



Professional Development Tool for Improving Quality of Practices in Kindergarten

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ISSA's Vision

With support from family and community, every child reaches his or her full potential and develops the skills necessary for being a successful and active member of a democratic knowledge society.

ISSA Mission

ISSA's mission is to support professional communities and develop a strong civil society that influences and assists decision makers to:

- provide high quality care and educational services for all children from birth through primary school (birth through 10 years old), with a focus on the poorest and most disadvantaged;
- ensure greater inclusion of family and community participation in children's development and learning;
- ensure social inclusion and respect for diversity.

ISSA's overarching goal is to promote inclusive, quality care and education experiences that create the conditions for all children to become active members of democratic knowledge societies. ISSA does this through: raising awareness of the importance of quality care and education, developing resources, disseminating information, advocating, strengthening alliances, and building capacity to create conditions where all children thrive.

ISSA Promotes

- Equal access to quality education and care opportunities;
- Child-centered, individualized teaching and learning, combining high-level instruction with support for the needs of each child;
- Development of skills and dispositions for lifelong learning and participation in a democracy;
- Recognition of educators' many roles as facilitators, guides, and role models in the learning process and as active members of their communities;
- Family involvement in children's development and education;
- Community engagement in public education;
- Respect for diversity, inclusive practices, and culturally appropriate learning environments and methods; and
- Self-improvement and ongoing professional development.

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The children shown in the photos in this publication are children enrolled in the early childhood programs of ISSA's national member organizations. Photographs appearing on pages 11, 13, 18, 32, 44, 46, 47, 78 were taken in Pitypang kindergarten, 18th district, Budapest, Hungary.

INTRODUCTION

Professional Development Tool for Improving the Quality of Practice in ECD

This *Professional Development Tool* is meant to accompany the document, *Putting Knowledge into Practice: A Guidebook for Educators on ISSA's Principles of Quality Practice*. It describes different levels of practice towards child-centered practice for each **Indicator of Quality** in *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy*.

- **LEVEL 0** describes practice that is **INADEQUATE** to be considered a child-centered approach.

The remaining levels build on each other:

- **LEVEL 1 – GOOD START** shows educators/practitioners how they can make a good start in improving their practice to become more child-centered.
- **LEVEL 2 – QUALITY PRACTICE** shows what is evidence of engaging in quality practice.
- **LEVEL 3 – MOVING FORWARD** shows educators how to make their practice more sustainable and to create systemic change in the teaching paradigm and practice.

For each Indicator of Quality there are concrete examples of actions which describe each of these four levels. These examples are **just** examples and are **not** intended to be a checklist of quality. Instead they are ideas that educators can use to begin reflection and dialogue about their own practice in order to better meet the needs of their own contexts and environments. The ideal, of course, would be for practitioners after these discussions to write more comprehensive separate examples for those working with different ages in their own languages. The examples provided are just short illustrations of how child centered practice can look.

**Description of Levels
in the Professional
Development Tool for
Improving the Quality
of Practice in ECD**

GOOD START

This level describes educators who start to change their practice with the aspiration to develop a child-centered classroom. In our experience, these educators usually start to change their practice by replicating ideas, examples, and strategies which they saw in trainings, which they read about in books, that they saw in another classroom, or that they heard about in discussions with mentors or peers. They may have experienced good reactions from the children, parents, and community on changes that they introduced in their classroom and start ‘to feel’ what is a child-centered approach.

ENGAGING IN QUALITY PRACTICE

It is at this level that educators consistently demonstrate their belief that young children have the right to realize and expand their own potential and to express their voice in the development of their own identities and abilities, relationships, and interactions with others, with ideas, with objects, and real and imaginary events. This more child-centered internalized “teaching” practice believes in the child’s potential by taking advantage of all learning opportunities. Quality “pedagogy” is an art form that is not a singular action or component but is the weaving together of all of the focus areas and principles in

the document, *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy*. These principles are not a recipe to be followed in a certain order - they are, instead, a description of how educators can combine the different components to create the proper pedagogical context for a child's maximal development.

