting system of early care and education of young children. The *MSDE Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs* intend to define program standards across the various types of programs and transcend - but not replace- program-specific licensing regulations. Since 1998, the standards have gradually leveled the playing field among early educators, provided greater focus on quality features of early learning, and given the early childhood community in Maryland the opportunity to improve its services to customers and promote young children’s school readiness skills.

The revised Standards reflect research and advancements in the field, that were not available when the original version was issued in 1998. The revised Standards are based on recently published curricular standards, program guidelines, and position statements (NAEYC/IRA, 1998; AAAS, 1998; NCTM, 2000; National Research Council, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, 2002; NAECS/SDE, 2003; Maryland Content Standards, 2003).

The revised Standards incorporate program standards, indicators, and descriptions of best practices for prekindergarten, kindergarten, center-based child care, and Head Start programs. They focus on the administration, operation, and family/community partnership of classroom-based programs.

By pursuing and successfully completing this MSDE Accreditation, child care, Head Start, and other non-public programs will receive program accreditation and public school early childhood

programs will receive program validation. The term validation is used for public school programs that operate within public schools which are already State accredited. Any program that uses the revised Standards and participates in the accreditation/validation process is seeking recognition of their commitment to improve the performance of its early childhood services.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has developed the revised *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs* (classroom based) document for use by staff in Maryland's center-based child care, Head Start, and public school prekindergarten and kindergarten programs. This document is a tool designed to guide staff through a systematic process of self-appraisal, program improvement, and accreditation/validation.

MSDE provides three documents to support the accreditation/validation process:

1. ***Guide to Accreditation/Validation***. This document outlines the self-appraisal process and the process for non-public programs to seek accreditation and public programs to seek validation from MSDE. These processes allow for consistent articulation of the key elements of high-quality programs among Maryland's early childhood professionals.
2. ***Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Accreditation for Center-based Child Care and Head Start Programs***
This document is used to rate the quality of center-based child care and Head Start programs occurring in classroom environments by participating staff and agency administrators.
3. ***Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Programs***. Participating teachers and other members of the local school systems use this document to rate the quality of individual public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs.

Both *Standards* documents identify three focus areas within which specific standards are provided that support the development and maintenance of high-quality programs. The three areas are:

- I. Program Administration
- II. Program Operation
- III. Home and Community Partnerships

Included in each document is a list of indicators by which the program standards are measured. Best practices are described for each standard indicator in terms that can be observed or documented. A list of representative examples is included to assist staff in identifying specific program examples that meet the best practices criteria and validate that specific indicators have been met.

Research suggests that programs that are of high quality can result in long-term benefits for children. High-quality programs have seven elements in common. The following chart indicates the seven elements of quality and their location within the areas of critical categories.

Critical Elements of Quality in Early Care and Education Programs

Areas of Critical Categories	Seven Elements of High Quality Early Childhood Programs
Program Administration	Efficient Program Administration
	Systematic Evaluation
	Ongoing Staff Development
	Continuity of Learning from Birth through the Primary Grades
Program Operation	Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environment, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Home and Community Partnerships	Close and Continuous Home-Program Cooperation
	Collaboration among Early Care Education Providers

MSDE Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs outlines a self-appraisal and accreditation/validation process. Non-public programs seek accreditation and public programs seek validation from MSDE. Programs receiving public funds under the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Program are **required** to pursue accreditation or validation. These processes provide a consistent set of quality standards and best practices for Maryland’s early care and education professional that is a goal to achieving high-quality programs.

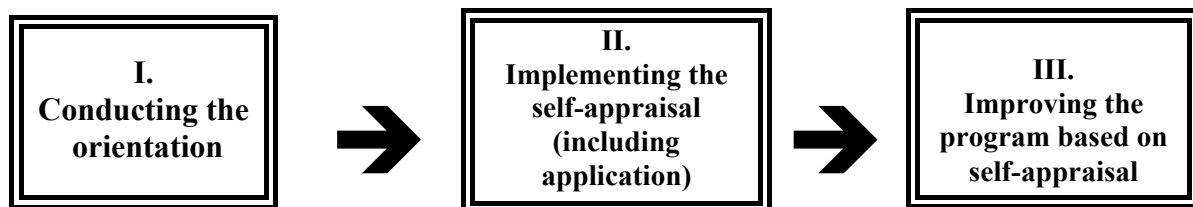
OVERVIEW OF THE SELF-APPRAISAL AND VALIDATION

Together, self-appraisal and validation comprise the process through which early childhood staff, with support from the administering agency or local school system, as well as MSDE, evaluate and improve the quality of their program(s). Early childhood programs may voluntarily elect to participate in an external review to publicly validate that the program meets high quality State standards for early childhood education programs as outlined in the document “*Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*” (MSDE, 2004). A program will have two years from the date of application to complete the accreditation process.

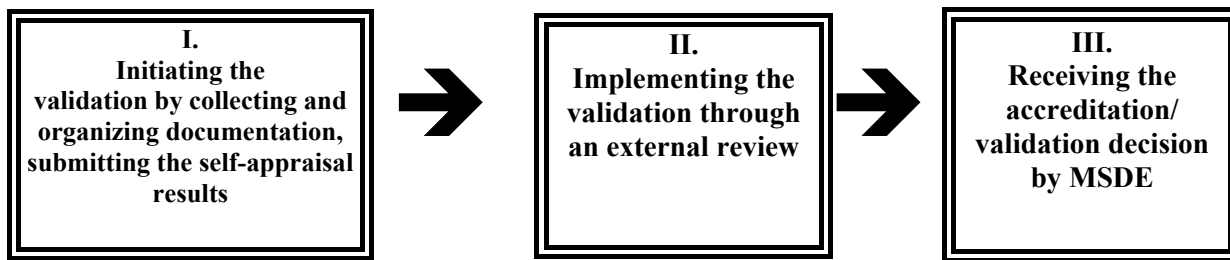
Grant programs have a shorter time frame. **Please note that self-appraisal and validation are voluntary for all programs. Those receiving public State funds through the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Grant have 18 months to complete accreditation from the beginning date of the grant period (Center-based Child Care and Head Start-CBCC/HS) or validation (Public Prekindergarten and Kindergarten).**

The self-appraisal and validation process has two phases:

PHASE 1: Implementing the Self-Appraisal: This phase of the process allows the applicant to reflect on their program quality. The first phase is internal to the program, agency, or school. During the self-appraisal phase, the program’s self-appraisal team receives orientation and makes decisions about the extent to which the program meets the standards and indicators. This review will determine the extent of the needed program improvements.

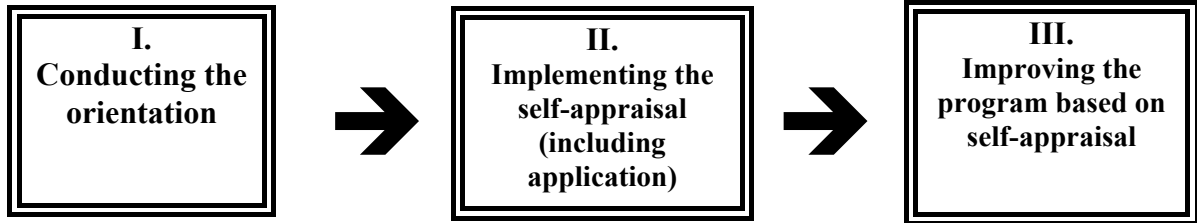


PHASE 2: Implementing the Validation: This phase enables the applicant to be formally recognized for a commitment to providing programs for young children that are of the high quality. Thus the second phase is external to the program. It consists first, of collecting and organizing documentation, second, an external review by a state certified validator, and finally a State committee’s decision as to whether the program has met State standards of high quality, as defined by the MSDE *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*. Note: Center-based child care and Head Start programs receive State accreditation, while public prekindergarten and kindergartens receive State validation.



PHASE 1:

IMPLEMENTING THE SELF-APPRAISAL PHASE



I. Conducting the Orientation

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) conducts regional orientation meetings to acquaint interested staff of early childhood education programs with the accreditation/validation process.

Participants from school systems and other early childhood programs attending the orientation meeting will:

- Receive an overview of the guidelines regarding the self-appraisal and validation/accreditation process
- Gain an understanding of the MSDE *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Center-based Child Care, Head Start, and Public Prekindergarten and Kindergarten*
- Review the *Standards* indicators
- Review best practices in early childhood education based on recent research and current literature

MSDE may provide technical assistance, and on-line support at www.mdk12.org/instruction/readiness/ecap.html. Grants may be available to assist with program accreditation. The applicant should consider the following topics prior to initiating the voluntary self-appraisal and accreditation/validation process:

- Internal evaluations of program quality as measured by the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Accreditation for Center-based Child Care and Head Start Programs*, and the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Programs*
- Resources available for staff development, monitoring the process, and purchase of materials necessary to increase program quality
- Staff and parent availability to participate throughout the entire process

II. Implementing the Self-Appraisal

A. Identifying the Self-Appraisal Team

Self-appraisal begins when the program identifies a self-appraisal team for each age group of children. i.e. all classrooms for four-year-olds compose one (1) team. Also, multi-age classrooms comprise one (1) team. (e.g. room with three and four-year-olds) All members of the self-appraisal team should become familiar with the MSDE *Standards* and have equal status concerning the rating of the program's quality.¹

The self-appraisal team should include the following members:

Self-Appraisal Team Members	
Center-based Child Care/Head Start	Public Prek and Kindergarten
1. Site Director	1. School Administrator
2. Instructional Supervisor (if applicable)	2. Teacher(s)
3. Teacher(s)/Senior Staff	3. Instructional Assistant(s)/Paraprofessional(s)
4. Teacher Assistant(s)/Aide(s)	4. Other Primary Grade Teacher(s)
5. Parent(s)	5. Parent(s)
6. Any additional members	6. Any additional members, (e.g., early childhood faculty or program staff)

B. Establishing the Self-Appraisal and Validation Timeline: (Appendix C)

All programs participating in the accreditation/validation process must complete the process within two years.

