

Durham Region Operating Criteria (DROC) Glossary

Words/Terms	Definitions
Accessible	Open for children to use independently without having to ask for help. They must be able to reach the item, and open and handle it independently.
Accessible resources	Resources that are independently accessible to families. Can be offered as hardcopies, via online apps, web links or emailed at least every four months. Note: If only providing one copy of a resource, the resource is required to have a QR code or a website.
Art equipment and material	For example, paper, crayons, pencil crayons, paint, brushes, glue, playdough. Note: Art materials and equipment need to be available in the program space.
Attendance	Children's attendance is recorded on the main attendance record promptly upon arrival and departure.
Auditory schedule	An auditory schedule uses spoken words and/or sounds, along with pictures or objects, to help guide someone through their daily activities. It shows what they need to do next, what they have already finished and helps them stay organized, independent, and calm by giving information through both hearing and seeing.
Available	Items that can be found in the program space with assistance from educators.
Bedding	Coverings for a bed, such as sheets and blankets. Note: All cots/cribs must have a sheet provided by the centre. A blanket/sheet to cover children who want to use one may be provided either by the centre or families.
Block and construction accessories	Learning materials that can be combined with blocks/construction materials to enhance the play experience. For example, race tracks, cars, play people, farmhouses and animals.
Block and construction materials	Different sizes and types of blocks. For example, wooden blocks, Duplo, K'nex, cardboard blocks, foam blocks, squishy blocks, home-made blocks.
Book accessories	Supplementary items that accompany or enhance the experience of reading or personalizing books. For example, puppets, flannel boards and flannel pieces, finger puppets, stuffed animals, magnetic boards and pieces, play people.
Cause and effect	A learning experience teaching that one action (the cause) leads to a result (the effect). For example, pop-up toys, ring stackers, shape sorters, stacking cups, magnets, puzzles.
Child-sized sink	A sink in which children can independently reach and use the faucet. It is acceptable to use a one-step step stool or a two-step step stool with handrails to support children's independence.
Child's eye-level	The height at which materials, visuals or activities are placed so they can be easily seen, reached and engaged with by children.

Children's cues	Non-verbal ways children show what they need or how they feel. These can include facial expressions, body movements, sounds and gestures. For example, a child might suck their fist when hungry, rub their eyes when tired, arch their back when overstimulated, or smile and make happy sounds when they want to play.
Cognitive materials	Play materials designed to stimulate and support mental processes like thinking, problem-solving, memory and creativity, helping build knowledge and understanding of the world. They encourage exploration, experimentation and abstract reasoning, enabling children to organize information, make connections and develop deeper understanding beyond mere repetition. These materials support the development of cognitive skills. For example, counting and sorting games, puzzles, braille puzzles, cause and effect toys, loose parts and interactions with the outdoor environment.
Consistently	Happening in the same way most of the time.
Cribs/cots	Different types of beds that provide children with the opportunity to rest.
Daily information chart	Individual documentation that includes the following information: all food consumed, time and duration of sleep, information regarding interactions and/or specific experiences they were engaged in, and time/type of diaper changes (wet/soiled) and/or toileting (based on toilet training schedule specific to individual children).
Daily schedule	A written schedule that lists when activities and events will occur during the day and is posted in a place accessible to families and educators.
Developmentally appropriate	Intentional practices, learning experiences and materials that meet the needs that of all the children within the environment, play materials and learning experiences.
Diapering procedures	Current Durham Region Health Department procedures for the diapering process that are posted in the diapering area for reference.
Diapering supplies	Materials required for the diapering process: hand soap, toilet paper, paper towels, diapers, pull-ups, change table. Note: The top of the diaper change table is not used as storage when not in use.
Display	Anything posted on the walls, furniture, photo frames and/or in digital photo frames.
Electronic media usage	Refers to any screen time for children. For example, watching TV/movies on a television, personal devices, computers, handheld devices, game systems, tablets and laptops.
Enhanced language learning	Learning through meaningful conversations that help children learn new words, understand longer sentences and practice talking with others. This can include describing what is happening during the day, asking open-ended questions and encouraging children to take turns in conversations. These experiences help build early reading skills, social skills and thinking skills.
Enrichment program	Unique learning experiences that go above and beyond the regular program. For example, monthly music teacher, yoga instruction, creative movement instruction, a children's workshop.