MOVING FORWARD

The final level in this *Professional Development Tool* is the step into transformative practice, which is a description of how educators can expand their art. Educators have immense power to be agents of change in creating a better world and a new future. Unfortunately, educational systems do not acknowledge or cultivate that power. Educators who have moved forward also empower themselves and their colleagues to raise their level of professional practice to improve the quality of teaching in their classrooms and schools, and to advocate for better learning environments for all children.

Moving Forward describes actions that include:

- Empowering children, families, and communities to take a greater role in shaping their destinies.
- Taking a more active professional role in the school and community as an agent of change.
- Greater reflection on the part of the educator regarding power structures that either include or exclude people, and their complicit roles in maintaining them.

Who should use this Professional Development Tool

The *Professional Development Tool* can be used by mentors, trainers, professors, and certifiers as a guide for where educators are currently working in their practice and to help them identify what can be individual or groups of educators' next steps in their professional development. It can also be used by individual educators that are actively working on implementing quality in their classrooms to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement.

It should be noted that educators may be farther along in the Levels in some indicators than others and that there are always places for improvement in one's practice and in defining the profession of early childhood development and education in general. It is an educator's commitment to wanting to learn more, to grow, and to be the best that one can be that defines professionalism. This document also encourages educators to be reflective and to acknowledge and use the power that they have to assist children and families to reach their full potential along with the support of professional learning communities.

Although the *Professional Development Tool* describes the kind of practice that would demonstrate how any particular indicator of quality is emerging or is executed, it also purposefully leaves room for dialogue among mentors, trainers, professors, certifiers, practitioners, etc., on what other examples of evidence might also define an indicator. The *Professional Development Tool* should also be used in with the guidebook, *Putting Knowledge into Practice* whenever there are questions of what kinds of examples of practice describe quality so that the additional examples meet the spirit of the theory and research behind that particular indicator.

What is clear is that to meet the requirements of education in the 21st century, there must be a shift from the idea that definitions of quality are fixed to a new idea that the quality is being defined on an ongoing basis through a process of co-construction among the many different stakeholders who are concerned with quality.

ISSA feels very strongly that Indicators of Quality need to be inclusive in order to reflect: the diversity of settings in which they are used, changes and new demands in society, and new research based and practice based evidence that is continuously occurring. Defining quality should be an on-going process

which supports educators in changing their practice and understanding of the pedagogical concepts which are seen as the most crucial to ensure high quality at a particular time and place.

Part of this process is better described in the final description of Moving Forward in the *Professional Development Tool*, whereby educators move forward in their practice when they go out into their communities (both professional and living) to engage in dialogue about what constitutes quality. This level shows a pathway towards a *transformation* paradigm of teaching that promotes the concept that individuals and communities can and will transform themselves to step away from the constraints of the past to create a new future.

It is our hope that this and all of the supporting materials associated with *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: ISSA's Definition of Quality Pedagogy* will be living resources that be improved upon by all who use it.

ISSA Quality Experts Group

ISSA would like to thank the Open Society Institute for its support for the development of the documents, *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: ISSA's Definition of Quality Pedagogy*, *Putting Knowledge into Practice* and the *Professional Development Tool for Improving the Quality of Practice in ECD*, as well as for the dissemination of these tools within the ISSA network.



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1

The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.1

The educator's interactions are warm and caring, expressing *appreciation* and *enjoyment* of children.



0 Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
Greetings and departures neglected. In general, does not pay attention to children. Sometimes speaks harshly to children. Speaks to children mostly to give them directions.	Greets children. Uses children's names when speaking to them. Smiles at children and shows care in other ways with facial and body language. Uses pleasant voice, polite words, and warm tone most of the time. Shows affection to children only in specific cases (such as when child is excited, sad, upset, etc.) Interacts with children in a way that is age appropriate.	Is responsive to all children's ideas, feelings, opinions, and experiences. Engages children in meaningful conversations. Treats children in ways that show awareness of them as unique individuals. Shows empathy, concern, and understanding; is comforting and reassuring. Interacts positively with children, both verbally (e.g., listening, conversing with interest and respect) and nonverbally (e.g., smiling, nodding, marking eye contact, getting down to children's eye level, etc.)	Engages in reflective practice by collecting and analyzing information about children's interactions in different environments and with different people

NOTE: It is unacceptable to speak harshly to children or to speak negatively about a child in front of that child.

