



December 2025

Leadership and Management Standards Self-Assessment:

A self-assessment tool for
professionals responsible for
leading organizations,
teams and other Early
Care and Education
professionals



Aligned with the competencies in the Leadership Essentials
Domain within the New Jersey Early Childhood Director and
Administrator Competencies.

This resource is made possible by funding from Grow New Jersey Kids/ NJ Dept.
of Human Services (DHS)/Division of Family Development (DFD)



Purpose:

This self-assessment reflects on the Leadership Essentials Domain as outlined in the New Jersey Director and Administrator Competencies and the Leadership and Management knowledge and competencies, or skills, and dispositions which build upon those within the Technical Assistance Standards. It is intended to be used as a self-assessment for identifying strengths or areas of expertise and identifying specific knowledge, skills and dispositions that can benefit from additional practice and make your leadership more impactful and effective. Using this resource in conjunction with the Leadership Reflection Tool creates a reflective activity for identifying areas for growth, supporting goal development and identifying key strategies for achieving set goals.

Instructions:

There are four standard areas: supervision approaches, processes within supervision, professionalism, and systems knowledge. Under each area and standard, you will find knowledge and competencies. There are also five sets of dispositions: caring, communicative, creative, critical, professional. Under each disposition you will find a list of qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors that characterize this set of dispositions. Use the below self-assessment process to work through the different standards and dispositions, completing it over a period of several days or one standard area or set of dispositions at a time.

Self-Assessment Process:

- 1. Assess:** Carefully read through the related knowledge and competency for each standard. Use the self-assessment tool to evaluate whether that standard is an area you feel highly skilled, proficient, or is a skill area that is emerging or area of growth as it relates to your practice. If you are not sure what is meant by a particular standard, indicate that it is an area that needs development. It is expected that even after many years as a professional, one would still have much more to learn as we are all life-long learners. Use the same process for assessing dispositions.
- 2. Reflect:** After each set of competencies/dispositions, place a checkmark next to a few that you want to highlight as being highly skilled and proficient. Next, look at those identified as emerging and areas for growth. Circle one or two that you want to consider for developing a goal around and work toward with additional support. Write them in the space and any notes you want to keep in mind.
- 3. Plan:** Use the SOAR framework to reflect on your self-assessment results a bit more deeply, specifically those areas/skills listed in the space provided after each area, and create SMART goals related to two knowledge/competencies and one related to a disposition quality and/or behavior.

Self-Assessment Ratings:

Highly Skilled (HS):

Exceeds expectations with deep understanding and exemplary application of the skill. Serves as a model for others and may support peers in developing this competency.

Proficient (P):

Demonstrates solid understanding and consistent application of the skill. Meets expectations and standards for early childhood professionals with minimal support.

Emerging (E):

Beginning to develop the skill with some understanding and partial application. Shows progress but still needs consistent practice and support to reach proficiency.

Area of Growth (AG):

Demonstrates limited understanding or application of the skill. Requires guidance and support to meet expectations. Improvement is needed to align with professional standards.



L&M Standards Area 1: Supervision Approaches

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams effectively utilize approaches to supervision and meets expectations of requirements, systems, standards, and credentials specific to managing administrative duties and building capacity in others.

1.1 Relationship-based practice

Knowledge: Understands that trust is essential for staff to feel safe, take risks, grow, and reach their full potential.

Competency: Builds strong relationships with staff by using trust-based principles—creating rapport, shared goals, and identifying strengths and individualized supports to encourage growth.

1.2 Communication

Knowledge: Understands how to use effective communication when working with adults.

Competency: Models active listening and uses different communication strategies to meet staff needs.

1.3 Contextual understanding of staff

Knowledge: Understands how staff experiences, values, and context influence their work.

Competency: Shows respect for staff by recognizing their roles, experiences, and values in both personal and professional contexts.

1.4 Contextual understanding of adult developmental stages, the role of the supervisor, and the workplace culture

Knowledge: Understands how trust, shared values, and strong relationships shape workplace culture and help staff reach their full potential.

Competency: Uses supervisory role to support strong relationships and a positive workplace culture where staff can grow and learn.

1.5 Cultural and linguistic appropriateness

Knowledge: Understands the importance of being culturally and linguistically sensitive when working with staff.

Competency: Chooses strategies and resources that match staff's learning style, culture, language, and preferences to provide supports that fit their needs and build on their strengths.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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1.6 Use of mentoring, coaching, and management strategies

Knowledge: Understands when and how to use coaching, mentoring, and management strategies based on best practices.