Evidence	Written or visual documentation to support completion of expectation.
Family structures	Describes the composition and relationships within a family unit, encompassing various configurations like two-parent families, single parent families, 2SLGBTQIA+ families, blended families, couples, multi-generational families, grandparent-led families, alternative family forms living in one household.
Flexibility	Being able to change plans, activities and teaching methods to meet the different needs of children. This could include adjusting the pace of an activity, responding to children's requests, offering different materials or trying new strategies when something isn't working. Being flexible helps children stay engaged, supports their learning and comfort, and reduces stress for educators. It also means responding to unexpected changes in the day, like emotions, routines or energy levels, to create a caring, inclusive environment.
Floor coverings	Floor coverings are materials placed on the floor to make a space safer, cleaner and more comfortable. These can include rugs, mats, carpets or foam tiles. They help create cozy play areas and make the program space welcoming for young children.
Furnishings	Furnishings are the pieces of furniture used in a space. This includes things like shelves, tables, chairs, cubbies and seating. Good furnishings are child-sized, easy to reach, and help create a comfortable, organized and welcoming environment for young children.
Gender identity	Gender identity is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. (Ontario Human Rights Commission).
Gross motor equipment	Materials and tools designed to support children's large-muscle movement, co-ordination, balance and physical activity. This can include things like climbers, slides, balls, balance beams, riding toys and tunnels.
Hazards	Anything that is potentially dangerous to the children. For example, worn/frayed carpet, broken chairs, unstable change table, chipping paint, uncovered electric outlets, easy access to cleaning supplies, accessible sharp utensils or medications, or disorganization that affects the safety of children (such as chairs stacked too high, toys piled on shelves).
Homemade books	Books that educators or children create themselves using paper, photos, drawings or printed pictures.
Homework materials	Supplies children need to work on their school assignments. These can include things like pencils, erasers, paper, crayons, rulers and simple reference books.
Hygienic	Anything done to maintain cleanliness. For example, removing tape residue from shelves, mirrors and windows; cleaning spills and dirt; washing/sanitizing tables before eating; and following the current Regional Public Health cleaning guidelines.
Inclement weather	Weather conditions that are severe or unsafe, such as heavy rain, thunderstorms, high winds, extreme cold or heat, or poor air quality. Inclement weather may require modifying outdoor plans or moving activities indoors to ensure children's safety.

Inclusive	Removing barriers and giving all children fair access to materials, activities and support. It means recognizing and supporting the many different groups of children and families in the community, so everyone feels welcome, respected and able to participate.
Individual Children's Schedules	Child-specific information about their daily needs. For example, eating habits, sleep routines, toileting information, likes/dislikes, general disposition or special care routines. Note: It is expected that there is an individual schedule for each child (enrolled in Infant and Toddler programs) to ensure individual needs are being met. Individual schedules must show evidence that they are based on the children's developmental stages and cues, and must be available to the educators in the program space.
Individual needs	Understanding and supporting what makes each child unique. This includes their strengths, interests, learning styles (like learning by seeing, hearing or doing), temperament, and any social, emotional or physical support they may need. This means implementing activities and routines that help every child feel included, supported and able to do their best. Educators use developmentally appropriate practices and may use an Individual Support Plan (ISP) to make sure each child can learn and thrive.
Language and literacy toys	Encourage children's learning about reading, writing or communication through interactive play materials. Any play materials that include letters and/or numbers.
Language and literacy learning experiences	Learning experiences focusing on reading, writing, storytelling and/or communication. For example, labelling games, audio books, reading books, singing songs, telling stories, reading recipes, exploring menus.
Learning area	An area in the program space that is intentionally set-up with similar play materials to support the focus. For example, the creative art learning area includes all the required accessible materials.
Learning areas are documented	Refers to emergent programming and used in centres that use an emergent curriculum model. Note: Learning experiences must be documented by the end of each day; however, learning experiences should be planned for the first day of each week. The previous week's programming will be reviewed to ensure experiences are documented for all learning areas.
Learning areas are planned	Refers to pre-planned learning experiences based on the current observations and interests of the children.
Learning experiences	Activities and moments that help children explore, discover and build new skills, such as playing with toys, reading books, engaging in creative experiences, exploring outdoors and/or playing individually or together with peers. Learning experiences are planned and/or documented to support children's development—helping them grow socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually—while having fun and feeling safe.