C. Submitting the Early Childhood Accreditation/Validation Application: (Appendix D)

The director or designee submits the following information to MSDE's Early Childhood Accreditation Project.

- Starting date for voluntary validation and anticipated completion date within two years
- Names of the members comprising each team conducting the self-appraisal and validation phases
- **Projected** date for pre-validation visit
- **Projected** date for validation visit of the *Standards for Implementing Early Childhood Programs* self-appraisal instrument

D. Rating the Program

Self-appraisal team members use the MSDE Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation to rate each indicator using a three-item scale:

- (N) Not Met means there is *insufficient* observable or documented evidence for the indicator.
- (P) Partially Met means there is *some* observable or documented evidence for the indicator.
- (F) Fully Met means there is an *abundance* of observable or documented evidence for the indicator.

¹For further information, consult MSDE's Early Childhood Accreditation Specialist

	(N) Not Met	(P) Partially Met	(F) Fully Met
Program			
Validator			

The team refers to the indicators, best practices, and representative examples to determine the appropriate rating based on the evidence as observed or documented. The instrument includes a column for school/program and classroom examples, which prompts the self-appraisal teams to record additional examples of exemplary activities noted within the program.

Note: Programs is defined as representing all classrooms of one age group.

Copies of the self-appraisal instrument should be reproduced for use in the self-appraisal.

1. A teacher and an assistant work together using one copy to rate the entire program by using the indicators, best practices, and representative examples. They **check off the representative examples** that have been observed or documented, write additional classroom examples in the appropriate column, and rate each indicator. Alternatively, each teacher and assistant may rate their age/grade levels and reach a consensus on a document that represents the entire program.
2. Additional members of the self-appraisal team, using separate copies individually rate the programs. They **check off the representative examples** that have been observed or documented, write additional classroom examples in the appropriate column, and rate each indicator. Members of the self-appraisal team observe the programs in each of the learning environments designated for particular age groups (e.g. playrooms for infants and toddlers, classrooms for three-year-olds, four-year-olds, or five-year-olds).
3. The complete self-appraisal team meets to discuss its findings and reaches a consensus on a common rating for each indicator. The self-appraisal team creates one document that becomes the master for each age/grade level. A **copy** of the **master** document(s) reflecting common ratings is sent to MSDE when requesting a validation visit. The original master(s) remains on site to be used by the validators during the validation visit.

III. Improving the Program Based on Self-Appraisal

A. Analyzing the Results of the Self-Appraisal

Program improvement begins when the self-appraisal team analyzes the results of its self-appraisal rating and identifies its program's strengths and needs. In order for a program standard to be met, most indicators for each standard should be fully met. **All** program standards must be fully met in every age group in order for the program to be designated as being of high quality and as meeting the accreditation standard.

B. Determining Areas for Self-Improvement

Once the self-appraisal team has analyzed and discussed the results of its self-appraisal, it decides which indicators will have to be improved. Indicators that are rated "Not met" or "partially met" **must** be addressed in the Program Improvement Plan.

C. Expanding the Self-Appraisal Team (If necessary)

The team may be expanded to include new members who will assist in conducting the program improvement. This expanded team may include other staff members (i.e. resource teachers, mentors, speech/language therapists) or outside professionals from other programs who may coach or support the team through this program improvement.

D. Developing a Program Improvement Plan (Appendix E)

The self-appraisal team documents the following information into *one Program Improvement Plan* for *each* age level:

- Standards/Indicators
- Self-Appraisal Ratings
- Age/Grade Level
- Improvement Strategies
- Resources needed (materials and support personnel)
- Person(s) Responsible
- Timeline and completion date of program improvement established by the team

Any decision to improve the program must take into account that change is a collaborative process involving both the staff implementing the program and school administrator or program director.

E. Implementing the Program Improvement Plan

The self-appraisal team implements the Program Improvement Plan within the established time line, usually three months, with the support of the identified staff.

F. Reassessing the Program for Improvement

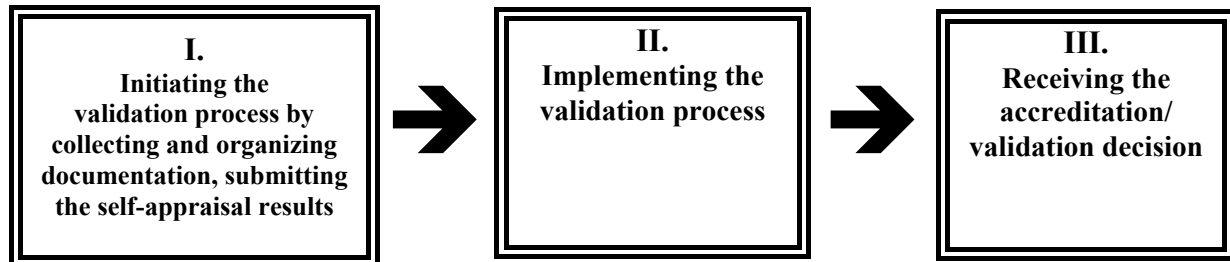
The self-appraisal team reassesses the program within three months or according to the established improvement plan to determine whether the indicators are fully met.

G. Re-Rating of the Program

The team re-rates each indicator that was previously rated “Not Met” (N) or “Partially Met” (P), by entering the appropriate rating and date. Each indicator that is marked “Fully Met” (F) should be supported by observable or documented evidence. Example:

	N	P	F
Program		√	√ MM/DD/YY
Validator			

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTING THE VALIDATION PHASE



I. Initiating the Validation Process

A. Organizing the Documentation

Upon initiation of the validation process, the self-appraisal team organizes the documentation to justify its program ratings by creating a set of three binders, one binder for each of the three focus areas; Program Administration, Program Operation, and Home and Community Partnerships. If a site has more than one program (ie. prek, K, Head Start, child care), one Program Operation binder is created for each program. The appropriate sections of the *Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS* (Appendix F) or the *Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K* (Appendix G.) should be placed in the front of each binder. These checklists will be used by the pre-validator/validator during the accreditation/validation visit. The dividers (which can be obtained from www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/readiness/) are placed in the binder with the documentation behind them sequentially.

B. Scheduling a Pre-Validation Visit (Recommended, but not mandatory)

Upon completion of program improvement, MSDE recommends a pre-validation visit. This visit is not mandatory, but may help the applicant to identify any details that may have been overlooked. The Program Coordinator must contact MSDE in writing to schedule the pre-validation visit or the self-appraisal team may decide to invite a qualified early childhood professional to observe the program and review the required documentation. A qualified early childhood professional may include

- a representative from an institution of higher education
- an early childhood professional/supervisor, or
- a representative from an early childhood organization.

The role of the pre-validator should be one of coaching the team in preparation for the validation visit. The pre-validation visit **must be completed** before the team submits its documentation to MSDE for the validation visit. As a result of the pre-validation visit, the self-appraisal team may need to implement further program improvement.

C. Submitting the Self-Appraisal Results and Requesting a Validation Visit

The director or school administrator submits a **Validation Request Packet** to MSDE requesting a Validation Visit: The Validation Request Packet should contain the following materials:

- Letter requesting a validation visit including suggested dates for the validation visit
- *Early Childhood Education Program Information Form* located inside the *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation*
- Copy/copies of the *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation* by age/grade level containing the updated **common** ratings. (The master self-appraisal document(s) will be retained at the school or center and used for the validation visit.) Be sure to include the completed *Early Childhood Program Information Form*.
- *Program Improvement Plan(s)* (Appendix E)
- Curriculum overview: (One page per age/grade level of local school system curriculum for each content area or yearly plan of learning objectives)
- Daily schedule per age/grade level
- Most recent copy of the program's current license inspection report (Child Care and Head start)
- Directions to the program site including contact names and telephone numbers (school/cell)

D. Receiving the Validation Visit Date

MSDE will schedule the date of the validation with State validator(s) within thirty (30) days of receiving the Validation Request Packet, and will notify the applicant of the validation visit date.

II. Implementing the Validation Process

Validation is the external review phase in which the accuracy of a program's self-appraisal is verified. It consists of a one-day visit by an experienced early childhood professional employed outside the jurisdiction in which the program is located. Validators may be Supervisors, Principals, and/or early childhood professionals who qualify to review early childhood programs. It is preferred for validators to have participated in the validation process, but not a requirement. All validators have attended MSDE validator's training.

A. The Role and Responsibilities of the Validator

Validators observe the implementation of programs and review the documentation to verify the extent to which the program meets State standards.

The validator's role is to:

1. Observe in the classrooms for approximately two (2) hours.
2. Walk through classrooms of other age levels to observe program continuity.
3. Review required documentation.
4. Interview the classroom teacher(s), senior staff, school administrators, program directors, educational supervisors, or the designee (for clarification if needed).
5. Share feedback with the self-appraisal team representative(s)

6. Return to MSDE the following:
 - The master self-appraisal instrument, with the validator's ratings added
 - A completed copy of the *Required Documentation Checklist* (Appendix F or G)
 - The *Validation Visit Verification Form* (Appendix N)
 - *The Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Form* (Appendix O)
 - *The Validators Commendation and Recommendations Report Form* (Appendix P)
This form must be completed in detail by the validator after leaving the site. It should reflect the commendations and recommendations for the programs.

B. The Day of the Validation Visit

1. The Validation Visit

The activities on a typical day of validation are tightly scheduled. The chart entitled *The Validation Visit Sample Schedule* (Appendix I) provides a typical schedule of how the validator(s) may proceed. The validator:

- Arrives at least 30 minutes before the beginning of the first classroom observation to meet with the school administrator/program director to review and adjust the schedule for the day;
- Observes classroom activities for at least two (2) hours. Any observation period less than two (2) hours may invalidate the review. The validator may choose to observe both a.m. and p.m. sessions of a program if half-day programs are being validated.
- Visits other classrooms of a different age group to observe for continuity in programs.
- Interviews the classroom teacher(s) and school administrator/ program director.
- Reviews required documentation.
- Rates each indicator by using the master *Self-Appraisal Instrument*. The applicant must supply this instrument on the day of validation.
- Conducts an exit conference at the end of the day, discussing with the school administration or program director any indicators that the validator rated differently (higher or lower) than the self-appraisal team.

