NIEER PRE-K QUALITY POLICY BENCHMARKS

Policy Benchmark	Description	Why It Matters
Learning goals	Comprehensive early learning and development standards to guide teaching and assessment	Programs need clear and appropriate goals explaining what children are expected to know and be able to do when they complete Pre-K.
Curriculum supports	Guidance for choosing and using content-rich curriculum	Programs should use curricula designed for young learners that focus on language, literacy, mathematics, science, and social-emotional development.
Teacher education level	Lead teachers required to have a bachelor's degree	Teachers with higher education levels generally provide higher quality learning environments for children.
Teacher specialized training	Lead teacher has specialized training for teaching Pre-K	Teachers need to understand how to teach young children in ways that are consistent with a child's learning and development.
Assistant teacher education	Assistant teacher has a formalized entry-level credential such as the Child Development Associates	All members of a teaching team influence classroom quality, so assistants should hold at least an entry-level qualification for teaching young children.
Professional development	Ongoing training for teachers and assistant teachers	Professional learning, including coaching and other classroom support, produces high-quality learning experiences for children.
Maximum class size	Maximum number of children per classroom is 20	Effective Pre-K programs have small classes, enabling teachers to understand and address each child's interests, needs, and capabilities.
Teacher-child ratio	Ratio of teachers to children is 1:10 or better	Working with small groups of children allows teachers to offer more individualized attention, which results in better outcomes.
Health screening and referral	Screenings for vision, hearing, health, and development concerns, along with referrals to needed services	Screening for health and development issues helps children get the help they need and often prevents later costly services.
Continuous quality improvement system	System to assess program quality used to guide improvement	Using data to inform program improvement helps educators provide the high-quality early learning opportunities children need.