Competency: Applies coaching, mentoring, and management strategies thoughtfully to meet staff and supervisory needs.

1.7 Mentoring

Knowledge: Understands that mentoring is a collaborative process that supports staff development and aligns with their personal and career goals.

Competency: Uses mentoring strategies that promote individual growth and empower staff.

1.8 Coaching

Knowledge: Recognizes that coaching is a targeted approach to help individuals and teams achieve specific goals.

Competency: Uses coaching strategies to support individual and team growth through collaborative plans and progress checks.

1.9 Management

Knowledge: Understands how to use management strategies for technology, administrative tasks, policies, schedules, and reports to solve problems, improve efficiency, and complete work.

Competency: Applies management strategies to oversee and monitor administrative tasks and resources needed to accomplish job responsibilities.

1.10 Conflict resolution

Knowledge: Understands conflict resolution models and strategies.

Competency: Uses conflict resolution strategies to support a positive workplace culture, including aligning communication style with intent, active listening, and collaborating with staff to find solutions.

1.11 Convenes and facilitates ongoing adult learning in a community

Knowledge: Understands social learning theories and psychological safety as key to fostering team meetings that support individual and group growth.

Competency: Uses strategies that encourage social learning and create a safe environment for staff to learn and grow individually and as a team.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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Place a checkmark next to a few knowledge and/or competencies from this area that you want to highlight as being highly skilled and proficient.

Now look at those you indicated as emerging and needing development. Circle one or two that you want to consider for developing a goal around and work towards with additional supports.

Write them in the space below and any notes you want to keep in mind.

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L&M Standards Area 2: Processes within Supervision

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams have knowledge of processes within supervision.

2.1 Types of supervision

Knowledge: Understands the three types of supervision—administrative, clinical, and reflective—and their roles in providing intentional, goal-oriented supervision.

Competency: Effectively applies administrative, clinical, and reflective supervision to deliver thoughtful, intentional, and goal-focused support.

2.2 Accountability

Knowledge: Recognizes the importance of setting clear expectations and practicing accountability to assess staff performance.

Competency: Communicates expected results, provides guidelines and resources, and agrees on a process for accountability and performance review.

2.3 Reflective supervision

Knowledge: Understands the core elements of reflective supervision and how it supports relationship-based practices and staff development through individualized plans.

Competency: Provides reflective supervision that uses core elements, promotes relationship-based practices, and includes professional development plans to help staff achieve their goals.

2.4 Supporting staff's capacity (growth in skills, abilities, knowledge and dispositions)

Knowledge: Understands that supervisors provide support and identify strategies to build staff capacity.

Competency: Partners with staff to encourage insight, risk-taking, and activities that promote growth in skills, perspectives, and knowledge.

2.5 Staff advocacy

Knowledge: Recognizes when staff need help advocating for their needs and the available resources and connections to support them.

Competency: Connects staff to appropriate resources and organizational supports as needed.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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L&M Standards Area 3: Professionalism

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams conduct themselves in a respectful manner, exhibiting a professional philosophy consistent with the requirements and expectations of standards and characteristics of effective leadership.

3.1 Professional orientation: philosophy, responsibilities, boundaries, legal and ethical practice

Knowledge: Understands professional philosophy, guiding principles, legal requirements, ethical standards, and supervisory practices, including maintaining boundaries.

Competency: Consistently follows professional, ethical, and legal standards, including maintaining staff confidentiality.

3.2 Role in leading others through change

Knowledge: Describes the supervisor's direct and indirect roles in supporting professional expectations and recognizes their responsibility as a change catalyst and agent.

Competency: Applies appropriate theories and resources to help staff adapt to continuous improvement, fosters collaboration and innovation within the team and organization, and connects staff to additional resources as needed.

3.3 Roles of other staff and colleagues

Knowledge: Identifies and respects the roles of supervisors, TA Specialists, and colleagues, and collaborates with them to support the organization's goals.

Competency: Builds positive relationships with supervisors, TA Specialists, and colleagues through open communication and a strengths-based approach.

3.4 Managing supervision and leadership

Knowledge: Understands the importance of managing processes, protocols, reports, and timelines, and the role of leading others with purpose and meaning.