Learning opportunity/outcome	<p>The learning outcomes (skill being enhanced/learned) of planned and/or documented learning experiences. For example, ELECT (4.6 Object Permanence), High Scope, Play to Learn, Montessori.</p> <p>Note: A learning opportunity must be included weekly for every learning area for full day programs (Infant, Toddler, Preschool) and at least one daily for Before and After School programs.</p>
Literacy materials	<p>Tools and resources that help young children learn about reading, writing and communication. These can include books, alphabet cards, markers, pencils, paper, labels, story props and pictures. Literacy materials encourage children to explore language, build vocabulary, recognize letters and words, and enjoy stories in fun and meaningful ways.</p>
Main attendance record	<p>A permanent method of recording and verifying children’s daily arrival and departure times. The main attendance record is completed in pen or through a digital program that captures the daily arrival and departure times.</p> <p>Note: The main attendance record must always accompany the whole group. It must reflect the names of children who have left the program space/group for small group learning experiences.</p>
Manipulative materials	<p>Hands-on objects that support children with the development of fine motor skills. For example, lacing beads; sewing cards; shape sorters; large, knobbed puzzles; real materials, such as nuts and bolts, things you collect on a walk.</p>
Math concepts	<p>Ideas that help young children understand numbers, shapes, patterns and how things relate to each other. Children learn math concepts through everyday play—counting blocks, sorting toys by size or colour, comparing amounts, building patterns or talking about shapes. These experiences help children develop problem-solving skills and prepare them for more advanced math in the future.</p>
Multimedia	<p>Different types of media – pictures, videos, music, stories and interactive tools – to help children learn and explore. Multimedia can include things like songs, digital books, simple videos, audio recordings, or interactive screens used in a safe and balanced way.</p>
Music	<p>Music can include visual music and vibration that support a wide range of abilities and disabilities. Music and lyrics must be age-appropriate with no advertisements.</p>
Music accessories	<p>Items to enhance music learning experiences. For example, headphones, musical instruments, CDs/books, puppets, scarves, ribbons, shakers, microphones.</p>
Natural elements/objects/materials	<p>Items that come from nature, used in programs to help children learn and explore. These can include things like rocks, sticks, leaves, shells, pinecones, sand, water and plants.</p>
Non-binary	<p>Describes a person whose gender is not only male or female. A non-binary person may feel like both, neither or somewhere in between. Being respectful of non-binary people means using the name and pronouns they choose and making sure everyone feels safe, accepted and included, no matter their gender identity.</p>

Non-instructional day	Full days children are in the program, such as summer, PA Days, March Break and seasonal holidays.
Non-verbal interactions	Communication through actions, expressions and cues instead of words. Includes facial expressions, body language, body contact, eye contact, personal space and tone of voice.
Pedagogical documentation	A way educators observe, record, and share what children are learning and doing. This can include photos, notes, children's work, videos or quotes. Educators use this documentation to understand each child's interests and development, plan future activities and show families how their children are growing. It helps make learning visible and guides educators in supporting children in meaningful ways.
Physical environment	The program space where children spend their time.
Picture symbol schedule	A picture symbol schedule is a type of visual schedule that uses images or icons to represent a sequence of activities or events. It acts as a "roadmap" for the day, providing structure and predictability. It is especially beneficial for individuals who process visual information more effectively than verbal instructions.
Planned and/or documented	Written evidence that reflects the learning experiences facilitated by educators.
Planned and/or documented physical play experiences	Learning experiences that encourage large muscle movement. For example, an obstacle course, pulling wagons, bowling, yoga, crawling through tunnels, breathing exercises, rolling balls, pushing carts. These experiences build strength, co-ordination, body awareness and confidence, forming a foundation for physical and cognitive development.
Portable attendance	A record of attendance that accompanies a small group of children when they are in a different program space. For example, going to the gym. Note: Not required for short transitions but must accompany any split groups for extended experiences.
Portfolios	Collections of a child's work and learning that are gathered over time. They can include drawings, photos, writing, artwork, observations, and notes about what the child is learning and enjoying. Portfolios include a minimum of two or more types of the following items: developmental reviews, artwork, photographs, observations, pedagogical documentation.
Positive and safe space	A place where children feel happy, protected and welcomed. The environment is clean, calm, and safe, and children know that adults will help them if they need it. It is also a place where everyone is treated with kindness and respect, differences are accepted and children feel comfortable being themselves. A positive and safe space helps children learn, play and grow with confidence.
Posted	Visually accessible to the children, families and educators in the program space or at the entrance to the program space.
Preferred language	The language an individual chooses to use for communication, whether spoken, written or signed. It reflects the person's comfort, fluency, or cultural preference and should be used whenever possible to support inclusion, understanding and effective communication.