2. Guidelines for the Day of Validation

The validation gives the applicants the opportunity to have an outside early learning specialist confirm the quality of its early childhood program. This can only happen if the visit is conducted in a spirit of openness and collegiality.

The school administrator or program director should:

- Notify all staff of the visit before it occurs.
- Provide lunch for the validator.
- Respond to the needs of the validator and provide assistance if requested, but also give the validator the freedom needed to discover the program's strengths during the observation.
- Provide a quiet place where the validator can review required documentation without interruption.
- Be prepared to provide additional documentation if it is requested.
- Have members of the self-appraisal team available to discuss and/or clarify information relevant to the program.

- Accompany the validator to other classrooms.
- Accommodate the validator, to the greatest extent possible, so that the schedules of relevant staff conform to the validator's schedule;
- Refrain from questioning, challenging, or debating the validator's ratings.
- View the visit as an opportunity for sharing and learning. (i.e. Refrain from making any changes in the usual routines of the school or program day.)

C. The Validation Ratings

During the validation visit, the validator rates the early childhood program using the *Self-Appraisal Instrument*. Differences in ratings between the self-appraisal and the validator's appraisal, whether the validator's ratings are higher or lower than the program's, are recorded on the *Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Form* (Appendix O). The validator is **required** to provide a written rationale in the comment column of the clarification form and an oral rationale for ratings that are different from the program's ratings. Comments may not be changed; however, the validator must record the school administrator/program director's comments if there are differences between the program and validator's ratings. In addition the validator must review these differences at the exit conference. These comments will be helpful to the Accreditation /Validation Decision Committee.

D. The Exit Conference

The exit conference is the final activity of the day. It is designed to allow the validator to discuss any differences in ratings between the self-appraisal team and the validator. At the end of the exit conference, the school administrator/program director and the validator complete the *Validation Visit Verification Form* (Appendix N). This form is intended to ensure that each segment of the visit was conducted according to procedure. **Once this form has been signed, the validity of the visit cannot be challenged.** Therefore, the school administrator/program director should read each section of the form carefully before signing it. The school administrator/program director should not initial next to any segment of the visit that did not take place as described in this document. Rather, the school administrator/program director should notify MSDE about any concerns within 24 hours.

III. Receiving the Accreditation/Validation Decision

When the validation visit has ended, the validator returns the following documents to MSDE:

1. the program's **master** self-appraisal instrument, including the validator's ratings,
2. a completed copy of the *Required Documentation Checklist* (Appendix F or G)
3. the *Validation Visit Verification Form*. (Appendix N)
4. the *Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Chart*. (Appendix O)
5. the *Program Improvement Plan*. (Appendix E)
6. the *Validators Commendation and Recommendation Form*. (Appendix P)

The Validation Decision Committee determines if the program meets State standards for early childhood programs.

A. The Role of the Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee

The Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee comprises three or more educators who have experience in administering or implementing early childhood programs. The Accreditation-Validation Decision Committee based on professional judgment reviews the ratings and comments provided by the program's self-appraisal team and the validator to render a decision about the program's accreditation.² The Committee, through its review, determines if the program has met State standards of high quality.

The Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee will guide its decisions regarding whether the program has met the quality standards by answering three major questions:

- Does the program offer sufficient evidence that all aspects of each indicator have been met?
- Has the program met most or all of the indicators for each standard?
- Has the program met all quality standards?

Aside from these quantitative criteria, the Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee takes into account one major qualitative question:

- Examine the *Program Improvement Plan* to determine if the program made progress between the team's self-appraisal and the validation visit as indicated by the self-appraisal team's and the validator's ratings?

B. The Decisions

The Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee decides the quality of the early childhood program. The three decisions and their implications are summarized below:

DECISION 1: **The early childhood program meets the standards of quality as outlined in the MSDE Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs if all standards have been met.**

IMPLICATION: *The early childhood program is accredited/ validated for a period of three (3) years upon issuance of the Certificate of Accreditation/Validation.*

DECISION 2: **The early childhood program meets many, but not all, of the standards of quality as outlined in the Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs. Its certification is conditional pending the implementation of the program improvement as outlined by the Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee.**

IMPLICATION: *The applicants have a period of time (not to exceed one year) to rectify the area(s) of concern. Accreditation/Validation is formally awarded when a State-certified specialist verifies that the area(s) have been rectified. Any early childhood program that does not rectify the area(s) of concern or arrange for a visit by a State trained validator will not receive a Certificate of Accreditation/Validation. The validator will only review the*

² Prekindergarten and kindergarten programs receive MSDE validation. Center-based Child Care and Head Start Programs receive MSDE accreditation.

specified recommendations. If the validator verifies that the recommendations have been successfully rectified, the Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee will grant the program accreditation/validation. If the recommendations have not been rectified, the Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee will not grant the program accreditation/validation. In this case, the program must submit to MSDE a request for approval to extend the period needed to make the recommended improvements.

DECISION 3: **The early childhood program meets few or none of the standards of quality as outlined in the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*.**

IMPLICATION: *The program is not accredited/validated. To receive accreditation/validation the early childhood program has the option to repeat the process beginning with self-appraisal.*

C. Program Notification of Accreditation/Validation

1. The Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee meets within ninety (90) days of a program's validation visit.
2. A program is notified in writing of the committee's decision within fifteen (15) days.
3. The early childhood program is accredited/validated for *three years* upon the issuance of the accreditation/validation certificate. However under certain circumstances the school administrator/director may request re-accreditation/validations at any time during this period.
4. Accreditation/Validation enables programs to receive recognition for their hard work and commitment to excellence in providing quality programs for young children. An accredited program may be eligible for State funds.
5. MSDE will notify the Maryland Child Care Resource Network of accredited CBCC/Head Start Programs, and will post the information on-line at MSDE's website.
6. Accredited/Validated programs, teachers/senior staff and assistants will receive certificates of recognition from MSDE's Early Childhood Accreditation Project. Staffs from accredited/validated programs may be invited to be trained as validators and/or serve as Accreditation/Validation Decision Committee members.
7. Accredited center-based child care programs which serve children with Purchase of Care vouchers may be eligible for higher reimbursement rates.
8. Public school prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers will receive one (1) Continuing Professional Development credit for participating in the validation process. **(CPD credits may be received only once.)**
9. A program that receives a Decision 3 may reapply for accreditation/validation at any time. (See page 14, Decision 3: Implications)