What are other ways that educators express appreciation and enjoyment of children?

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1

The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.2

The educator's interactions with and expectations of children are *consistent with the process of child development and learning.*



o Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not use supportive language to encourage children to try new things or to retry things when they fail the first time. Uses inappropriate words/phrases (such as "You could be smarter," "You are bad," etc.) Ignores when children become frustrated and begin to get angry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds appropriately to the majority of the children's behaviors. Manages both individual behavior and group dynamics. Uses supportive language to encourage children to try new things and to retry if they fail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualizes interactions to stimulate, scaffold, and further support learning and development of every child. Follows children's lead in conversations and discussions. Uses information and relevant data in determining expectations of individual children. Responds appropriately to every child's behaviors. Has realistic expectations that children not replicate adult understanding and behaviors, but that children <i>can do</i> many things. Encourages and uses children's input. Observes children's preoccupations and asks them questions based on those observations. 	<p>Recognizes in a nonjudgmental manner that children's knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions to learning are shaped through all of their interactions, not only those in school.</p>

NOTE: It is unacceptable to use discipline such as hitting, yelling, humiliating, etc.

What are other ways that educators demonstrate that their interactions with and expectations of children are consistent with the process of child development and learning?

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1

The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.3

The educator interacts frequently with *individual children throughout the day, building on their strengths and stimulating their learning and development.*



○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks all children to do same activities in the same way during the same amount of time. Engages only with the more active children. Does not allow children to tell what they already know about the topic. Talks TO children, not with them. Asks questions that have single or brief "correct" answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions to learn more about the children's thoughts and plans. Sometimes asks individual open ended questions to an individual child to stimulate learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks open-ended questions to invite thoughtful and expansive answers. Encourages all children to talk about how they understand something or share their views and perspectives on a topic. Asksing children to recap, hypothesize, speculate. Engages in real conversations WITH individual children about topics they are interested in. Creates activities based on children's interests. Creates new play opportunities and activities for children in which every child can express his/her ideas and views. 	<p>Empowers and helps children acquire the skills to be co-partners (meaning that they also take the lead) in the process of co-constructing knowledge, not only in the classroom, but in other settings as well.</p>

What are other ways educators demonstrate that they interact frequently with individual children in ways that build on their strengths and stimulate their learning and development?



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1

The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.4

The educator's interactions are *responsive to each child's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive strengths and needs.*



○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neglects what children already know or are capable of doing.Gives too much attention to a singular child to the neglect of others in the room.Neglects children's specific needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Differentiates activities for groups of children who develop skills more quickly or slowly.Comforts children who need immediate emotional support.Encourage children to express their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reacts to individual children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs. (For example, accommodates different children's needs for more activity or quiet, for a slower or faster pace, for more or less challenging activities, etc.)Notices when individual children need more help or more challenge and makes adjustments accordingly.Provides children support until they are ready to do something by themselves.Teaches children ways to comfort themselves.Has flexibility in routines (for example, accommodating children's need to rest, to eat, etc., at different times).	<p>Seeks out as much information as possible on how children react and interact in different environments and reflects on own interactions with individual children to become more responsive to children's strengths and needs.</p>

What are other ways educators demonstrate that their interactions are responsive to each child's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive strengths and needs?



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1

The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.5

The educator provides opportunities for children to *make choices* and to have those choices realized *and respected by others*.



○ Inadequate

Does not give children any choices.

1 Good Start

Gives children some choices about where to play and how to go about an activity, including what materials they would like to use, what they would like to learn more about, who they will play with, etc.

2 QUALITY Practice

Plans for how to provide opportunities for every child to make meaningful choices (activities, themes, materials, places to work, whom to work with, how long to stay on an activity) that are appropriate to the children's ages and capabilities.

Encourages children to experiment, find new ways to do things, and talk about their discoveries.

Has a system for children's choices that includes a "plan-do-review" format.

Moving Forward

Helps children develop the skills to reflect on their choices, understand consequences, and to think about what other options might have been available.

What are other ways that educators show that they provide opportunities for children to make choices?