Pretend play accessories	Play materials used to extend imaginative play and role-playing possibilities. For example, dress-up clothes, puppets, menus, food, toy appliances and furniture (such as a stove, table/chairs, doctor's kits, cash register, dishes, workbench).
Print materials	Physical items made of paper that have words and pictures on them. Examples include magazines, posters, flyers and brochures. These materials use age-appropriate language, visuals and layout to support early literacy, learning, engagement and understanding.
Process art	Open-ended process where children can freely engage with art materials and express themselves individually and creatively.
Product art	Specific materials are presented to the children and there is a finished end product in mind by the educator.
Program plan	Describes the specific learning experiences planned for children or documented by the end of the day in each curriculum area. It is different from a schedule in that it includes details of each learning experience. The program plan is unique to each individual centre/agency or program and reflects their curriculum model and philosophy. The program space has a program plan for both indoor and outdoor experiences that is reflective of the children enrolled in each particular program.
Program space	The space/room where children spend the majority of the day.
Prop boxes	Bins filled with materials and toys for a specific focus. For example, a "paint store" prop box may include rollers, paint brushes, cash register, money and smocks.
Props	Objects and materials that children use to support imaginative scenarios and role-playing. In pretend play, these props provide tangible tools that help children explore, experiment, and express themselves in engaging and realistic ways.
Range	Two or more items.
Repeatedly	Happening three or more times.
Role models	People children look up to and learn from by watching their actions and behaviour. Role models can be educators, caregivers, older children or other trusted adults who show kindness, respect, honesty and helpfulness. Good role models teach children how to solve problems, treat others well and make positive choices by showing these behaviours in their everyday interactions.
Rotational play materials	Stored play materials available to rotate within the program space to allow children new and novel experiences, supporting ongoing engagement.
Round bullet (O)	Indicates the sub-item may not be applicable. This can include Nursery School programs operating less than six hours per day, summer programs with rotating children, etc.
Routine care practices	Consistent daily actions and interactions to support children's health, safety, comfort, hygiene, nutrition, rest, emotional security, and overall well-being, while also promoting learning, independence, and positive relationships.