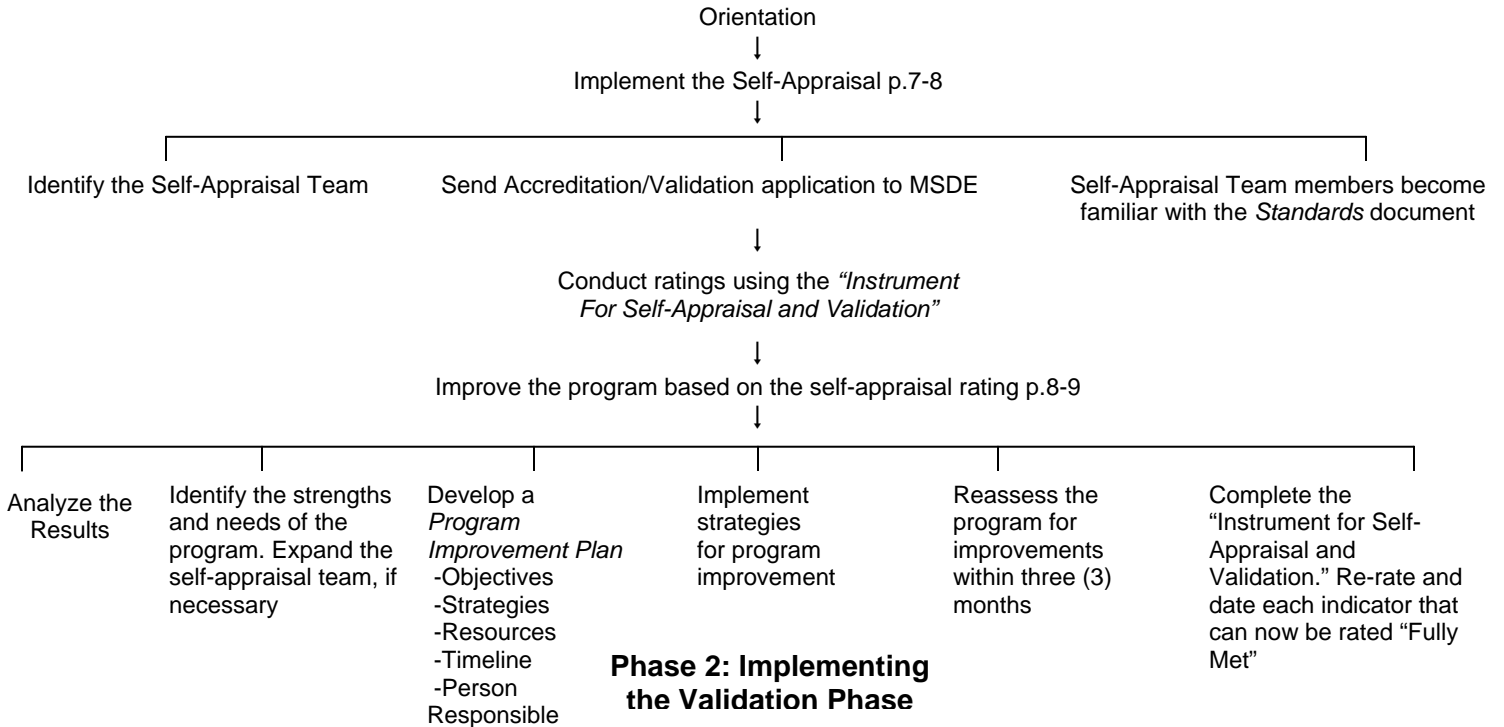
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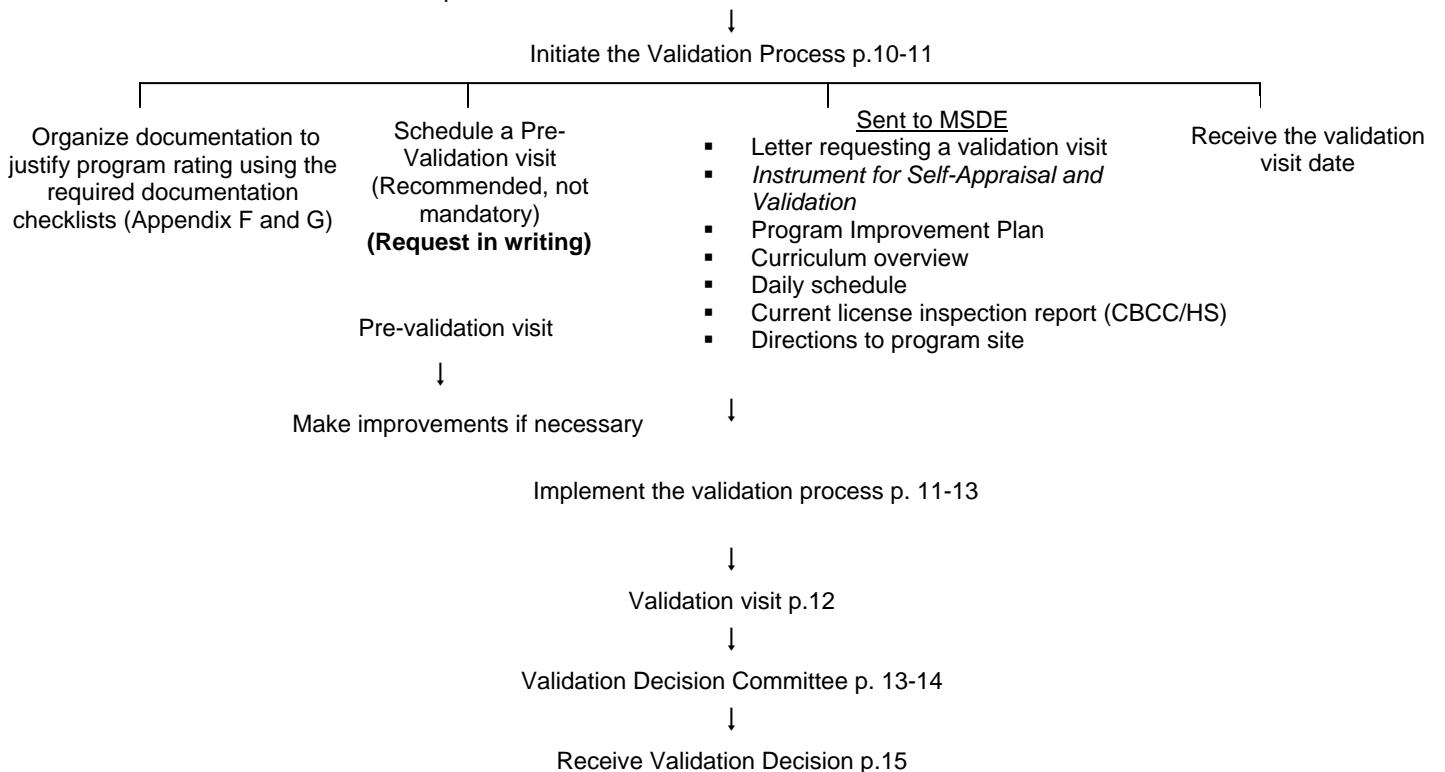
* *Forms used only by pre-validator or validator*

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
**EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCREDITATION/VALIDATION PROCESS
 FLOW CHART**

Phase 1: Implementing the Self-Appraisal Phase



Phase 2: Implementing the Validation Phase



OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE OF THE SELF-APPRAISAL AND VALIDATION PROCESS

The self-appraisal and accreditation/validation process is mandatory for programs receiving public funds under the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Program Grant. These programs have **18 months** to complete accreditation from the beginning of the grant. The same process is voluntary for Center-based Child Care, Head Start Programs, and Public Prekindergarten/Kindergarten programs. These programs have **2 years** from the date of initiation to complete the accreditation process.

Phase 1: Self-Appraisal

I. Conducting the Orientation - See page 6

- A. Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)/designee will conduct Regional Orientation Meetings.
- B. Participants from school systems and other early childhood programs who attend the orientation meeting will:
 - Receive an overview of the guidelines regarding the self-appraisal and validation/accreditation process
 - Gain an understanding of the MSDE *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Center-based Child Care, Head Start, and Public Prekindergarten and Kindergarten*.
 - Review the *Standards* indicators.
 - Review best practices in early childhood education based on recent research and current literature.
- C. Program leadership should consider the following topics prior to initiating the voluntary self-appraisal and accreditation/validation process:
 - Internal evaluations of program quality as measured by the **Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Accreditation for Center-based Child Care and Head Start Programs**, and the **Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs: Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Programs**.
 - Resource availability for staff development, process-monitoring, and purchase of materials necessary to increase program quality
 - Staff and parent availability to participate throughout the entire process

II. Implementing the Self-Appraisal - See pages 7-8

The Director/School Administrator will:

- A. Identify of the Self-Appraisal Team

Self-Appraisal Team Members Become Familiar with the Standards	
CBCC/Head Start	Public Pre-K and Kindergarten
1. Site Director	1. School Administrator
2. Instructional Supervisor	2. Teacher(s)
3. Teacher(s)/Senior Staff	3. Instructional Assistant(s)/Paraprofessional(s)
4. Teacher Assistant(s)/Aide(s)	4. Other Primary Grade Teacher(s)
5. Parent(s)	5. Parent(s)
6. Any additional members	6. Any additional members, (e.g., early childhood faculty or program staff)

- B. Establish the *Self-Appraisal and Validation Timeline* (Appendix C)
- C. Submit the *Accreditation/Validation Application* (Appendix D)
- D. Rate the Program: Reproduce Standards document and use to conduct the self-appraisal ratings.
- Teacher and assistant use one (1) document to rate the entire program.
 - Additional team members use separate copies to individually rate the program.
 - The complete self-appraisal team reaches a consensus on a common rating for each indicator. They create one (1) master document for each age/grade level reflecting a common rating that will be sent to MSDE.

III. Improving the Program Based on Self-Appraisal - See pages 8-9

The Self-Appraisal Team will:

- A. Analyze the Results of the Self-Appraisal: Determine which standards have been met or not met.
- B. Determine Areas for Self Improvement
- C. Expand the Self-Appraisal Team (if necessary)
- D. Develop a *Program Improvement Plan* (Appendix E)
- E. Implement the *Program Improvement Plan*
- F. Reassess the Program for Improvement (within three months of the initiation of *The Program Improvement Plan*)
- G. Re-rate the Program for each indicator that was previously rated “N” or “P” and is now considered “F.” Add the new rating and date to the instrument.

Phase 2: Validation

I. Initiating the Validation Process – See pages 10-11

The Self-Appraisal Team will:

- A. Organize the Documentation. Use the *Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS* (Appendix F) or *Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K* (Appendix G)
- B. Schedule a Pre-Validation Visit (*recommended, but not mandatory*). Contact MSDE, in writing, to invite early learning professionals to observe, review, and provide program support prior to the validation visit. If pre-validation visit is to be completed internally, notify MSDE.
- C. Submit the Self-Appraisal Results and Request a Validation Visit
The director/school administrator will send to MSDE:
 - Letter requesting a validation visit with suggested dates
 - Early Childhood Education Program Information Form* located inside the Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation
 - Copy(ies) of the **master** *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation* by age/grade level containing the updated common ratings. (The master self-appraisal document(s) should be retained at the school or center and used for the validation visit.)
 - Program Improvement Plan(s)* (Appendix E)
 - Curriculum overview (scope and sequence, long range plans, or yearly plan of learning objectives for each age/grade level and content area)
 - Daily schedule per age/grade level
 - Current License Inspection Report (CBCC/HS)
 - Directions to the program site, including contact names and program/cell telephone numbers
- D. Receive the Validation Visit date.

II. Implementing the Validation Process - See pages 11-13

- A. The Role of the Validator: **Validators observe the implementation of the program and review the documentation to verify the extent to which the program meets State standards.**
- B. The Day of the Validation Visit:
 - *The Validation Visit Sample Schedule* (Appendix M)
 - Guidelines for the Day of Validation

- C. The Validation Ratings:
- The *Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Form* (Appendix O) is used when the validator and program rating is different on any indicator rating(s).
 - The validator will incorporate the director/school administrator and teacher comments on the written report (*Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Form*).
 - The validator reviews the differences at the exit conference.
- D. The Exit Conference: Validator and directors/school administrator sign *Validation Visit Verification Form* (Appendix N)

III. Receiving the Accreditation/Validation Decision - See pages 13-15

- A. The Role of the Validation Decision Committee: The committee is convened within 90 days of the validation visit. Through its review, the committee determines if the program has met State standards of high quality.
- B. The Decisions
- Decision 1: Meets all standards. The program is validated for three years.
 - Decision 2: Meets many, but not all, standards. The program's validation depends upon improvement of identified standards within one year of receipt of decision.
 - Decision 3: Meets few or none of the standards. The program is not validated.
- C. Program Notification of Accreditation/Validation: MSDE will notify the program in writing of the committee's decision within 15 days of the meeting of the Decision Committee.

