

The image features a light beige background with decorative hexagonal patterns in the corners. The top-left corner has a cluster of overlapping hexagons outlined in thin lines of gold, brown, and pink. The right side of the image is decorated with a collection of solid-colored hexagons in various shades of brown and peach, some of which are partially cut off by the edge.

Demonstrating Leadership Through Reflection and Self-Assessment

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TIFFANY KRUSHENSKY



Today's Session

- Introductions
 - Overview of topic
 - Group discussion
 - Exploration of standards/scales
 - Potential next steps for professional growth
 - Goal setting, Q&A, wrap-up
- 





‘Housekeeping’

- Come and go as you need
 - Sign-up sheet floating around, so we can send follow up with you via email afterward
 - Handouts
 - Feel free to raise your hand with comments/questions throughout
- 



Introductions

- Kalli Decker
- Professor of Human Development & Family Science at Montana State University
- Focus areas: Child development; Early childhood education; Early intervention
- Energized: Led dinosaur week for preschoolers!



Introductions

- Tiffany Krushensky
- Accreditation Manager with Montana Association for the Education of Young Children
- Focus: Program Accreditation through NAEYC and NAFCC
- Energized: 1st cohort with center programs in progress



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Ice Breaker

- Your name
- Program name/Program type
- Role in your program
- What's one recent win, project, or moment in your professional role that made you feel energized?



Session Goals



- Engage in self-reflection
 - Explore several high-quality classroom and program assessment tools (they don't have to be scary - we promise!)
 - Identify strengths and growth opportunities within your own settings
 - Choose a tool you would like to explore more and set a goal
 - Identify potential next steps for professional growth
- 



What is leadership?

What does it mean to
be a leader?

Our Lens Toward Leadership

- Leading by example
- Being a life-long learner
- Engaging in self-reflection
- Building on existing strengths
- Seeking opportunities to improve
- Taking action, when appropriate
- Supporting others 'on the way up'
- [NOT about judgement of self or others]



If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.
- John Quincy Adams



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One Way To Demonstrate Leadership...

- Look toward the national ‘gold standards’ of our field
- (Reasonably!) Hold ourselves to those standards - while also keeping in mind our unique realities, situations, etc.



Reflection



What guides quality in your program?

- What does "high quality" look like in your setting?
- How do you determine what is “high quality”?
 - What tools, standards, or frameworks help guide your program, classroom, or teaching practices?
- How familiar are you with quality standards and assessment tools?
- Are you currently using any of the following?
 - *Accreditation standards (NAEYC, NAFCC, Montessori)*
 - *Quality Recognition System/Montana Treasures*
 - *Teaching Strategies GOLD*
 - *Head Start Performance Standards*
 - *Other quality improvement frameworks*



Introduction of Standards



Today we'll focus on **two main groups of standards** that are based in research and high-quality expectations:

- **Environment Rating Scales**

- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-3)
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3)
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-3)

- **National Associations**

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Standards



Observational Assessment Tools by the Environment Rating Scales Institute:

- Birth to 36 months: Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-3)
- Age 3-5: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3)
- Mixed ages: Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-3)

General Information:

- Multiple subscales
- Ratings (1 = Inadequate, 3 = Minimal, 5 = Good, 7 = Excellent)
- Not our focus today:
 - Rigidity/counting
 - Things that already overlap with licensing

Standards

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation

- *For center-based programs and some family/group programs*
- Focuses on relationships, teaching and learning, family engagement, leadership, and program quality

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation

- *Designed specifically for family child care and group home programs*
- Focuses on relationships, learning environments, family partnerships, professionalism, and program quality

Shared Purpose

- Reflect on current practices
- Identify strengths and opportunities for growth
- Support continuous quality improvement
- Promote high-quality experiences for children and families



How These Standards Align

Where we've been:

- STARS has historically used tools like ITERS, ECERS, and FCCERS to define and measure quality

Where we are:

- Montana's new Quality Recognition System (Montana Treasures) still values reflection, growth, and Continuous Quality Improvement — including ERS assessments, SMART goals, coaching, and quality improvement planning
- National benchmarks like NAEYC, NAFCC, Head Start, and Montessori accreditation are now recognized as **Stage 3: Excelling in Quality**