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.1
The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child's construction of self/identity and learning.

Indicator 1.1.6

The educator's interactions with children develop their *initiative, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and leadership*.



○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<p>Expects children to only follow teacher directions.</p> <p>Does not allow children to initiate or lead activities (play).</p> <p>Gives teacher models for children to follow in all activities.</p>	<p>Assigns children or lets them choose classroom jobs or responsibilities.</p> <p>Allows children to take the initiative during free play time.</p> <p>Sometimes allows children to initiate play and does not interfere.</p> <p>Sometimes leaves children to manage their social disputes.</p> <p>Sometimes gives children opportunities to show their work or talk about their successes with others.</p>	<p>Encourages and enables children to do activities independently, from self-care to classroom projects.</p> <p>Provides opportunities for each child to take meaningful roles in group learning activities.</p> <p>Involves children in the defining classroom responsibilities, rules, and routines and letting them make decisions on how to put them into effect.</p> <p>Gives positive feedback on initiatives taken by children by showing interest, asking questions, admiring, and giving affirmation.</p> <p>Follows children's lead.</p>	<p>Assesses and explores what mechanisms in the school and community may undermine children's initiative and works to find ways to diminish those effects.</p>

What are other ways that educators assist children with developing their initiative, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and leadership?

Principle 1.2

The educator's interactions promote the development of a learning community where each child feels s/he belongs and is supported to reach his/her potential.

Indicator 1.2.1

The educator facilitates peer interactions among children to build shared understanding, mutual support, and a sense of community to help them reach learning and developmental goals.



1. INTERACTIONS

○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<p>Organizes activities where children work alone and do not have to speak with each other.</p> <p>Adults talk to the children and the children only respond to the adults.</p>	<p>Organizes activities in pairs or small groups.</p> <p>Provides some opportunities for children to choose with whom they would like to work with.</p> <p>Encourages building of classroom community by finding ways for children to experience pleasant moments together such as during meal or snack times, in morning meetings, and by talking to each other during activities throughout the day.</p> <p>Establishes a climate in which children feel free to talk and share.</p>	<p>Plans and designs activities for children where they must cooperate, collaborate, and care for each other.</p> <p>Develops children's social skills, such as active listening, showing interest in what others do, comforting others, and sharing joy and excitement.</p> <p>Intervenes in situations when issues of exclusion occur among children and assists them to resolve the problem.</p> <p>Provides opportunities for children to support each other's learning, including referring them to one another for information or assistances.</p> <p>Helps children appreciate the contributions of their peers, for example, by giving them the tasks of generating a group story, etc.</p>	<p>Helps children understand their responsibility in creating and maintaining the emotional safety in the classroom so that all can learn and develop.</p>

What are other ways that educators facilitate peer interactions among children?



INTERNATIONAL
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Principle 1.2

The educator's interactions promote the development of a learning community where each child feels s/he belongs and is supported to reach his/her potential



Indicator 1.2.2

The educator offers activities that help children learn how to *distinguish feelings, to recognize them in themselves and their peers, and to communicate about them.*

1. INTERACTIONS

○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<p>No activities that help children to learn about feelings are offered.</p> <p>Organizes only activities where children work alone and do not have to speak with each other.</p> <p>There are no possibilities for children to speak about their feelings.</p> <p>Names some feelings as "bad" (to be angry, to be afraid, etc.)</p>	<p>Encourages children to use their own words when expressing their emotions.</p> <p>Gives positive feedback to children when they are sensitive and caring toward others.</p> <p>Encourages children to share individual experiences that incorporate their feelings.</p>	<p>Accepts all feelings and emotions without judging them while teaching children how to express even difficult emotions in appropriate/acceptable ways to get their needs met.</p> <p>Does appropriate age level activities with children such as roles plays, story reading, where they recognize different emotional expressions and name them.</p> <p>Encourages children to acknowledge and describe challenges they encounter, whether it be with materials, peers, routines, or expectations.</p>	<p>Reflects upon the best ways to help children deal with their emotions so that teachable moments can be used most effectively when they occur.</p>

What are other ways that educators help children learn how to distinguish feelings in themselves and others?