**SELF-APPRAISAL AND VALIDATION PROCESS
TIMELINE**

The program may record specific dates in this timeline in order to assist in completing all steps in the self-appraisal/validation process within the required timeframe. All programs have two (2) years from the date stamped on the application as received by MSDE.

Date	Activity
	1. Attend MSDE or local orientation
	2. Conduct internal evaluations of quality, resources, and staff/parent availability (prior to initiating voluntary self-appraisal, accreditation/validation)
	3. Identify the self-appraisal team for each age group
	4. Submit <i>The Early Childhood Accreditation/Validation Application</i> (Appendix D)
	5. Complete the program self-appraisal and ratings for each age group based on observations and required documentation
	6. Analyze the self-appraisal results and determine areas for self improvement
	7. Develop a <i>Program Improvement Plan</i> - one plan per age group (Appendix E)
	8. Implement the <i>Program Improvement Plan</i>
	9. Have self-appraisal teams reassess and re-rate the improved indicators
	10. Use the <i>Required Documentation Checklist</i> (Appendix F or G) to organize program documentation
	11. Schedule a pre-validation visit (recommended, but not mandatory) Date of pre-validation visit: _____
	12. Submit the self-appraisal results to MSDE and request a validation visit Date of validation visit: _____



200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 FAX: 410-333-6226

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCREDITATION/VALIDATION APPLICATION

Name of Organization _____

Supervisor _____

Name of Program _____

Address _____

County _____

Support person (if applicable) _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

Hours of operation _____ a.m to _____ p.m.

Self-Appraisal Team Members

Name	Position
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Name	Position
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(use additional paper if necessary)

Established timeline to complete accreditation

Date (Month/Year)	Date (Month/Year)
Orientation for staff _____	Complete Self-appraisal _____
Pre-validation visit _____ (if applicable)	Projected Validation visit _____

Name of person completing this form _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Accreditation Information

- First-time validation**
- Re-validation: Effective through _____**

The date of the application receipt at MSDE is the determining date of initiation of the self-appraisal process.

Mail or fax a copy of the program's current Office of Childcare License/Letter and/or MSDE Non Public School Approval Certification with this application (if applicable) to MSDE, Early Childhood Accreditation Project. (address above)

For MSDE Use: Date Rec'd: _____

Program Improvement Plan

Date: _____

Program _____ 's Program Improvement Plan

Age/Grade Level Prek KDG I/T 2 YRS OLD 3 YRS OLD 4 YRS OLD 5 YRS OLD

Public Schools Only

***This form is to be used to develop a program improvement plan for indicators rated Partially Met (P) and Not Met (N)**

STANDARDS / INDICATORS	SELF-APPRAISAL RATING	IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES	RESOURCES	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE AND COMPLETION DATE

PROGRAM _____

AGE/GRADE LEVEL _____

PAGE _____

Continued

Program Improvement Plan

STANDARDS/ INDICATORS	SELF- APPRAISAL RATING	IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES	RESOURCES	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE AND COMPLETION DATE

Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS

Directions for Teachers:

1. Obtain three binders and label the covers:
 - I. Program Administration
 - II. Program Operation
 - III. Home and Community Partnerships
2. Place each section of the checklist in front of the corresponding binder. The validator will use it during the validation visit.
3. Gather and organize the required documentation using the checklists and dividers. (Refer to page 10, I.A. for directions to obtain the dividers.)
4. If the document is listed for more than one indicator, identify the location within the document where each indicator is being met and label it with the indicator number. (Refer to page 10, I.A.)

Directions for Validators:

1. Check the box () to indicate that the document was enclosed and contained evidence to meet the sited indicators
2. Check the dashes (-) to indicate that the specific content was included in the documentation.
3. Photocopy the *Required Documentation Checklist* and submit the original to MSDE with the other required materials. Place the photocopy in the front of the documentation binders.

Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS

I. Program Administration

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Mission/policy statements of the early childhood program	1.1.1 Planning 1.1.3 Implementation	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of dissemination of mission and policy statements to staff and families	1.1.1 Planning	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Written mission/policy statements regarding staff development <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Staff Development Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation Packet for Staff	1.1.2 Staff Development	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for involving parents	1.1.3 Implementation	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines, Yearly Plan and/or Handbook <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of completed evaluation tools <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation timeline	1.1.4 Evaluation	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Minutes, agendas, calendars for meetings/trainings/conferences providing staff with orientation and feedback	1.2.1 Administration 1.2.2 Supervision	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> OCA Staff Orientation Form for each staff member (signed and dated) <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of resource materials <input type="checkbox"/> Job descriptions and responsibilities	1.2.1 Administration	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of informal and formal observations <input type="checkbox"/> List of available support and resource personnel for staff <input type="checkbox"/> Program evaluation report, if applicable	1.2.2 Supervision	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> OCC Personnel Qualification Form <input type="checkbox"/> Maryland Child Care Credential <input type="checkbox"/> Transcripts and teaching certificates	1.2.3 Qualification	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff schedules with breaks and planning times	1.2.4 Professional Support	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of implementation of one of the following: ___ a state recommended curriculum ___ a local education board (LEA) Curriculum ___ a curriculum developed by the program and approved by MSD	1.3.1 Curricula 2.2.1 Goals and Learning Outcomes	Director or Designee

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Curricular guides and/or unit plans for each content area	1.3.1 Curricula 1.3.2 Assessment and Instructional Strategies 2.2.2 Content 2.2.5 Science 2.2.6 Social Studies	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Transition plans for class/program	1.3.3 Transition and Continuity of Services	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Minutes from staff, planning, and parent meetings regarding program improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Most recent inspection/monitoring report <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation that the Standards instrument and Program Improvement Plan(s) were communicated to the governing body	1.4.1 Reporting	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Master copy of the Self-Appraisal Instrument	1.4.1 Reporting 1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Improvement Plan(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of ongoing improvement	1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Director or Designee

Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS

II. Program Operation—Birth to 6 Years

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of fire drills <input type="checkbox"/> Septic inspection certificate, if applicable	2.1.1 (a) Learning Environment: Indoor	Director or Designee

II. Program Operation – Infants and Toddlers

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of routine care	2.2.1 (I/T) Routine Care	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of routine care observations <input type="checkbox"/> Transition plans to promote continuity of care	2.2.2 (I/T) Social/Emotional Security	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of nature experiences	2.2.3 (I/T) Sensory and Cognitive Development	Teacher

II. Program Operation—Ages 3-6 Years

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Daily schedule(s) and lesson plans identifying experiences in ___ Listening/speaking ___ Reading ___ Writing ___ Mathematics ___ Science ___ Social Studies ___ Fine Arts ___ Physical Education ___ Health Education	2.2.3 (a) Listening/Speaking 2.2.3 (b) Reading 2.2.3 (c) Writing 2.2.4 Mathematics 2.2.5 Science 2.2.6 Social Studies 2.2.7 Fine Arts 2.2.8 Physical Education 2.2.9 Health Education	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of student writing showing an array of products and developmental stages	2.2.3(c) Writing	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Yearly schedule for implementing science thematic units	2.2.5 Science	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Yearly schedule for implementing social studies thematic units	2.2.6 Social Studies	Teacher

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans that reflect: <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible groupings <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning and/or problem solving <input type="checkbox"/> Differentiation of instruction based on individual assessment results	2.3.1 Flexible Grouping 2.3.3 Questioning/Problem Solving 2.4.2 Assessment based Instruction	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Assessment Methods and Documentation <input type="checkbox"/> WSS or similar assessment system <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolios containing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklists • Anecdotal records • Work samples <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of differentiated assessments	2.4.1 Multiple Assessment and Documentation 2.4.3 Communication of Assessment Information	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of ongoing authentic assessments used to determine individual and small group needs	2.4.2 Assessment Based Instruction	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication of Assessment Information <input type="checkbox"/> Progress reports/report cards <input type="checkbox"/> Conference schedules <input type="checkbox"/> Communication logs	2.4.3 Communication of Assessment Information 2.4.4 Articulation	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Notes from articulation meetings	2.4.4 Articulation	Teacher

Required Documentation Checklist for CBCC/HS

III. Home and Community Partnerships

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration materials <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of family outreach activities ___ Log of telephone calls ___ Copies of program newsletters ___ Dissemination of program goals and plan ___ Class/program event fliers <input type="checkbox"/> Sign-in sheets and/or agendas/minutes for parent meetings and conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Handbook for parents <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of program calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Materials in native languages and alternative formats for family members with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Directory of program staff	3.1.1 Communication with Families	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters containing ___ Child development and learning information ___ Information regarding community resources	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development 3.1.4 Collaborating with the Community	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Agendas, sign-in sheets, and evaluations for workshops involving parents and/or children	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development 3.1.5 Evaluation	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> School Readiness Materials	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule of parents or community volunteers <input type="checkbox"/> Agendas for volunteer orientation and trainings <input type="checkbox"/> List of parent advisory committee, program improvement team, and/or governing board	3.1.3 Family Participation and Involvement	Director or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of Memorandums of Understanding, agreements, agendas and/or minutes of meetings with community resources <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of established transition policies, and/or transition plans with community resources <input type="checkbox"/> List of community resources that collaborate with the program <input type="checkbox"/> Guides or directories of community resources available to parents/programs	3.1.4 Collaboration with the Community	Director or Designee

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of completed surveys sent to parents and participating community organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of evaluations of partnership activities	3.1.5 Evaluation	Director or Designee

Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K

Directions for Teachers:

1. Obtain three binders and label the covers:
 - I. Program Administration
 - II. Program Operation
 - III. Home and Community Partnerships
2. Place each section of the checklist in front of the corresponding binder. The validator will use it during the validation visit.
3. Gather and organize the required documentation using the checklists and dividers. (Refer to page 10, I.A. for directions to obtain the dividers.)
4. If the document is listed for more than one indicator, identify the location within the document where each indicator is being met and label it with the indicator number. (Refer to page 10, I.A.)