Today's focus:

- Using standards as practical tools for leadership, reflection, and continuous improvement — not just compliance
- Classroom quality





Other Resources for Standards

- Classroom Assessment Scoring System – 2nd edition
 - Infant-Toddler
 - Pre-K - K - 3rd
 - Program Administration Scale – 3rd edition
 - Business Administration Scale – 2nd edition
- 





Activity

Two main groups of tools:

Environment
Rating Scales
(ITERS-3;
ECERS-3;
FCCERS-3)

National
Associations
(NAEYC and
NAFCC)



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Activity

- **5 Minutes: Explore individually**
 - **5 Minutes: Discuss**
 - **10 Minutes: Reflect**
 - **5 Minutes: Large group discussion**
- 
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Activity

5 Minutes: Explore Individually

Review each set of tools on your own

- Copies of the full tools are being passed around
 - Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-3; ECERS-3; FCCERS-3)
 - National Associations (NAEYC and NAFCC)
 - Handouts provide example areas from each tool focused on:
 - Supportive interactions/social-emotional
 - Language/literacy
- 



Activity

5 Minutes: Discuss

Share observations and questions with others at your table

- What are your thoughts about each set of tools?
 - Environment Rating Scales (ITERS; ECERS; FCCERS)
 - National Associations (NAEYC and NAFCC)
- 



Activity

10 Minutes: Reflect

Add your thoughts to the wall using small sticky notes:

- **Overall Thoughts: What stands out to you about each set of tools?**
 - Environment Rating Scales (ITERS; ECERS; FCCERS)
 - National Associations (NAEYC and NAFCC)
 - **Strengths: What are you already doing?**
 - What strengths can you easily identify in your program?
 - **Areas for Growth: What would you like to try?**
 - What is one area you would like to explore or strengthen?
- 



Group Discussion

Sticky Note Review

- **Overall Thoughts: What stands out to you about each set of tools?**
 - Environment Rating Scales (ITERS; ECERS; FCCERS)
 - National Associations (NAEYC and NAFCC)
 - **Strengths: What are you already doing?**
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- 

Accreditation Mentorship Program

Interested in the Next Step?

Montana Accreditation Mentorship Program provides individualized support for programs pursuing:

- **NAEYC Accreditation**
- **NAFCC Accreditation**

Mentorship and Cohorts Include:

- One-on-one guidance
- Help navigating the accreditation process
- Goal setting and action planning
- Connections to resources and supports
- Ongoing encouragement and accountability
- Accreditation fee scholarships

National accreditation
is one pathway to
achieving **Stage 3:**
Excelling in Quality in
the new Montana
Treasures QRS system

***Whether you're just exploring accreditation or ready to begin,
we're here to help.***

Accreditation Mentorship Program

Not quite ready yet?

That's okay! Quality improvement can happen in many ways.

Supports Available in Montana:

- Use quality standards and assessment tools for self-reflection
- Connect with a SPARK TA Specialist to work through ERS
- Complete a Program Growth Tool (to be launched soon)
- Participate in coaching sessions
- Explore professional development and training opportunities
- Develop SMART goals and improvement plans based on assessment tools of your choice.

Many of these supports also align with Montana Treasures Stage 2 quality recognition pathways.

Accreditation is simply one pathway programs may choose when they are ready



Connecting to the MT System

If your program wants to strengthen...	Consider connecting with...
Learning environments, classroom interactions, and ERS	SPARK Technical Assistance Specialists
National quality standards and accreditation	MTAEYC Accreditation Mentorship Program
Business practices, sustainability, and program operations	Zero to Five Montana Business Supports
Professional development and workforce education	MTECP Scholarships; Higher Education Partners
Family child care quality and networking	Montana Family Child Care Network (MFCN)
Licensing questions and regulatory compliance	DPHHS Child Care Licensing
Inclusion and developmental supports	Child Care Training (CCT); Montana Milestones

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Goal Setting Activity

Worksheet focused on:

- Using one or more of the tools
- Exploring accreditation or the new QRS system



Wrap-Up

- Thoughts?
 - Questions?
 - Comments?
- 



Thank You!

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Montana Association for the
Education of Young Children