



Early Education Addendum

Early Education Addendum for ACSI *Inspire*

General Instructions

This addendum is designed to supplement the *Inspire* protocol, providing information specific to early education (EE) programs. This addendum will identify these categories:

- *Additional Indicators* to be addressed that are not found in *Inspire* and are unique to EE programs
- *Evidence* that is specific to EE programs (beyond what is indicated in *Inspire*)
- *Modifications* in the EE Addendum replacing an indicator in *Inspire*
- Notification that an *Inspire* indicator *Does Not Apply* to Early Education programs

Any school that serves children from birth through pre-kindergarten that desires accreditation for their EE program will complete this addendum as well as the *Inspire* protocol at the time of their accreditation visit. This applies to “*standalone*” programs (which could include kindergarten) as well as those associated or “*attached*” to elementary school programs.

Definitions and Instructions

Attached EE programs: ACSI defines an *attached* EE program as one that provides childcare and education to children from birth to the start of formal education, generally kindergarten, and is associated with or “attached” to an elementary or higher grade level school program.

Standalone EE programs: ACSI defines a *standalone* EE program as one that provides childcare and education to children from birth to the start of formal education, generally kindergarten, but is not associated with an elementary school program. A *standalone* program may be associated with a church and still be considered standalone. They may also be independent of any parent organization or ministry. Some standalone programs also include kindergarten in their EE programs. If a standalone EE program also includes or oversees the kindergarten grade level, this addendum will encompass the kindergarten aspects also (depending on state laws).

Self-Study

When it is determined that the school needs to complete the EE Addendum, additional sections will be made active in the digital platform. *Additional* and *modified* indicators will be included for each domain along with the ability to upload evidence. Each domain will have a textbox similar to those in the main *Inspire* protocol, allowing those who work on the EE Addendum to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The school should also use the textbox to include a general reflection that helps explain any specific distinctives, challenges, or context for the team member(s) reviewing the EE portion of the report. Those who are working on the EE Addendum will identify prioritized goals resulting specifically from the EE Addendum and share those with the Steering Committee.

The school will rate the indicators within the *Inspire* protocol, as well as the EE Addendum indicators identified as *additional* and *modified*. Schools will also note some addendum indicators requiring supporting evidence specific to EE. No EE specific rating will be required for items simply marked as “Evidence.”

For attached programs, the group reviewing the EE program may feel that upon their review of evidence, there is a difference between what the main school program has rated an indicator and what the EE would rate that indicator. If this occurs, the EE program should make a note of that in the textbox provided for each domain.

A few general questions will be asked at the beginning of the EE Addendum section in the digital platform. These are needed to provide context for the team member(s). More information will be provided with prompts in the digital platform:

1. **Licensing status with your state** - Please include documentation (complete the [Statement of Practice for Non-licensed EE Programs](#) if not state licensed).
2. Provide **demographics** (numbers and ages served, ethnicity overview, etc.) of the children in the EE program. Please include the *number of classrooms*, the number of children served, as well as the FTE of children served.
3. Describe the **history and administration** of the program, including how the EE program came into existence, the leadership structure, and how it operates in relation to the elementary school (if an attached program). If the program is associated with a church ministry, describe how the program and church are interrelated.
4. Describe the **curriculum used**, including texts adopted, other external sources used. (developed in-house, purchased, specific company, specific thematic approach to curriculum)
5. Describe the **personnel** who are assigned to the EE program: # of teachers, assistant teachers, aides, and any other significant positions including their education/training.
6. Describe **structures used to support EE students and develop school culture** such as chapel or Bible teachers, resource specialists, special programs or services offered, etc.

Composition of the Team

For *attached* programs, the chair of the combined visit will be appointed approximately 12-18 months prior to the team visit. That person will be an expert in the *Inspire* standards and indicators. An additional team member (or members, depending on size of the program) will be appointed to serve on the team with experience in EE programs. That person will help the chair assess the program's overall readiness for the visit. He or she will also serve as the contact or resource person for the EE director/staff as they complete their self-study in preparation for the team visit.

