



SPROUT QUALITY CHECKLIST

[S] SECURE AND SENSITIVE

S.1: Low staff turnover allows children the opportunity to develop secure relationships with teachers.

Look for data regarding teacher turnover within a classroom and/or program-wide; look for data across the year as well as past-year trends. Ask administrators: “On average, how long are teachers retained?” Ask current teachers: “How long have you been in this classroom?”

Ask about what the center does to retain good teachers. How does the leadership review and use information and data on teacher trends?

S.2: Children view teachers as a source of comfort and security and actively seek their attention, input, and support, while also feeling comfortable to act independently.

Look for children who approach teachers both when they are upset and when they’re excited or have good news.

Look for teachers who support children’s autonomy, allowing them to take on self-care tasks and classroom responsibilities as appropriate.

S.3: Teachers treat children as individuals and know their strengths, needs, and backgrounds well enough to use that information to inform instruction.

Look for teachers who seem to know a lot about the children’s background interests. (e.g. “Look, Jack, this book has trains, and I know you love trains.”)

Look for visual cues of accommodations being provided in the classroom. (e.g., Ms. Williams is holding a child’s hand during story time to help her stay seated on the carpet; Sammy is given a special cushion to sit on which it makes it more comfortable for his leg cast.)

[P] PLAYFUL LEARNING

P.1: Teachers make deliberate efforts to organize guided play activities so that play is used to teach important early readiness skills, such as math, literacy, and social-emotional competence.

Look for teachers working alongside the children, asking questions, and following their interests.

Ask whether each activity is considered to be play or learning or both. Ideally, most classroom activities should fall into both categories.

P.2: Teachers participate in free play and guided play as an opportunity to engage children in learning opportunities through play.

Look for teachers co-playing while making connections and modeling language. Children are not left to play entirely on their own without guidance. Even during free play, teachers are on hand to help, guide, or engage when asked.

Look for a mix of child-led play and teacher-led suggestions, questions, or prompts.

P.3: Periods of free play are offered where children are provided materials and props to pursue their own interests within a safe environment, such as riding trikes or digging in dirt.

Look for children whose focus is sustained on an activity of their choosing.

Look for a variety of materials, props, activities, and centers to support that play.

[R] RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

R.1: Teachers frequently have extended meaningful conversations with individual children as a way to allow children to express themselves and improve their language skills.

Look for individual exchanges with children, and exchanges where children respond back meaningfully, not just with “yes” or “no” answers.

Look for red flags that might include children being asked to be quiet for long periods of time, or activities where teachers do the majority of speaking.

R.2: Teachers follow the child’s lead and respond appropriately.

Look for teachers scanning the classroom during free play or center time and anticipating and responding to children’s needs as they arise.

Look for teachers paying attention to children’s interests and providing learning opportunities that follow their lead.

R.3: Children appear to feel comfortable speaking with and seeking assistance from teachers because they know that their bids for attention will be met with respect and care.

<u>Look for</u> body language from teachers demonstrating that children's feelings matter (e.g., eye contact, warm affect, nods of understanding, teacher gets down on child's eye level, etc.)
<u>Look for</u> exchanges between children and teachers that are warm and kind.

U.2: Data is collected to document children's progress towards curricular objectives and to guide teachers' individualization of instruction as needed.
<u>Look for</u> individual portfolios or binders organizing evidence related to each child's progress.
<u>Ask about</u> what kind of data is collected on each child, and what it is used for.
U.3: Efforts are made to implement curricula faithfully with concrete record-keeping of progress through the curriculum and attention to the scope and sequence of instructional objectives.
<u>Ask about</u> how teachers are trained to use curriculum and how the center ensures that the curriculum is implemented faithfully.
<u>Ask about</u> whether the center uses coaching or other supports to help teachers use curriculum effectively.

[O] ORGANIZED ENVIRONMENTS

O.1: There are clearly identifiable and purpose-driven areas of the children's learning space that each include a variety of learning activities and materials that are regularly rotated to keep children engaged and interested.
<u>Look for</u> clearly defined or demarcated areas for various activities, e.g., quiet space, reading space, motor space, writing station, dramatic play center, etc.
<u>Ask</u> how often materials and activities are rotated and how children's interests impact the selection of materials, activities, or themes.
O.2: Adults practice proactive behavior management such that expectations are clear and consistent, and they monitor children's interactions and behaviors to prevent, rather than react to, problems and conflict.
<u>Look for</u> teachers giving clear instructions before each activity and setting children up for success.
<u>Watch for/Ask about</u> how behavioral correction or discipline is handled.
O.3: There are well-developed plans for the day with clear thought for the day's lessons and activities that correspond to clear learning objectives across multiple developmental domains, including language, literacy, math, and social-emotional competence.
<u>Look for</u> posted curriculum and objectives.
<u>Look for</u> children engaging with a classroom activity, either independently, with a teacher, or with peers.

[T] TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

T.1: The program has highly skilled teachers who have the requisite technical knowledge, social-emotional skills, and cultural competence to serve the population of children (and families) in their care.
<u>Ask about</u> what competencies the program looks for when recruiting or hiring.
<u>Ask about</u> the level of teacher credentialing or training among program/classroom teachers.
T.2: The program offers ongoing training supports where opportunities and support are available to teachers to constantly improve skills in ways that improve pedagogy and the overall learning environment.
<u>Ask about</u> what professional development is available to teachers and whether they receive time off and/or stipends for growth opportunities.
<u>Ask</u> if teachers receive planning time, and what opportunities are available to collaborate with other teachers.
T.3: Teachers are clearly valued as evidenced by a sustainable model for investment in their training, to curb turnover, and to ensure consistent quality in their teaching practices.
<u>Ask about</u> overall supports and incentives offered to teachers and teachers.
<u>Look for</u> evidence that teachers feel a sense of efficacy and joy in their work; look for red flags that they might feel unsupported or burned out (e.g., they speak about it openly, appear fatigued and stressed most of the time, or miss excessive days of work).

[U] USING EVIDENCE-BASED AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM

U.1: Programs use a curriculum with a scope and sequence that has been rigorously tested for positive effects on children's development in key domains.
<u>Ask about</u> what curriculum is used, why it was chosen, and how the program evaluates its effectiveness with the children being served.
<u>Ask how</u> teachers re-visit and re-engage past lessons to ensure children master skills.