Schedule (toy washing)	Toys and play equipment washing plan is available and followed as per Regional Public Health requirements. Note: Dated schedule with sign-off (signature or initials) completed by educators for all play materials. It is not acceptable to sign and date the schedule ahead of time.
Science and nature equipment and materials	Items that facilitate hands-on exploration, observation, and experimentation with the physical and natural world, encouraging curiosity and the development of key scientific skills. For example, bottles filled with natural items, magnifying glasses, plants, coloured lenses, volcanoes, tornado bottles.
Segregated manner	Kept separate, apart or isolated from a main group. Segregating displays of certain sociocultural identities or ranges of abilities is not appropriate; these should be integrated throughout the program space.
Sensory equipment	Equipment to use sensory materials on/in. For example, sensory table, light tables, texture walls/boards. Note: Must be open at all times with the exception of lunch and sleep time.
Sensory materials	Items that engage the senses (touch, sight, sound, smell, taste, balance) to promote development, learning and calming. For example, textured material in a bin, shredded paper, sensory boards, shaker bottles.
Sensory learning experiences	Planned and/or documented learning experiences referring to one or more of the five senses: taste, sight, touch, smell and hearing.
Sing	Includes chants, humming, rapping.
Small groups	Grouping by small ratios. For example one educator with a group of up to three infants (1:3), five toddlers (1:5), eight preschool children (1:8), thirteen kindergarten children (1:13 - 44 months or older but younger than seven years), 15 primary/junior school-age children (1:15 - 68 months or older but younger than 13 years) or 20 junior school-age children (1:20 - nine years or older but younger than 13 years).
Sociocultural identities	Representation of Indigenous peoples and cultures, different ethnicities, races, languages, sexual orientations and diverse gender identities.
Soft seating	Soft seating refers to comfortable furniture – sofas, chairs and cushions – to make the area comfortable for children to sit and browse language and literacy materials.
Soiled	Objects that are dirty or that children have sneezed on or mouthed.
Some/sometimes	25 per cent of the equipment and/or materials and/or 25 per cent of the day/time.
Special interest groups/clubs	Optional groups for children that are dedicated to a particular interest or activity, with experiences going above and beyond regular experiences. For example, skating club, karate lessons, Lego club or knitting club.
Spontaneous resources	Materials or items that educators use in the moment, based on children's interests or something unexpected that happens. Spontaneous resources help educators turn everyday moments into learning opportunities by following the children's curiosity and encouraging

	exploration and creativity. For example, if a child has expressed an interest in trains, the educator may provide trains/tracks, books and/or dress-up clothes from the cupboard to the child.
STEAM	STEAM refers to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.
Sufficient	Enough toys and equipment for the number of children who want to use them.
Terms of endearment	Words or phrases expressing love, affection or fondness, used to address people, pets or even objects. For example, "honey," "darling," "sweetheart" or animal-based names like "bunny" or "bear." It is important that all children receive equal levels of affection, and respect is shown for their preferred names and pronouns.
Three-dimensional display	Materials that children create to help them learn by building things they can see and touch. These materials have depth, height and width. They are usually made from recycled items like cardboard boxes, paper towel rolls, tissue boxes and/or yogurt containers, instead of flat, two-dimensional paper.
Toileting picture symbol schedule	Posted in the washroom and shows children what steps to follow when they are in the washroom, including how to use the toilet.
Toileting procedures	Current Durham Region Health Department procedures for the toileting process that are usually posted in the washroom for reference.
Toileting supplies	Hand soap, toilet paper, paper towel,
Toys and equipment	All toys, play materials and equipment that are accessible to the children. For example, pretend play furniture, large blocks, indoor riding toys.
Transitional play materials	Play materials that help children move calmly and easily from one activity to another. They reduce confusion and keep children focused, engaged or comforted. Examples include special transition objects (like a favorite toy or soft fabric square), sensory tools (like textured balls or calming scents) or simple books. These materials help children adjust to different parts of the day or new routines.
Transitions	When children move from one learning experience to another.
Variety	Three or more items.
Verbally verified	Educators broadcast to their team any changes in attendance. For example, children arriving and leaving, small group transitions, as well as educator arrivals or departures.
Visual attendance	A way of taking attendance using pictures, symbols or written names. Children may show they are at child care by moving their photo or name to a special spot, which helps them feel independent and learn to recognize their own name. It also gives educators a quick and easy way to see which children are present. Note: The visual attendance board must always show the correct children who are there that day.

Visual music	Imagery based on music and/or sound; it often uses colour or shapes to depict sounds. For example, music videos with sign language, using instruments that are tactile to create vibrations, or music videos with colours.
Visual/Auditory Schedule	A Visual/Auditory Schedule shows the main routines of the day using photos, symbols and/or sound cues. Note: It must be accessible to children at all times, whether posted or kept in a photo album, ring holder or similar format. Schedules should be adapted as needed to support diverse abilities, such as using braille, tactile elements or auditory formats.
Visual Schedule	Real photos showing when activities and events will occur during the day.
Written verification of attendance	Can refer to children's transitions or educator transitions. Educators check the main attendance record against the number of children physically in the program space for accuracy. This verification must indicate the number of children present, the time of verification and the initial of the educator doing the verification. This does not include random head counts unless it is identified as a group transition.