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.2

The educator's interactions promote the development of a learning community where each child feels s/he belongs and is supported to reach his/her potential

Indicator 1.2.3

The educator promotes democratic values by encouraging every child to *express his/her opinion* in an appropriate way and *participate in decision making*.



○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not ask children about their opinions. Tells children what they or others are supposed to think and do. The teacher focuses only on her/his own feelings/actions. Does not trust children to solve problems on their own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives some opportunities to be engaged in only some decisions. Asks children their opinions when doing so fits into the classroom schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages children to freely offer their opinions <i>even if unsolicited</i> and helps them find the right words to frame their arguments/positions. Shows respect for children's decisions. Ensures that children's opinions and decisions are respected by other children and adults in the classroom and are incorporated wherever possible. Models how to listen to others' opinions. Engages children in formulating the classroom rules and procedures. Teaches children about the process of making decisions, including soliciting different possibilities and analyzing the consequences of different decisions on themselves and others. Provides opportunities for children to revise decisions based on new knowledge and experiences. 	<p>Promotes the right of the children to freely express their views in any proceedings that affect them.</p>

What are other ways that educators encourage children to express their opinions and participate in decision making?

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.2

The educator's interactions promote the development of a learning community where each child feels s/he belongs and is supported to reach his/her potential

Indicator 1.2.4

The educator promotes and supports the development of children's *language and communication* in multiple ways throughout the day.



○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks the majority of the time. Only asks children closed ended questions. Does not encourage children to speak with each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives opportunities for all children to talk during different times of the day encouraging their discussions. Encourages children to role play. Pays attention and promotes the use of new words introduced during activities and play. Sometimes uses open-ended questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently asks open-ended questions that expand children's thinking. Asks children to elaborate on and clarify their ideas, predict, or speculate. Organizes cooperative learning activities where children have to communicate with each other in order to learn new material. Models active listening as well as talking with children. Supports the development of children's pre-literacy skills through a language and print rich environment. Encourages children with language differences to take risks and not be afraid to make mistakes when speaking. 	<p>Follows children's communication and scaffolds interactions with and among children so that their language and communication skills expand.</p>

NOTE: It is unacceptable to demand silence or to punish children for talking to each other.

What are other ways that educators support the development of children's language and communication?

Principle 1.3

The educator engages in purposeful, reciprocal interactions with other adults to support children's development and learning.



Indicator 1.3.1

The educator engages in *respectful social interactions* with families, other staff members, and community members and *models* and promotes such interactions.

1. INTERACTIONS

○ Inadequate	1 Good Start	2 QUALITY Practice	Moving Forward
<p>Does not greet other adults when they come in to the classroom.</p> <p>Does not model verbal and nonverbal communication with other adults.</p>	<p>Always speaks respectfully with and about others in the classroom.</p> <p>Greets and acknowledges other adults that enter the classroom.</p>	<p>Interactions (verbal and nonverbal) between adults model respect, support, and partnership.</p> <p>Asks other adults questions, for help, for their opinions, ideas, and experiences with a topic.</p> <p>Shows appreciation of other adults' ideas and contributions.</p>	<p>Develops an awareness of inequalities between groups and works to erase boundaries in interactions with others.</p>

NOTE: It is unacceptable to speak disrespectfully about or to others.

What are other ways that educators demonstrate that they are engaging in respectful social interactions with other adults in the classroom?



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

1. INTERACTIONS

Principle 1.3
The educator engages in purposeful, reciprocal interactions with other adults to support children's development and learning.

Indicator 1.3.2

The educator cooperates with other professionals in the school and community to promote children's development and learning.



○ Inadequate

Does not cooperate with other professionals or community members.

1 Good Start

Asks specialists for advice on how to support children in the classroom.

2 QUALITY Practice

Invites others to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess/co-reflect in order to support children's learning and development.

Seeks relevant and objective information on children from their previous educators or others who may be working with them.

Creates Individual Education Plans together with specialists and with parents, when appropriate.

Moving Forward

Shares their experiences about successful cooperation with other professionals during teacher conferences.

Write articles about cooperation to be published in the pedagogical press.

What are other ways that educators can cooperate with other professionals in order to promote children's learning and development?