Competency: Manages supervisory tasks—such as processes, protocols, reporting, and timelines—while inspiring staff to connect with purpose and contribute individually and collectively.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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3.5 Self-assessment of knowledge and skills

Knowledge: Articulates knowledge and skills needed for intentional, goal-oriented supervision, including evidence-based methods in areas such as:

- Supervisory roles and responsibilities
- Building capacity in self and staff
- Leadership principles and styles
- Conducting Reflective supervision
- Adult learning principles
- Ages and stages related characteristics
- Personal intelligence
- Neuroscience and psychology research
- Leadership styles and frameworks

Competency: Recognizes personal strengths and areas for growth as a supervisor, stays current with best practices, and sets professional development goals to support continuous improvement.

3.6 Individual professional development for growth and skill building

Knowledge: Understands the value of resources and continuing education for supervisors to grow their knowledge and skills.

Competency: Continuously improves skills and performance through professional learning, self-reflection, journaling, participating in communities of practice, coaching, attending or presenting at conferences, joining professional organizations, and staying current with research and literature.

3.7 Current research and effective practice

Knowledge: Builds knowledge of current research and trends and their relevance to effective early care and education practices.

Competency: Applies research and trends in leadership, adult learning, coaching, mentoring, team building, positive work culture, and capacity building to supervisory practices.

3.8 Reflective practice

Knowledge: Understands the principles of reflective practice and how they strengthen professional relationships.

Competency: Promotes reflective practice by modeling it, creating opportunities for reflection, and sharing outcomes.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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3.9 Leadership

Knowledge: Understands that leadership is stewardship, not a position.

Competency: Practices leadership as stewardship by prioritizing service over self-interest, building relationships, and creating an environment that empowers and develops people.

3.10 Collaboration

Knowledge: Understands the principles of collaboration with peers, teams, administration, and other professionals inside and outside the organization.

Competency: Builds partnerships and collaborations to strengthen teams by sharing knowledge, skills, ideas, research, and best practices.

3.11 Self-care and wellness

Knowledge: Understands that staff bring their whole selves to work.

Competency: Promotes staff well-being by supporting self-care, building healthy relationships, and creating an environment that supports their total well-being and values their unique skills and strengths.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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Place a checkmark next to a few knowledge and/or competencies from this area that you want to highlight as being highly skilled and proficient. Now look at those you indicated as emerging and needing development. Circle one or two that you want to consider for developing a goal around and work towards with additional supports. Write them in the space below and any notes you want to keep in mind.



L&M Standards Area 4: Systems Knowledge

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams have knowledge of NJ's early childhood systems, resources, and regulations.

4.1 Knows early childhood and relevant systems and resources

Knowledge: Identifies local, regional, state, and national early childhood resources to support staff needs and interests.

Competency: Connects staff with key stakeholders and current resources within early childhood systems to meet their needs and interests.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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4.2 Needs assessment for systems improvement

Knowledge: Understands the importance of assessment for identifying staff and program needs, strengths, and challenges to improve policies and procedures.

Competency: Analyzes data from observations, notes, reports, and other sources, and shares results confidentially with leadership and stakeholders as appropriate.

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4.3 Connects data to systems

Knowledge: Knows how to use reliable, and valid assessment tools along with other methods to inform change at the team, organization, and system levels.

Competency: Applies data from reliable and valid assessments and other sources to inform change at team, organizational, and system levels.

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Dispositions: Caring

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams with this set of dispositions values and appreciates all aspects of the well-being of staff, peers, team, administration, and other professionals within and beyond one's organization. The following list comprises many but not all of the qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors that characterize a set of caring dispositions.

Empathetic: Identifies with and sees things from the perspective of others.

Compassionate: Sympathizes, often with a desire to understand and help improve conditions of others' lives.

Understanding: Develops appropriate relationships.

Respectful: Shows appropriate regard for the needs, ideas, and experiences of others.

Passionate: Demonstrates excitement, enthusiasm, and optimism for the people, content, and context of the learning process.

Culturally Humble: Commits to an ongoing process of self-reflection that includes recognizing one's own biases and power imbalances, approaching others with curiosity, respect, and an openness to understand their unique experiences and perspectives.

Patient: Interacts with others without becoming annoyed or anxious.

***Supportive:** Values others' well-being, creates a friendly atmosphere, and is attentive to their needs.

***Appreciative:** Notices and values the positive aspects of life and the contributions of others, helping others find value and strength even in negative situations.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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NOTE: Asterisked Dispositions below are those identified with effective leadership and management roles. They are in addition to those included in Technical Assistant Standards (TAS) and not asterisked.

Place a checkmark next to one or two dispositions from this area that you want to highlight as being highly skilled and proficient. Now look at those you indicated as emerging and needing development. Circle one you want to consider for developing a goal around and work towards with additional supports. Write it in the space and any notes you want to keep in mind.