For *standalone* programs, the team will be composed primarily of early educators. The chair will serve as the contact or resource person for the EE director/staff as they develop the self-study in preparation for the team visit. The size of the team will be determined based on a combination of total enrollment and number of classrooms in the EE program at the time of the visit.

Readiness Checklist for EE Programs

Approximately eight weeks prior to the team visit, a visit readiness check will be performed to determine if the visit can go forward. That check may be virtual or in-person. The chairperson (and EE representative, for attached programs) will be looking for a basic level of effectiveness on *Inspire* and the EE Addendum components. For an initial accreditation visit, the EE program may not be expected to have the level of maturity of an established program seeking renewal accreditation. For those programs, some indicators may still be in progress, thus being marked as "Somewhat Effective" by the school. The *Visit Readiness Checklist* will be completed along with a [Standard 11 Checklist](#).

Team Visit

When the school hosts the visiting team and has an attached EE program, at least one additional team member with expertise in EE will participate on the team. For standalone EE programs, the full team will be focused on the EE program. The size and number of team members dedicated to the EE program will be determined by the size of the EE program. The team member(s) will observe classes in whatever way is agreed upon with the EE director and the team chairperson.

The EE team member(s) will rate the *additional* and *modified* indicators, evaluate the additional evidence, and complete a reflection for each domain where they will comment on their observations and additional evidence. A school may receive commendations or recommendations that pertain specifically to the EE program. EE team members may also contribute to the full team report during the visit.

Icons used throughout this Addendum:



Additional Indicators required for EE programs



Evidence: The evidence needed is specific to early education.



Modifications in the EE Addendum replacing an indicator in *Inspire*.



Definitions of *Inspire* terminology specific to EE (see *Inspire* Glossary for expanded general definitions)



Indicator does not apply to early education programs

Evidence

The school will need to provide evidence specific to early education for all indicators that are additional, modified, or marked for additional evidence. The EE team member(s) will review the evidence to determine if the program is effectively meeting each indicator. If an *Inspire* indicator is not listed in this addendum, no additional evidence pertaining to the EE program needs to be provided. Some evidence will be required prior to the team's arrival as listed on the [Visit Readiness Checklist](#).

This EE Addendum is intended to be used as a side-by-side document with Inspire.

PURPOSE DOMAIN



Additional Evidence

Indicator 1.4: Evidence shows that the EE program applies and assesses the expected student outcomes in age-appropriate ways.

Indicator 3.2: Evidence is needed to show that the governing body makes informed decisions with an orientation to the state/local regulatory expectations of the early education program (even if not state licensed) to promote effectiveness.



Modified Indicator

Modification for Indicator 2.2: Spiritual formation and character development in early education is supported through instructional planning/curriculum and activities within the program.



Definitions

Indicator 3.1: In church-sponsored EE programs, the *governing body* may be the church board. Schools are not required to have a separate school governing body in addition to the church governing body. (See [Guidelines and Requirements for Governance](#))

Indicator 3.4: In standalone EE programs, the term *head of school* may mean the EE director. In attached EE programs, there may be both a head of school and EE director, each with distinct responsibilities.

RELATIONSHIPS DOMAIN



Additional Evidence

Indicator 4.1: Evidence demonstrates how the program implements a Christlike culture that promotes prosocial interactions and builds social/emotional skills and resilience in children.

Indicator 5.1: Evidence shows collaboration between home and school including family conferences and daily touchpoints regarding the child's educational experiences, needs, milestones, progress, and/or concerns that impact the child's well-being and development.



Modified Indicator

Modification for Indicator 6.2: The EE program provides age-appropriate opportunities for young children to serve local or national communities/community helpers to expand learning beyond the four walls of the classroom.



Additional Indicator

EE Indicator 5.4: Families are onboarded through personal orientation to the school's expectations and goals. Parents are provided with a comprehensive Program/Parent Handbook that includes enrollment and dismissal policies as well as financial policies and commitments, operational information and expectations, and licensing accountability, and are required to review and sign their agreement annually for mutual accountability (per individual state requirements).



Definition

Indicator 5.1: *Stakeholders* include anyone invested in the program's success and outcomes including leadership, staff, families, students, and external community (e.g., church and local community).

