

Great Start to Quality On-Site Assessment Guidance



The on-site assessment is a step in the [Great Start to Quality rating process](#) for programs seeking a 4 or 5 Star rating.

If the program is a **Non-Alternate Path** program and receives a 4 or 5 Star [validation](#), the next step is the on-site assessment. If the program chooses not to have an on-site assessment, the program will publish as a 3 Star, even if the validation was a 4 or 5 Star.

If the program is an **Alternate Path** program and receives a 5 Star validation, the next step is the on-site assessment. If the program chooses not to have an on-site assessment, the program will publish at a 4 Star, even if the validation was a 5 Star. Alternate Path programs publish at the 4 Star rating because they are already monitored at a national or state level beyond licensing.



Figure 1

The on-site assessment tool used by Great Start to Quality is the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool. In Figure 1, notice the star rating that corresponds to the validation points earned and the PQA score. If at any time a program no longer wishes to participate, the program may choose to Opt Out of the process.

PQA

HighScope's Program Quality Assessment (PQA) is a rating tool designed to measure the quality of early childhood programs that include Family Child Care, Infant-Toddler, and Preschool programs. [Learn more about the Program Quality Assessment \(PQA\) developed by HighScope.](#)

The Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality's School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) is a rating tool designed to measure the quality of Out-of-School Time programs who are licensed for ages 5-12 years. [Learn more about the School-Age Program Quality Assessment developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.](#)

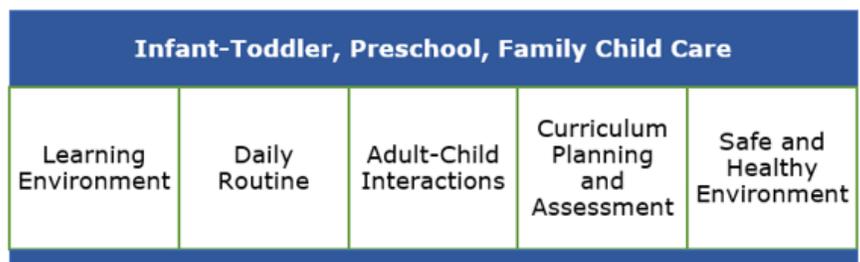
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Why does Great Start to Quality use the PQA?

Great Start to Quality (GSQ) uses the PQA tools because they are comprehensive tools for all programs, regardless of curriculum. The PQA tools align with the Michigan Standards of Quality for [Infant and Toddler](#), [Prekindergarten](#), and [Out-of-School Time](#). The PQA tools are valid and reliable and focus on best practices. This makes them great tools for supporting the children and staff in the program.

Focus of the PQA

The **Family Child Care, Infant-Toddler, and Preschool PQA's** look at five different areas of the program. The five areas include learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interactions, curriculum planning and assessment, and safe and healthy environment. Refer to Figure 2.



Infant-Toddler, Preschool, Family Child Care				
Learning Environment	Daily Routine	Adult-Child Interactions	Curriculum Planning and Assessment	Safe and Healthy Environment

Figure 2

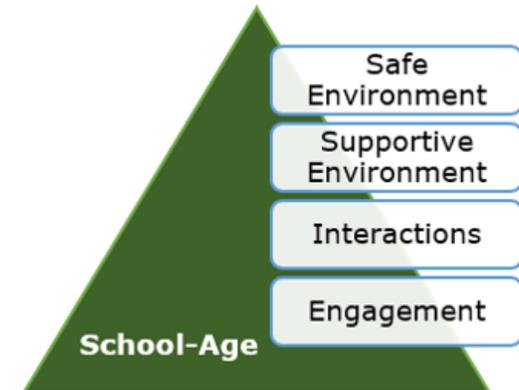


Figure 3

The **School-Age PQA** looks at four different areas of the program. They include safe environment, supportive environment, interactions between adults and children, and engagement of the children in the program. Refer to Figure 3.

The on-site assessment is a chance to show off the program

The Assessors are happy to see programs' commitment to improvement and want to make the process as simple and pleasant as possible. They are experienced at conducting on-site assessments for all program types across the state. The Assessors have worked in various program types themselves and have knowledge of different philosophies and curricula.

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The on-site assessment is just a starting point

After an Assessor visits the program and conducts an on-site assessment, a written report will be completed and shared with the program. A Quality Improvement Consultant (QIC) from the local Great Start to Quality (GSQ) Resource Center will work with the program to review the report and plan for improvements. The program can then [apply for a new rating](#) at any time.

All the information needed is in the PQA book

All programs should look at a PQA book before the observation. This is the best way to prepare for an on-site assessment. All levels in each row show the indicators and examples. To get a copy of a PQA book:

- Contact the local [Great Start to Quality Resource Center](#) to check out a copy from the Lending Library
- Contact [HighScope](#) to buy a copy of Family Child Care, Infant-Toddler, and/or Preschool programs
- Download the [School-Age Program Quality Assessment](#) tool from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Who conducts the On-Site assessment?



Figure 4

A GSQ Assessor or an Approved Assessor will complete the on-site assessment. All GSQ Assessors and Approved Assessors receive training and must complete regular reliability testing.

- A [GSQ Assessor](#) is an employee of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) which implements Great Start to Quality.
- An [Approved Assessor](#) is someone with the certification that the program selects to complete the on-site assessment.

Non-Alternate Path classrooms will have their on-site assessment conducted by a GSQ Assessor. Head Start, Early Head Start, and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited classrooms have the choice to use an Approved Assessor or a GSQ Assessor. All Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) classrooms must request an Approved Assessor and use the on-site assessment results completed by their Early Childhood Specialist.

