

# PRESCHOOL FOOD INITIATIVE RATING CONDENSED MATRIX DESCRIPTION

A detailed description of the condensed table of standards and practices promoted and taught by the Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative.

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# Preschool Food

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## Preschool Food & Healthy Habits (PFI) Rating Description for 2013 *Short* Matrix

### Purpose

The Rating Matrix provides both a guide and a target for child care centers who want to improve the food and physical activity practices of their program. Preschool Food Initiative where designated.

### Original Structure

The original “Long” Rating Matrix is organized according to nine subject areas:

1. **Food Quality Standards** (minimally-processed, healthful)
2. **Mealtime Practices** (using meal time as teaching time)
3. **Food Purchasing and Acquisition** (policies exist to ensure quality food)
4. **Staff Training** (PFI, Gardens, Curriculum Webbing, Communication)
5. **Educating Children** (teaching where food comes from)
6. **Physical Activity** – (program policies, yard design, teacher practices and children’s activities that support movement throughout the day)
7. **Food Literacy** – (information provided to parents in English and Spanish)
8. **Gardens** – (center of children’s education and source of food)
9. **Parents and Families** – (participation activities for parents and families)
10. **Nursing Mothers-Breastfeeding** – encouraged (location & expressing milk)

### Revised “Short” Matrix Structure

As of 2013, the following will be included in the narrower PFI Matrix focus:

1. **Food Quality Standards** (minimally-processed, healthful)
2. **Environmental Stewardship (previously Mealtime Practices-** using meal time as an opportunity to teach environmental standards)
3. **Physical Activity** – (program policies, yard design, teacher practices and children’s activities that support movement throughout the day), includes “Hydration”
4. **Gardens** – (center of children’s education)
5. **Parents & Families** – (Impact on child and family behavior at home)

### Rating Process

A combination six- and four-point rating scale allows center staff or an outside evaluator to determine the level a center has achieved on 8 separate items within the five subject areas



### **How the Matrix Can Be Used**

The Matrix is used in several ways. Initially, it is used by center staff to identify their center's level of development. This allows them to identify areas they wish to develop further and organize an approach to working with them. The matrix is also used by staff of the PFI Project to conduct a similar evaluation and better support that center's efforts in development. Finally, the Matrix is used by PFI Initiative staff to determine the level of achievement by a center and acknowledge that level of achievement through a tiered recognition process similar to that of the Outdoor Classroom Demonstration Site process.

### **Description of Matrix Items**

#### **Items 1 & 2 Rating Categories**

1- *No Guide* – The center provides no guidance of any kind regarding this item.

2 - *Verbal Guide* – The center provides some level of verbal guidance regarding this item; however, the guidance does not adequately meet PFI criteria.

3 - *Verbal Guide Criteria* – The center provides specific verbal guidance regarding this item that is perceived to meet PFI criteria, however the guidance is not written down.

4 - *Written Guide* – The center provides some level of written guidance regarding this item; however, the guidance does not adequately meet PFI criteria.

5 - *Written Guide Criteria* – The center provides specific written guidance regarding this item that is perceived to meet PFI criteria.

6 - *Written Guide & Parent Education* – In addition to specific written guidance regarding this item that is perceived to meet PFI criteria, the information is made available to parents either through a written communication like a parent handbook or through a handout at a pre-enrollment, parent orientation or parent meeting that is held annually.

#### **1. Food Quality Standards**

*Lunches/Meals primarily prepared on site OR Lunches/Meals primarily prepared off site (vendor) OR Lunches primarily brought prepared from home* – Please reference the PFI nutrition guide below to identify if PFI criteria are met.

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*Snack (regardless of source)* – Please reference the PFI nutrition guide to identify if PFI criteria are met.

### **The Nutrition Guide**

The “PFI Criteria” for healthy food is as follows:

- Whole
- Unprocessed
- Unpackaged
- No additives (artificial anything)
- No added sugars
- Locally grown
- “Organic”

### **2. Environmental Stewardship**

*Recyclable utensils & dishes used by children* – Where non-reusable utensils, cups and dishes are used, they are recycled. Children actively participate in this program (seen as part of clean-up process).

*Center-wide recycle program is in place* – Recycle containers are placed in every room of the center or outside area where children eat meals. The center has a plan and practice in place whereby glass, metal, paper and plastic are recycled. Children actively participate in this program, as appropriate.

### **Items 6, 8, & 9 General Rating Categories**

*1 - Never* – This item is never acted on

*2 – Seldom* – This item is seldom acted on

*3 - A # of times* – This item has been acted on a number of times

*4 - Regularly* – This item is acted on a regular basis

or you may use:

*1 - No Action* – No action is being taken regarding the item

*2 - Talk About* – Staff discuss ways of taking action regarding the item

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3 - *Some Action* – Staff are taking action regarding the item but the action is not fully implemented on a regular basis

4 - *Much Action* – Staff are fully implementing the item on a regularly occurring and ongoing basis. (This would usually mean either daily or weekly.)

#### **4. Staff are trained in Food Quality Standards**

Staff know, understand, and follow the PFI food quality standards (Nutrition Guide). They know how to translate them into which foods to select and have children to eat.

#### **6. Physical Activity**

*Policy/practices about outdoor programming* – The center has an outdoor program in place that supports children’s physical activity. This program is articulated to staff and parents and is reflected in center practice. The design of the facility supports physical activity. There is open/safe space for running. There is outdoor storage of items that support physical activity. Gross motor play area can be directly accessed from the classroom. Children can be seen running, using their upper bodies, and generally engaging in vigorous physical activity on a daily basis. Teachers are consistently physically active and engaged with the children in their play and/or activities. Teachers set-up and participate with children in age-appropriate physical activities that give children opportunities to increase skill levels. Again, teachers are seen as role models for children. Children are outdoors a minimum of two hours per day for full day programs and one hour per day for half day programs. Additional ways to accomplish this is to see that all learning can occur outdoors (can include eating outdoors, gardening activities, etc.). On any given day, a minimum of three gross motor and three other types of activities are available outdoors. To qualify, “gross motor activities” should not be teacher-directed or led. Children are encouraged and supported to be outside during inclement weather that is otherwise safe (examples of unsafe outdoor conditions could be poor air quality conditions that are smoky or so windy as to bring down tree branches).

*Drinking water is readily available* – For older children capable of drinking on their own, water is readily available inside and out; for younger children not capable of drinking without assistance, staff is aware of the need to offer water regularly and do so.

*Drinking water is encouraged* – Reminding children of the opportunity to drink water is a consistent practice of all staff.

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## **8. Gardens**

*Year round productive garden is in place* – The center has an active, year-round garden that can be accessed by a minimum of 20% of the children who might use play yard at any given time.

The garden may be in one location or in several. It can be in any form such as raised beds, boxes, or at ground level.

*Garden-related curriculum provided year long* – Curriculum activities related to the garden (i.e., science, math, literacy) occur on a weekly basis throughout the year.

*Gardens are pesticide & chemical free* – No pesticides or other dangerous chemicals are used in the garden. Gardens are “organic”.

## **9. Parents and Families**

*Children/families home eating habits improve* – As a result of healthy food and activity practices at the center, children and their families establish more healthy eating habits at home. The specific items to be measured are 1) Eating less fast food; 2) Drinking less sugary drinks such as soda pop or sweetened juices. [Note: Testing this will require a brief survey]

*Children/families spend more time outside* – As a result of healthy food and activity practices at the center, children and their families spend more time physically active outdoors [Note: Testing this will require a brief survey]