Dispositions: Communicative

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams with this set of dispositions are sensitive to and skilled in the various aspects of human activity. They have effective interpersonal relationship skills and attitudes that foster collaborative enterprises useful in enhancing the teaching-learning process. The following list comprises many, but not all, of the qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors that characterize a set of communicative dispositions.

Present: Is keenly engaged in interactions and observations.

Responsive: Is inclined to act to best meet the needs, subtle as well as obvious, of others and their circumstances. Demonstrates responsiveness in multiple ways such as through a conversation or over time by, for example, providing follow up resources as needed.

Attentive: Pays attention to all aspects of communication and applies active listening techniques such as paraphrasing what the other person has said to ensure clear understanding.

Collaborative: Involves and works with others in planning, problem solving, and implementing effective practices.

Vocal: Is willing to openly and respond to peers, practitioners, administrators, and community.

***Approachable:** Engages in friendly, trustworthy, and non-judgmental attitudes, behaviors, and non-verbal cues, while remaining receptive to ideas and concerns.

***Authentic:** Actions align with core values and beliefs, accompanied by willingness to be vulnerable and take responsibility for mistakes.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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Dispositions: Creative

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams with this set of dispositions display the capacity to envision and craft things in novel and meaningful ways. The following list comprises many, but not all of the qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors that characterize a set of creative dispositions.

Flexible: Adapts, adjusts, and modifies practices to meet the needs of those with whom she/he is supervising or supporting; thinks on his/her feet; is comfortable with change.

Inventive: Uses the interests, preferences, and needs of staff to collaboratively design multiple strategies to support and generate novel solutions by combining imagination, openness to diverse perspectives, and a willingness to challenge established norms. Embraces calculated risk-taking, viewing challenges as opportunities for positive change and thrives on exploring unconventional ideas to create purposeful and innovative outcomes.

***Perseverance:** Has an unwavering commitment to goals and the ability to guide teams/others through challenges and setbacks; demonstrates resilience, maintains focus on long-term objectives, and models consistent effort even under pressure; inspires persistence in others, turning obstacles into opportunities and fostering a culture of determination and accountability.

***Pre-thinking:** Pauses to anticipate outcomes, consider long-term impacts, potential challenges and plans strategically before acting; thinks ahead, prepares for multiple scenarios, and makes decisions based on foresight rather than impulse.

***Observant:** Pays close attention to details and actively notices what is happening in their team, organization and environment; listens and watches before acting, striving for objectivity and minimizing bias for identifying patterns and making informed decisions.

***Divergent thinking:** Encourages creativity and values originality and curiosity, fostering an environment where diverse ideas are welcomed and encourages the generation of multiple solutions instead of settling for one “right” answer; challenges conventional thinking and inspires teams to explore new perspectives, driving innovation and growth.

***Forward-thinking:** Anticipates future challenges and opportunities, guiding decisions with long-term vision and strategic foresight; proactively plans, adapts to change, and inspires others to embrace innovation.

***Innovative:** Drives change by turning creative ideas into practical solutions that deliver impact, transforming bold ideas into results that create value for their team, organization, and stakeholders.

***Systemic thinker:** Sees problems and decisions in the context of the bigger picture, understands how parts of an organization connect and influence each other; anticipates long-term impacts and looks beyond quick fixes to address root causes; considers feedback loops, correlations, and unintended consequences, resulting in strategic decisions that strengthen the whole system rather than isolated components.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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Area of Growth (AG):

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Dispositions: Critical

Description: Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams with this set of dispositions have the ability to examine closely, to critique, and to ask questions. They do not accept the “status quo” at face value but employ higher-level thinking skills to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize. Self-evaluation and reflection characterize individuals with this set of dispositions.

Reflective: Consistently takes time to evaluate one’s leadership and management effectiveness and behavior in terms of his/her larger goals, nurtures reflectivity in staff and reflects on own growth and accountability.

Enterprising: Exhibits a willingness to pursue solutions to problems or questions, gathers relevant data and persistently seeks to improve situations or areas of need.

Open-minded: Exhibits an ability to look at different sides of an issue, recognizes the possibility of error in one’s own beliefs and practices and does not display or act upon prejudices against people or ideas.

Effective: Nurtures high expectations, demonstrates self-direction and confidence and encourages others to display their own skills and strengths.

Modest: Places the needs of the learner and/or learning task above their ego; reflects on their own growth and accountability.

***Courageous:** Has the confidence to make bold decisions and take principled action, even in the face of uncertainty or resistance; models integrity and resilience, inspires trust and empowers others to act with confidence and conviction; challenges the status quo, speaks up for what is right and embraces calculated risks to drive progress.