Directions for Validators:

1. Check the box () to indicate that the document was enclosed and contained evidence to meet the sited indicators.
2. Check the dashes (-) to indicate that the specific content was included in the documentation.
3. Photocopy the *Required Documentation Checklist* and submit the original to MSDE with the other required materials. Place the photocopy in the front of the documentation binders.

Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K

I. Program Administration

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Mission/policy statements ___ Local school system ___ School	1.1.1 Planning	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Current School Improvement Plan that includes prek/k and the following components ___ Needs assessment data analysis ___ Performance goals and objectives ___ Evaluation ___ Action/management plan	1.1.1 Planning 1.1.2 Staff Development 1.1.3 Implementation 1.1.4 Evaluation 1.3.2 Assessment and Instructional Strategies 1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Staff Development Plan	1.1.2 Staff Development 1.2.1 Administration	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Agendas/minutes from School Improvement Team meetings	1.1.4 Evaluation 1.4.1 Reporting 1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Calendars, agendas, notes, and minutes of conferences and meetings for staff	1.2.1 Administration	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Informal and formal observation reports	1.2.2 Supervision	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Current certification documents of classroom teachers <input type="checkbox"/> High school diplomas/GED of paid assistants	1.2.3 Qualification	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>MMSR Framework and Standards for Prekindergarten and/or Kindergarten/VSC</i>	1.3.1 Curricula 2.2.1 Goals and Learning Outcomes	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum guides and/or unit plans for each content area that align with State standards	1.3.1 Curricula 1.3.2 Assessment and Instructional Strategies 2.2.2 Content 2.2.5 Science 2.2.6 Social Studies	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment data (MSA, CTBS, county, school)	1.3.2 Assessment and Instructional Strategies 1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Administrator or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Agendas/minutes of articulation team meetings regarding continuity of student learning <input type="checkbox"/> Transition plans for class/program	1.3.3 Articulation and Continuity of Services 1.4.1 Reporting 1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Administrator or Designee Teacher

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Agendas/minutes from School Improvement Team meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Letter documenting that the Standard's Instrument and Program Improvement Plan(s) were sent to central office	1.4.1 Reporting	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Master copy of Self-Appraisal Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> Program Improvement Plan(s)	1.4.2 Ongoing Planning	Administrator or Designee

Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K

II. Program Operation

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of fire drills	2.1.1(a) Learning Environment: Indoor	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Daily schedule(s) and lesson plans identifying experiences in ___ Listening/speaking ___ Reading ___ Writing ___ Mathematics ___ Science ___ Social Studies ___ Fine Arts ___ Physical Education ___ Health Education	2.2.3 (a) Listening/Speaking 2.2.3 (b) Reading 2.2.3 (c) Writing 2.2.4 Mathematics 2.2.5 Science 2.2.6 Social Studies 2.2.7 Fine Arts 2.2.8 Physical Education 2.2.9 Health Education	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of student writing showing an array of products and developmental stages	2.2.3(c) Writing	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Yearly schedule for implementing science thematic units	2.2.5 Science	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Yearly schedule for implementing social studies thematic units	2.2.6 Social Studies	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans that reflect: ___ Flexible groupings ___ Questioning and/or problem solving ___ Differentiation of instruction based on individual assessment results	2.3.1 Flexible Grouping 2.3.3 Questioning/Problem Solving 2.4.2 Assessment Based Instruction	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Assessment Methods and Documentation ___ WSS or similar assessment system ___ Portfolios containing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklists • Anecdotal records • Work samples Evidence of differentiated assessments	2.4.1 Multiple Assessment and Documentation 2.4.3 Communication of Assessment Information	Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of ongoing authentic assessments used to determine individual and small group needs	2.4.2 Assessment Based Instruction	Teacher
Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication of Assessment Information	2.4.3 Communication of Assessment Information	Teacher

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ Progress reports/report cards ___ Conference Schedules ___ Communication Logs 	2.4.4 Articulation	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notes from articulation meetings	2.4.4 Articulation	Teacher

Required Documentation Checklist for Prek/K

III. Home and Community Partnerships

Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration materials <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of family outreach activities ___ Log of telephone calls ___ Copies of class/school newsletters ___ Dissemination of program goals and plan ___ Class/school event fliers <input type="checkbox"/> Sign-in sheets and/or agendas/minutes for parent meetings and conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Handbook for parents <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of program calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Materials in native languages and alternative formats for family members with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Directory of program staff	3.1.1 Communication with Families	Administrator or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters containing ___ Child development and learning information ___ Information regarding community resources	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development 3.1.4 Collaborating with the Community	Administrator or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Agendas, sign-in sheets, and evaluations for workshops involving parents and/or children	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development 3.1.5 Evaluation	Administrator or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> School Readiness Materials	3.1.2 Supporting Child Development	Director or Designee Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule of parents or community volunteers <input type="checkbox"/> Agendas for volunteer orientation and trainings <input type="checkbox"/> List of School Improvement Team members <input type="checkbox"/> List of PTA/PTO/parent advisory committee members	3.1.3 Family Participation and Involvement	Administrator or Designee
<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of Memorandums of Understanding, agreements, agendas and/or minutes of meetings with community resources <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of established transition policies, and/or transition plans with community resources <input type="checkbox"/> List of community resources that collaborate with the program <input type="checkbox"/> Guides or directories of community resources available to parents/programs	3.1.4 Collaboration with the Community	Administrator or Designee
Documentation	Indicator	Person Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of completed surveys sent to parents and participating community organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of evaluations of partnership activities	3.1.5 Evaluation	Administrator or Designee

STATE AND NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Validation and accreditation are similar processes initiated by different agencies. Accreditation is the process whereby a program voluntarily pursues self-study, program improvement, and external program review in order to meet and publicly confirm that it meets criteria of quality established by State and National Accreditation Programs. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) are National efforts to promote quality in all types of group programs for young children, including day care, Head Start and private nursery schools. The NAEYC, NECPA and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) accreditation/validation processes parallel each other. With the exception of the orientation stage, the steps involved in seeking accreditation/validation are similar.

There are several differences between accreditation and validation regarding the criteria used to measure the quality of the program. State and National program criteria are intended to assess quality in all types of programs, including infant, toddler, preschool and public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs. MSDE standards are intended to assess quality in programs for young children birth to six, who are enrolled in either the public schools, center-based preschools, or Head Start programs. They address the elements of quality that are specifically critical to early childhood education programs in public schools. The MSDE standards are closely aligned with the National standards and with Federal Head Start Performance Standards. The following components have been established for State and National accreditation:

Component	MSDE	NAEYC	NECPA
Orientation for Early Childhood Programs	Yes	No ⁱ	No
Establish Self-Appraisal Team	Yes	Yes	No
Observation of Early Childhood Classroom	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrator Report	No ⁱⁱ	Yes	Yes
Teaching-Staff Questionnaire	No ⁱⁱⁱ	Yes	Yes
Teaching-Staff Survey	No	Yes	Yes
Family Survey (ie. A required part under Partnerships)	Yes ^{iv}	Yes	Yes
Identification of Strengths and Needs of Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development of Improvement Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Validation Visits (optional)	Yes	No	No
Description of Early Childhood Program	Yes ^v	Yes	Yes
Validation Visit	Yes	Yes	Yes
Determination of Accreditation/Validation by Decision-Making Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes

ⁱ In selected states only

ⁱⁱ Documentation required

ⁱⁱⁱ Validator Interview with Teacher(s)

^{iv} Incorporated in Home and Community Partnerships

^v Referenced on the Early Childhood Program Information Form

The Pre-Validation Process

The purpose of a pre-validation visit is to observe a program and review the required documentation for possible program support. The pre-validator should provide feedback and coach the team for the validation visit.

The pre-validation visit must be scheduled **after** the completion of the program self-appraisal phase. This includes:

- Identifying the self-appraisal tem
- Submitting the Accreditation/Validation Application to MSDE
- Rating the program
- Developing and implementing a Program Improvement Plan based on the results of the self-appraisal
- Reassessing and revising the ratings on the instrument based on the program improvements
- Gathering and organizing of the required documentation

As a result of the pre-validation process, a program has the opportunity to have its self-appraisal instrument, documentation, and program reviewed by a qualified early childhood specialist.

Activities conducted during the pre-validation visit should include:

- A tour of the center/program
- Observation of the center/program
- Debriefing with the self-appraisal team
- Review of documentation
- Recommending course of action:
 - Proceed with validation
 - Follow Up Services Needed
- Report to MSDE Accreditation Facilitator the outcome of the pre-validation visit using the *Pre-validation Visit Report Form*. (Appendix J)

As a result of the pre-validation visit and recommendations, the MSDE Accreditation Project Facilitator will determine the necessity of follow-up services and will notify the program/school of the decision. Any adjustment of the accreditation timeline will be determined by the MSDE Accreditation Project Facilitator and the program director/administrator.

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Early Childhood Development
Early Learning Branch
Early Childhood Accreditation Project
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone: 410-767-4441, Fax: 410-333-6226

PRE-VALIDATION VISIT REPORT FORM

Date of Visit _____

Pre-Validator _____

Program/School _____

County _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Director/School Administrator _____

Contact Person _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

**Type of Accreditation:
(check any that apply)**

NAEYC

NECPA

MSDE

NAFCC

Other: _____

Recommended Course of Action

Proceed with validation using feedback from pre-validators

Follow-up services needed. Please attach additional comments on a separate sheet of paper.

To be completed by MSDE

Date Received _____

Reviewed by: _____

Reviewer's Signature/Date: _____

MSDE Recommendation:

No further action taken at this time

Follow up services needed

Pre-Validator Signature Date

PRE-VALIDATION VISIT REPORT FORM
Pre-Validator(s) Comment Form

Program/School: _____ Pre-Validator Visit Date(s): _____

Type of Accreditation:

MSDE

NAEYC

NECPA

NAFCC

Directions: Provide detailed comments about the program's status in the validation process for each of the focus areas.