TEACHING AND LEARNING DOMAIN



Additional Evidence

Indicator 7.3: Evidence demonstrates how the early education program uses developmentally and age-appropriate practices that are informed by research reflecting an understanding of how young children grow and learn.

Indicator 8.1: Evidence of curriculum documentation and planning for early education shows the identification of age-specific learning outcomes (based on state or national early learning standards) for all developmental domains: spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical.



Modified Indicators

Modification for Indicator 7.4: Use of technology in early education is guided by written policy, is appropriate to the age and the attention span of the children, and promotes meaningful learning. Technology is previewed by the staff for overall content and age appropriateness and serves as an occasional supplement to daily activities rather than a significant part. There is appropriate teacher involvement in introducing and follow-up with questions and activities that elicit children's active engagement.



Additional Indicators

EE Indicator 7.7: Learning experiences include a variety of differentiated learning opportunities and activities that provide a balance of teacher-guided instruction and child-initiated exploration.

EE Indicator 7.8: The instructional program guides child behavior utilizing preventative approaches, engaging environments, and clear expectations through age-appropriate boundaries and guidance, teaching, and modeling self-regulation skills.

EE Indicator 7.9: The instructional program provides age-specific benchmarks and expectations in critical thinking, problem solving, coping skills, and resilience.

EE Indicator 7.10: The early education program incorporates indoor and outdoor learning experiences and designs environments with a variety of safe and engaging stimuli for the different needs of each learner.

EE Indicator 7.11: The early education program utilizes routines and transitions to extend teaching in a developmentally appropriate way and includes planned movement from one activity to another, wait time, and engagement activities.

EE Indicator 9.4: Assessments are aligned with the program's expected student outcomes and/or state early learning standards to assess children's growth in areas of spiritual, language, cognitive skills, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, self-help skills, and physical development.

EE Indicator 10.4: Staff development includes a focus on creating emotionally healthy environments that teach and model personal and peer respect with reactions and responses that are predictable, are appropriate, and show care for others.

EE Indicator 10.5: Early education staff complete (one-time) the *Principles & Practices of Christian Early Education* within the first three years of employment. **(Please note: Staff can also choose to complete an [ACSI-approved Christian Philosophy of Education course](#).)**

EE Indicator 10.6: Early education staff complete a minimum of four (4) clock hours annually in Biblical Studies.

EE Indicator 10.7: Early education staff complete a minimum of four (4) clock hours annually in Health and Safety training in accordance with the [National Health and Safety Standards](#). (If your state requires more than four (4) clock hours of health and safety training, your teachers must follow state requirements. If your program is exempt from state requirements, then the four (4) clock hours are required.) Schools (and their personnel) are aware of and practice National Health and Safety Standards to promote a positive physical environment.

EE Indicator 10.8: Early education staff complete a minimum of twelve (12) clock hours annually of professional development. If your state requires more hours of professional development, your teachers must follow state requirements. If your program is exempt from state requirements, then the twelve (12) clock hours are required). (*12 hours not inclusive of Biblical Studies or Health and Safety training hours*).

EE Indicator 10.9: Early education staff complete an [Annual Professional Development Report for Early Educators](#) that is approved by the director and kept in personnel files, available upon request at the time of accreditation.



Definitions

Indicator 7.1: “A biblically-based instructional program is seen throughout each *discipline*.” In early education, a *discipline* (subject area) would be a developmental domain: spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. This use of the word *discipline* in this context is not child guidance or classroom management.

Indicator 7.4: Technology in EE includes listening centers, electronic devices, audio/visual, etc. Technology also includes passive media (television, DVDs, CDs).

Indicator 9.1 and 9.3: Authentic assessment incorporates a variety of strategies and can be either a published assessment or a school developed research-based tool to collect data such as observations, anecdotal notes, running records, checklists, and/or annotated/evaluative portfolios (beyond a scrapbook of learning activities). This can be used as a screening tool within the first few months of entry and throughout the school year to assess learning and development.