***Vulnerable:** Embraces openness and authenticity, shares uncertainties, admits mistakes, and seeks input without fear or judgement; builds trust by being transparent and approachable, creating a culture where others feel safe to speak up and take risks.

***Growth-Mindset:** Leads with the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort, learning, and resilience; embraces challenges, views setbacks as opportunities to grow and encourages continuous improvement for themselves and their teams; fosters a culture of learning, provides constructive feedback, and models adaptability- helping others build confidence and achieve their full potential.

***Transformative:** Articulates a bold vision, motivates with purpose and fosters creativity and critical thinking with a focus on driving meaningful, positive change by inspiring others and challenging the status quo; look beyond incremental improvements, aiming for deep shifts in beliefs and systems that unlock growth for individuals, teams, and organizations.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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***Transparent:** Is open, honest and communicates clearly; invites feedback; shares information openly, explains decisions clearly, and operates without hidden agendas; models accountability by making actions and responsibilities visible, aligning behavior with stated values, fostering trust through integrity.

HS	P	E	AG

Place a checkmark next to one or two dispositions from this area that you want to highlight as being highly skilled and proficient. Now look at those you indicated as emerging and needing development. Circle one you want to consider for developing a goal around and work towards with additional supports. Write it in the space below and any notes you want to keep in mind.



Dispositions: Professional

Description: These are general expected qualities and practices of all professionals, including Leaders responsible for an organization and/or teams.

Ethical and principled in person and profession: Commits to a specific set of values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect a high standard of ethics, competence, and responsibility in one's work; demonstrates integrity and adheres to standards established by the profession (i.e. the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct).

Responsible and reliable: Conducts work and related tasks in a reliable, thorough, and efficient manner; has strong work ethic; meets deadlines and consistently follows through on commitments and actions.

Discreet: Uses wisdom, thoughtfulness, and sound judgment in handling sensitive information and situations; complies with federal, state, and program policies regarding confidentiality, avoids gossip and communicates thoughtfully to prevent misunderstandings or harm.

Objective: Makes decisions based on facts, evidence, and logic rather than personal feelings or biases; remains impartial, considers multiple perspectives, and exercises professional boundaries for separating emotions from data to ensure fairness and accuracy.

***Empowering:** Trusts their teams' capabilities, provides access to information and resources, and delegates meaningful decision-making authority; encourages others to act with confidence, autonomy, and purpose.

***Enthusiastic:** Displays energy, optimism and passion that is contagious, driving team commitment, fostering confidence, and encouraging action.

***Inspiring:** Motivates and elevates others through vision, authenticity, and empathy; communicates a compelling purpose; creates trust and energizes teams to strive for excellence and positive change.

***Knowledgeable:** Fosters a culture of learning, encourages critical thinking by asking probing questions and models confidence in thoughtful, well-informed decision-making.

***Dependable:** Provides a stable, reliable presence that builds trust and confidence within their teams and organization.

Circle or highlight the rating that applies to you.

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Use the below SOAR framework (Stravros & Hinrichs, 2009) to reflect on your self-assessment results a bit more deeply, specifically those areas/skills listed in the boxes above and record your responses to the questions in the chart below. This reflective activity can assist you as you organize your thoughts, identify which knowledge, competency and disposition qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors you want to focus on for creating goals and plan for your professional growth and learning.

Strengths

What knowledge, competencies and dispositions are most effective for me right now, and how do I know?
What leadership qualities am I beginning to demonstrate more consistently?
What can be built on?

Aspirations

How do my aspirations align with my core values?
What goals would make me exceptionally proud?
What do I want to be known for as a leader?

Opportunities

What outcome or result would I like to achieve based on my areas of need?
How can I best meet the needs of my staff?
What new skills do I need to move forward?

Results

What result do I want to see by leverage my strengths, opportunities and aspirations for moving forward?
How will I track progress towards this goal?
How will I know if I have achieved this goal and accomplished what I want?

Now, create two SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) goals related to **knowledge/competencies** from the responses in the chart above, and which are priorities that are most important to you.

First Goal:

Second Goal:

Create one SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) goals related to a **disposition quality and/or behavior** from the responses in the chart above, and which is a priority that is most important to you.

Goal:

*Continue your professional journey with the Leadership Reflection Tool. This resource is designed to serve as a reflective thought partner to strengthen your skills in reflective practice, support implementation of new skills and practices and identify key strategies for achieving set goals.