1. Program Administration:

2. Program Operation:

3. Home and Community Partnerships: _____

Validator: The Day of Validation

On the day of validation, the validator will:

1. Meet the program staff and review the plans for the day with the building administrator, or program director.
2. Observe the classroom(s) of the program seeking validation using the self-appraisal instrument and completing the validator's rating column of this instrument. As is shown in the following chart depicts the indicators for each standard are rated using a three-item scale. "Not Met" means that there is an insufficient, observable evidence for the indicator. "Partially Met" means that there is some observable evidenced for the indicator. "Fully Met" means that the indicators can be matched with an abundance of observable evidence of high quality.

SCHOOL AND VALIDATORS' RATING CHART

	Not Met (N)	Partially Met (P)	Fully Met (F)
Program (P) / School (S)			
Validator (V)			

3. Review the written documentation provided by the school or program to determine if the documentation which is provided supports the school's or program's rating.
4. Have lunch. This can be a discussion time with the teacher(s), assistant(s) and administrator(s).
5. Interview personnel to receive clarification regarding documentation, observation, and ratings on self-appraisal instrument. Personnel may include:
 - early learning supervisor (for public schools)
 - classroom teacher (or senior staff)
 - building administrator or program director
 - instructional supervisor or education supervisor
 - early learning resource teacher (for public schools)
6. Tour the school or program. Walk through prekindergarten, kindergarten, first grade classes, and classrooms for different age groups to observe continuity of learning.
7. Take time, alone, for personal reflection. Complete written documentation of the Self-Appraisal Instrument for the exit conference. If there are differences in the school's / program's or validator's rating, whether higher or lower, complete the *Validation Visit Clarification of Rating Chart* (Appendix O). Share information on this form during the exit conference.
8. Complete the Validation Exit Conference by doing the following:
 - Meet with the early learning personnel involved in the validation process. At this time, it would be helpful to acknowledge the schools or program's effort and hospitality.
 - Share highlights of the differences in the ratings, if applicable. Use the *Validation Visit Clarifications of Rating Chart* (Appendix O) to provide both a written and oral rationale for any differences. If there are no differences in ratings, check the appropriate box. Record the building administrator or director's comments about

the rationale next to the school or director, read, and sign the form. Leave a copy of the completed form at the site.

- Support with written comments any indicators rated “Not Met”.
 - Complete the *Validation Visit Verification Form* (Appendix N). This form is intended to ensure that each segment of the visit was conducted according to procedure. Once the form has been signed, the validity of the visit cannot be challenged. It is therefore important for the administrator or director to read each section of the form carefully before signing it. Leave a copy of the completed form at the site.
 - Instruct the administrator to notify MSDE about any concerns within 24 hours. Have them contact the accreditation facilitator at (410) 767-4441.
9. Return the following information to MSDE within three (3) business days:
- The master copy of the *Self-Appraisal Instrument* containing the school or program’s and validator’s rating.
 - The *Validation Visit Verification Form* (Appendix N)
 - The *Validation Visit Clarification Ratings Form* (Appendix O)
 - The *Validators Commendations and Recommendations Report Form* (Appendix P)
 - The master of the *Required Documentation Checklist for CCBC/HS* (Appendix F), *Prek/K* (Appendix G)

Mail to:

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Early Childhood Development
Early Learning Branch
Attention: Accreditation Project 10th floor
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Maryland State Department of Education Early Childhood Accreditation Project Validator’s Timeline

Before the validation visit

Receive by phone
 ▪ Availability call

Receive by mail
 ▪ Validation confirmation letter
 ▪ Self-appraisal instrument
 ▪ Program’s improvement plan
 ▪ Curriculum outline
 ▪ Programs schedule
 ▪ Directions to the program

Review all relating materials
 ▪ Self-appraisal instrument
 ▪ Program improvement plan
 ▪ Curriculum outline
 ▪ Blank Required Documentation Checklist for CCBC/HS, Prek/K

During the validation visit

Meet the school administrator/director

Observe the classroom/program

Review written documentation

Interview staff to obtain information, if needed.

Complete rating (Instrument)

Exit Conference

Forms to complete and use
 ▪ The Self-Appraisal Instrument
 ▪ Validation Visit Clarification of Rating Chart
 ▪ The Validation Visit Verification Form

Meet with the early learning personnel involved in the validation process

Acknowledge the program’s efforts and hospitality

Share differences in the ratings (if applicable)

Complete the Validation Visit Verification Form

Provide written comments for any indicator rated **“Not Met”**

Instruct the administrator to notify MSDE about any concerns within 24 hours

After the Validation Visit

Within three (3) business days send to MSDE
 ▪ The completed Self-Appraisal Instrument
 ▪ Required Documentation Checklist
 ▪ The Validation Visit Clarification or Rating Form
 ▪ Commendations/Recommendations concerning the Visited Program

Within ten (10) business days send to MSDE
 ▪ Bill for consultation services
 ▪ Expense report for consultation services

The Validation Visit Sample Schedule

Time	Validators Activity
8:00 a.m.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the program. 2. Meet program staff. 3. Tour the facility. 4. Provide the director/school administrator with an overview of the plans for the day.
8:45 a.m.	Begin classroom observations with the arrival of the children and begin review of the written documentation.
12:00 p.m.	<p>Interview the program teachers to clarify observations (if needed).</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>Walk through classrooms containing older aged programs/grades in order to observe program continuity</p>
1:00 p.m.	Continue classroom observations.
2:00 p.m.	Interview the program staff, to clarify observations, obtain information about indicators that could not be rated through observation, and complete ratings, (if needed)
3:15 p.m.	<p>Continue to review the written documentation and complete the <i>Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation</i></p> <p>Complete the <i>Validation Clarification of Rating Chart</i>, if needed (Appendix O)</p>
3:45 p.m.	<p>Conduct the Exit Conference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share information re: differences in ratings and share the <i>Validation Clarification of Rating Chart</i>, if needed. (Appendix O) 2. Complete the <i>Validation Visit Verification Form</i> (Appendix N)

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Early Childhood Accreditation Project
VALIDATION VISIT VERIFICATION FORM**

School Administrator
 Director
Program _____
Address _____ **County** _____
City _____ **State** _____ **Zip code** _____
Phone _____ **Fax** _____ **EMAI** _____

Directions: The director/school administrator and validator(s) initial each procedure listed below to verify that it was properly followed. At the end of the visit, the director/school administrator and validator(s) sign the form verifying that all procedures were properly followed. **Leave a photocopy at the site.**

VALIDATION PROCEDURE PROPERLY FOLLOWED

	Director/School Administrator	Validator
The validator met with the director/school administrator to review the validation tasks and his or her plans for the day.	_____	_____
The validator observed those areas of the program in which activities are provided for prekindergarten, kindergarten, center-based, and Head Start children.	_____	_____
The validator's observation of the program lasted at least 2 hours.	_____	_____
The validator was provided with required written documentation necessary to rate indicators in all <i>Standards</i> categories.	_____	_____
The validator verified ratings for program continuity by walking through other age/grade levels, reviewing documentation, and interviewing the director/school administrator. (if applicable)	_____	_____
The validator and/or director/school administrator provided written justification or rationale for any indicator rated different from the self-appraisal team's rating.	_____	_____
The director/school administrator was provided with a written record of the validator's comments. (<i>The Validation Visit Clarification of Ratings Form, Appendix O</i>)	_____	_____

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of Director/School Administrator	Date	Signature of Validator	Date

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Early Childhood Accreditation Project

VALIDATION VISIT CLARIFICATION OF RATINGS FORM

Directions: This form is to be completed by the validator prior to the exit conference if there are differences between the program’s and the validator’s ratings. The validator shares this form with the program staff during the exit conference and provides an opportunity for the program to justify the difference in its rating. The validator records the program’s comments. At the conclusion of the visit, the validator and the director/school administrator sign the form. **Leave a photocopy of this format the site.**

Program: _____

Signature of Director/School Administrator/Date: _____

Signature of Validator/Date: _____

NO DIFFERENCES IN RATINGS.

Standard/ Indicator	Rating				Comments
	Program	N	P	F	
	Program				P
	Validator				V
	Program				P
	Validator				V
	Program				P
	Validator				V
	Program				P
	Validator				V
	Program				P
	Validator				V

Maryland State Department of Education
Early Childhood Accreditation Project

VALIDATORS COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT FORM

PROGRAM _____ VALIDATION VISIT DATE _____

VALIDATOR _____ CONTACT # _____

Directions: Complete this report form **off-site**, after the visit. Summarize the comments noted in the *Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation* in the spaces below. Supply at least three commendations for each focus area. Please provide additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form. Submit this report form with the additional required documents to MSDE.

COMMENDATIONS (Please provide three or more comments for each focus area.)

STANDARDS/ INDICATORS REFERENCE	<p>Program Administrator</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p> <p>Program Operation</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p> <p>Home and Community Partnership</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>
---------------------------------------	---

RECOMMENDATIONS

STANDARDS INDICATORS REFERENCE (Please supply)	
---	--

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Maryland State Department of Education
Early Childhood Accreditation Project

Decision Committee Report

Date: _____

County: _____

Program/School: _____

Committee Members: _____

COMMENDATIONS: _____

RECOMMENDATION: _____

- Decision I**
Valid until _____
The early learning program meets the standards of quality as outlined in the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*.
- Decision II**
Another validation visit _____
(Date)
The early learning program meets many, but not all, of the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*.
- Decision III**
The early learning program meets few or none of the standards of quality as outlined in the *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Program*

**STANDARDS FOR IMPLEMENTING QUALITY
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. If an organization has more than one program, are all programs required to go through the validation process?**

No. The validation process is voluntary except for programs receiving funds from the State under the Judith P. Hoyer Child Care and Education Enhancement Grant. The validation process refers to an individual program site, not an entire organization.

- 2. If an organization has child care for infants and toddlers as well as preschool age children will both program components have to participate in the validation process?**

Yes. All programs operating in the same location, must participate in the validation process simultaneously.