EXPERTISE DOMAIN



Modified Indicators

Modification for Indicator 12.2: EE Administrators/Directors and Staff have qualifications specific to their role in early education. See document “[EE Staff Qualifications](#)” for details to meet this indicator.

Modification for Indicator 13.3: The early education program shows evidence of an early intervention plan for helping children who exhibit varying developmental delays or challenges in the learning environment.



Additional Indicators

EE Indicator 11.1: Regardless of licensing status (licensed, exempt, registered, religious exempt, certified, etc.) the school complies *at minimum* with local/state/federal laws and state licensing regulations *and* communicates its written policy to staff and parents.

LICENSED PROGRAMS: Submit a copy of the most recent licensing inspection report and examples of where license information is published.

NON-LICENSED PROGRAMS: If exempt, voluntarily registered, religious exempt, certified, etc. submit a link to their state's licensing standards AND complete/submit the [Statement of Practice for Non-licensed EE Programs](#).

EE Indicator 11.2: Programs appropriately disclose organizational statements, including licensing status/information and non-discrimination policy, visible in print and virtual materials (handbooks, website, and promotional materials).

EE Indicator 12.7: Compensated lesson planning and prep time for early education staff is provided, including breaks that are reflected in the staff work schedule (meeting or exceeding state/federal labor laws).

EE Indicator 13.4: Early education program provides families with specialized resource information, materials, and contacts from local/state agencies or services. (i.e., Resources, county or state intervention services, practitioner lists)



Indicator Does Not Apply

Indicator 13.2: Does not apply to early education programs.

RESOURCES DOMAIN



Additional Evidence

Indicator 15.1: Evidence demonstrates how the EE program is represented and visible in the school's/church's long-range planning, financial models, and marketing strategies.

WELL-BEING DOMAIN



Additional Indicators

EE Indicator 18.4: Direct visual supervision of children is practiced at all times whether children are in the classroom, outdoors, or in any area of the early education center and are outlined in staff policies and procedures.

EE Indicator 18.5: Policies and procedures for sanitizing toys, equipment, and the environment are documented and implemented based on [National Health and Safety Standards](#) and include training for staff.

EE Indicator 20.4: Policies and procedures for wellness and illness management including but not limited to attendance policies related to sick child/isolation procedures, nutrition and food service, proper handwashing, and personal student medical needs (allergy and special concerns) are published.

EE Indicator 20.5: Behavior policies and procedures are implemented with gentleness, consistency, and firmness; redirection, reflective listening, and positive reinforcement are used (as opposed to physical punishment, restraint, or psychological/verbal abuse). Staff receive training and are consistent and predictable in providing loving physical and emotional care of all children.

INFANT-TODDLER

Infant-Toddler Standard

Infant/toddler care is unique and is not a scaled-down version of a preschool classroom. Infant/toddler staff are trained and knowledgeable about the developmental norms and health and safety needs of children in the earliest years. Staff demonstrate flexibility to adapt a pattern of care to meet children's rapidly changing needs.

I/T Indicator 1: Staff-child interactions during diapering promotes conversation skills for language development, nurture, and attachment.

I/T Indicator 2: Systematic procedures exist for daily documentation and communication regarding each child's individual health, sleeping, eating, and diapering/potty training patterns as well as their interests and accomplishments.

I/T Indicator 3: Staff are educated about national infant/toddler health and safety standards including the risks of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS); procedures have been implemented to reduce those risks and statements are published regarding preventions and precautions.

I/T Indicator 4: Sleeping equipment and bedding meets the standards of the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission; infants are placed on their backs for sleeping and soft items are not placed in cribs.

I/T Indicator 5: Staff are educated on choking hazard risks and the evaluation of the classroom environment for the safety of infants and toddlers.

I/T Indicator 6: Infants and toddlers are cared for in a personal manner by attentive staff; children are never restrained or left for extended periods in highchairs, infant seats, cribs, swings, etc.

I/T Indicator 7: Infants, toddlers, and twos' feedings are participative and nurturing; children are not fed from propped-up bottles.

I/T Indicator 8: The equipment, furnishings, and learning environment in infant/toddler classrooms are developmentally age-appropriate and meet national health and safety standards.