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Meet the Assessment Team



Figure 5

Why is an on-site assessment important for the program?

The assessment step of Great Start to Quality (GSQ) is important because it gives an in-depth and objective look at the practices in the program. An assessment gives valuable information for reflection and quality improvement. It can be an ongoing asset as the program continues to work toward increasing quality.

How many on-site assessments will the program receive?

Family and Group Child Care providers receive **one** on-site assessment visit using the Family Child Care PQA.

Out of School Time only programs receive **one** on-site assessment using the School-Age PQA.

Centers serving infants/toddlers and/or preschoolers will have observations in **at least one-third of the total number of classrooms and in each age group**. All classrooms are randomly selected for observation.

To find the total number of on-site assessments the program needs to fulfill the one-third requirement, please refer to Figure 6.

If an Alternate Path program requests an [Approved Assessor](#) to complete only some of their classrooms, a [GSQ Assessor](#) will observe in any remaining classrooms to fulfill the one-third and age group requirement.

Center with Infant, Toddler, or Preschool Classrooms	
1 to 4 Classrooms	1 PQA
5 to 7 Classrooms	2 PQAs
8-10 Classrooms	3 PQAs
11-13 Classrooms	4 PQAs
14-16 Classrooms	5 PQAs
17-19 Classrooms	6 PQAs
20 Classrooms	7 PQAs
Center with School Age Only Classrooms	
1 to 20 Classrooms	1 PQA
Family Child Care Program	
1 PQA	

Figure 6

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BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER the on-site assessment

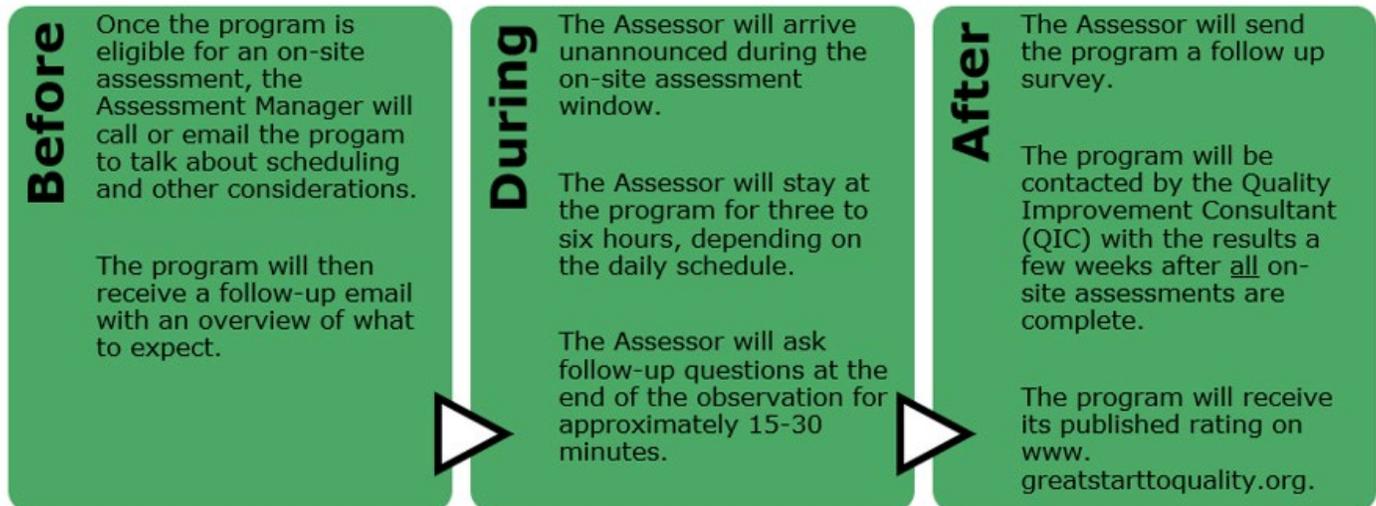


Figure 7

How is the PQA scored?

The Assessor will use their notes from the observation to score each row and section of the PQA. The scoring directions for the PQA are at the front of each PQA book.

- Each row in the PQA is scored as a level 1, level 3, or level 5
- The overall score is an average of each section in the PQA
- Rows that score a level 5 will not have evidence in the report as the program achieved high quality in these areas
- Rows that score a level 3 or a level 1 will include evidence from the observation. The evidence could include interactions between teachers and children, quotes from teachers and children, details about the environment, materials, and schedule, etc.

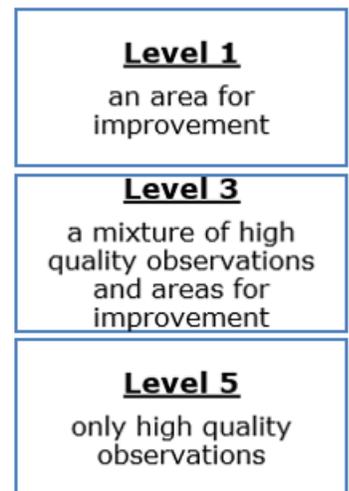


Figure 8

Have questions or need help?

The Quality Improvement staff at the local Great Star to Quality Resource Centers are partners in navigating the rating process and can help support improving program quality for early childhood programs. Contact the local [Great Start to Quality Resource Center](#) or call 1-877-614-7328. For OST programs, the Michigan After-School Partnership is there to provide support. Contact outofschooltime@ecic4kids.org for more information.