- 3. Can public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs located in the same facility go through the validation separately?**

Yes. It is highly recommended that the total early childhood program pursue accreditation simultaneously, but individual programs may go through the process at separate times.

- 4. Are self-contained and inclusive classrooms included in the validation process?**

Yes. The validation process may be used for all early childhood programs birth to six years.

- 5. Will a validator automatically be sent on the projected date for validation indicated on the application form?**

No. Programs must request a validation date in writing when submitting the validation request packet. The date will be confirmed by MSDE.

- 6. If there is a change in the Director and/or School Administrator of a program during the validation process, will the process continue?**

Yes. The program should immediately notify MSDE's Early Childhood Accreditation - Validation Project of the change. The self-appraisal process may continue. The new Director and/or School Administrator should become familiar with the validation process.

- 7. How long is the Certificate of Accreditation/ Validation valid?**

Once the accreditation/validation is awarded, it is valid for 3 years from the date of the Decision Committee's decision.

8. Can a program be granted a time extension to satisfactorily meet all accreditation/validation Standards?

Yes. Programs that do not initially receive accreditation/validation may receive it later pending the implementation of the program improvement within one year. This extension is only granted after a validation visit and Decision Committee's decision II.

9. Can a program be granted a time extension beyond the 2 years of completion?

No. The program has 2 years to complete program accreditation/validation.

10. Is the accreditation/validation process mandatory?

No. The accreditation/validation process is voluntary except for those programs receiving funds from the State under the Judith P. Hoyer Child Care and Education Enhancement Grant. These programs must complete or become State or Nationally accredited prior to the end of their grant period.

11. Do programs have to pay a fee for the State's accreditation/validation process?

No. The MSDE validation process is free. However, National accreditation programs charge fees for their accreditation process.

12. What are the benefits of a program going through the accreditation/validation process?

Among the benefits are eligibility for specific State funds, program improvement, improved customer satisfaction, professional growth among staff, and public recognition as a quality program. Public school, child care and Head Start teachers, who hold a Maryland certificate, may receive one (1) Continuing Professional Development credit for participating in the validation process. CPD credits may only be awarded once for participating in this process.

13. Can validator(s)' ratings be appealed?

No. The director/school administrator of programs will have the opportunity to comment on the validator's ratings during the exit conference of the validation day.

14. Can the required documentation be organized by indicator number?

No. The required documents must be organized in binders by document. Programs should use the required documentation checklist (Appendix F or G in the Guide) and the dividers provided by MSDE. Dividers may be downloaded from the MSDE website, <http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/readiness/ecap.html>

15. Should all representative examples listed in the instrument be observed or documented?

All representative examples noted with a bolded icon (**□** and **O**) are required. Representative examples are the examples that validate the corresponding indicator and meet the best practice criteria.

16. Who can conduct an orientation?

Regional orientations are conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education. Participants from local school systems and early childhood programs who attend the orientation will receive information about the validation/accreditation process. Representatives from programs should share the received information with all staff members and parents who will be involved in the self-appraisal and validation process.

17. When should a current validated/accredited program begin the process if they wish to continue their status as a validated/accredited program?

To continue the status as a validated/accredited program, a program should conduct the self-appraisal rating, make program improvements, have a validation visit and receive a validation/accreditation decision prior to the end of the effective validation/accreditation date.

18. How should a small group be accredited?

Small group programs are accredited using the same procedure and documents as center-based programs.

Appendix S

Glossary

Accreditation	The process of successfully completing self-appraisal, quality improvement, and validation of a center-based child care or Head Start early childhood education program and receiving a Decision I from the Validation Decision Committee.
Alignment	Alignment refers to the policy that guides curriculum and instruction. The policy that guides all programs is consistence and in agreement.
Application for accreditation	The request by an early childhood education program to initiate the self-appraisal and validation process.
Articulation	The sharing of information among teachers, between grades or between programs with the participation of parents regarding a child's developmental and academic progress as well as instructional plans for the future.
Assessment (Performance-based)	Documentation and evaluation of children's skills, knowledge, behavior and accomplishments across a wide variety of curriculum areas for the purpose of supporting teaching and learning.
Associate of Arts Degree (A.A. Degree)	A degree granted from a 2-year community college.
Authentic learning	Providing materials and learning experiences which represent real life experiences.
Best practices	A series of actions, strategies, or behaviors that contribute to optimal learning and quality early childhood programs
Child care	Child care and nursery programs are operated privately and either licensed by MSDE/Child Care Administration and/or approved by MSDE in accordance with the non-public school regulations.
Child Find	Child Find is an organization that serves as the entry point for referrals to local school systems for children beginning at age three who may be in need of special education services.
Collaboration	Continued planning and implementation of activities among a variety of stakeholders with vested interests in the well being and learning of young children.

Comprehension	The ability to understand, remember, and communicate with others about text that has been read.
Continuity of service/transition	The continuance of services that support children’s social, emotional, physical, linguistic, and cognitive development when a child advances to another level or transfers to a different early childhood education program.
Daily message	Model, shared, or interactive writing that is written each day for children to read together as a shared reading experience.
Developmental stages of writing	The stages of writing that children progress through as they are developing writing skills and processes. They include: emerging, pictorial, pre-communicative, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, conventional, advanced.
Developmentally appropriate practices	Refers to instructional practices that are based on an understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-related human characteristics that permit general predictions within an age range; • How to respond effectively to the strengths, interests, and needs of individual children; • The social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and research-based.
Diversity	Different/varied in culture, race, socio-economics, age
Documentation	Printed materials that verify specific activities or ideas related to the program standards and indicators.
Domain	A broad area of a child’s growth and learning.
Emergent literacy	Emerging and prerequisite foundational skills related to reading and writing such as recalling a story from memory, connecting a letter’s sound with its graphic representation, awareness of letter sounds, syllables, and invented spelling.
English Language Learners (ELL)	Refers to children whose home language is something other than English.

Exit conference	The meeting at the end of the validation visit between the validator and the director/school administrator of the program to discuss the visit, review comments, and record any differences in ratings between the self-appraisal team and the validator(s)'. The <i>Validation Visit Form</i> is signed at this time by the validator and the director/school administrator.
Fluency ²	The ability to read text accurately and quickly so it sounds like spoken words.
Grant Period	Refers to the period of time when the program receives notification of the grant award until the established ending date, usually two years.
Handwriting	The ability to write some or all of the letters of the alphabet by hand.
Head Start	Head Start programs for children, birth to five, are governed by the Federal government and operated by local organizations, most of the not-for-profit agencies.
Highly qualified	Teachers must have a bachelor's degree, full State certification, and "demonstrated competency, as defined by the State, in each of their core academic subjects." Experienced teachers must either meet the requirements for new teachers or meet a "High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation" (HOUSSE), based on years of teaching, combined with professional development and awards.
Indicator	Important points or aspects of a standard that is to be evaluated.
Integrated learning	The act of mixing or combining different subjects, skills, or processes.
Licensing	Refers to a license to operate. This license requires minimal standards for operating a program. Whereas, the MSDE Accreditation project's main focus is on the elements of program quality. This refers to a program providing services beyond what licensing and regulatory requirements demand.

² Put Reading First, *The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, Kindergarten through Grade 3*

Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program	A Statewide interagency early intervention system for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Local Infants and Toddlers Programs, composed of local school systems, health departments, departments of social services, and other public and private providers identified by each jurisdiction, deliver services to children with disabilities from birth to age three and to their families. Local single points of entry have been established in all jurisdictions to accept referrals from parents, physicians, hospitals, and others who suspect that an infant or toddler may be in need of early intervention services.
Maryland State Department of Education Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC)	A curriculum for every grade level and subject area designed to help teachers align instruction with State standards.
Modalities	A means of processing information to memory (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). Most children have a predominant modality of learning, but some have a balance between two.
Multicultural	Representing many cultures
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association of Family Child Care.
NECPA	National Early Childhood Program Accreditation
Philosophy	A set of values or beliefs related to an early childhood education program's mission or goals.
Phonemic awareness ³	The ability to hear, identifies, and manipulates individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.
Phonics ⁴	The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between the phonemes (sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (letters and spellings that represent the sounds in written language).
Phonological awareness ⁵	A broad term that includes phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness activities include working with

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rhymes, words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.

Pre-validation	A visit to a program at the conclusion of the self-appraisal process and prior to the validation visit. This visit includes an observation of the program, review of the required documentation, and a recommendation about the programs readiness for a validation visit.
Pre-validator	An early childhood professional who coaches the self-appraisal team for a validation visit.
Primary care giver	The person who is primarily responsible for caring for the child.
Print awareness ⁶ (Concepts of print)	The understanding that text: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Can be speech written down▪ Tracks from left to right and top to bottom▪ Sweeps from one line to the next▪ Is printed words that have separate spaces
Program	Represents all classrooms of one age group or developmental level.
Realia	Props or other physical items used to increase realism in role-playing.
Self-appraisal	A process whereby a team composed of teachers, administrators, parents, and others evaluates the level of quality of an early childhood program using the <i>Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation</i> . The self-appraisal is designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a program and to provide the basis for quality improvement for those indicators that have not been fully met.
Standard	Criteria by which components of a program are evaluated.
Validation	The external review of a program by a validator assigned by MSDE, in which the accuracy of the program's self-appraisal and subsequent quality improvement is verified using the <i>Instrument for Self-Appraisal and Validation</i> . Programs must receive a Decision I from the Validation Decision

Committee to be considered validated. Public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs receive validation, instead of accreditation because they are already housed in an accredited facility.

Vocabulary⁷

Words one must know to be able to communicate effectively.

Listening vocabulary: Words one must know to understand what is heard.

Speaking vocabulary: Words one uses in speaking.

Reading vocabulary: Words one must know to understand what is read.

Writing vocabulary: Words used to communicate in writing.

⁷ *Put Reading First, The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, Kindergarten through Grade 3*

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