

# A Road Map Through the NAEYC Accreditation Process

This tool is designed to integrate the many excellent information documents provided by NAEYC both in their publications, information on the Assessment Tools CD, and the online information at [www.naeyc.org/academy](http://www.naeyc.org/academy) and [www.naeyc.org/selfstudy](http://www.naeyc.org/selfstudy).

This tool is in no way a document that tells how you **MUST** go through the process. It is an attempt to help pull all the process information into one place.

## PRE-QUALIFICATION STEP: Administrator and Teaching Staff Qualifications

NAEYC has established baseline qualifications for administrators, teachers, and assistant teachers. If you are not in compliance with these qualifications, you will not be able to pass the “candidacy” step. Go to [www.naeyc.org/academy](http://www.naeyc.org/academy) and click on “information for programs”. Go next to “The 4 steps”. Then click on Step 3: Candidacy. The final click is on “meet candidacy requirements”, the first bullet in the text. **It is important to analyze your compliance or ability to come into compliance before starting the process.**

## STEP ONE: Enrolling in Self Study

You order the self study materials by using the form provided on line at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org). The cost depends on the number of children enrolled at your center. You can find those fees online.

### Beginning Self Study

1. Either use/copy the complete list of criteria from the publication “NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria” or create a document by copying all the criteria from the self study books that pertains to the age groups you are seeking to get accredited
  - a. Go thru this list and, at a very “gut” level, indicate whether you are in compliance, close to compliance, or need to get into compliance. Remember that you are allowed 20% non-compliance, so don’t get too concerned as you go through.
  - b. When you go back to tally your results, you will have a good sense of where you are already in good shape, what you have to work on, and what you might decide you will never be in compliance with
  - c. Doing this initially will help you to focus, take away some of the fear, and will give you a baseline as you start the other tools.

Because every criterion has a “source of evidence”, by completing each one of the provided tools, you will assess **every single criterion**. There is no need to use the self-study books to go through the criterion one by one. They are meant to be resources. By doing all the tools explained below, you will know which criterion you are in compliance with, and which criterion you need to work on.

2. Do the **Teaching Staff Survey**. You will find this on the Assessment Tools CD. This is the longer of the two with room for comments.
  - a How you do this is really up to the culture of your program. You know best. You could do this either all together at a staff meeting, send it home with the teachers, do it in individual classrooms if the teachers want to talk about it. Your choice, as long as many teachers are participating as possible, and it has been done in a very open and honest way.
  - b YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO SHOW THESE **STEP ONE** SURVEYS TO NAEYC.
  - c Use the results to help you plan the type of training your staff is requesting, to compare the results against your initial assessment, and compare to the family survey results.
3. Do the self-study **Family Survey**. You will find this on the Assessment Tools CD. This is the longer of the 2 family surveys and has room for comment.

Tips: Prepare your parents ahead of time. The week before you send it out, send out information on accreditation and why parent input is so important. You can find a pamphlet that will help at [www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org).

- a Offer some type of incentive for the parents to return the surveys (raffle, books, cash)
  - b There is no set % that you must get back, but you want to be sure you have enough to get a very good sense of what the parents are thinking. YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO SHOW THESE **STEP ONE** SURVEYS TO NAEYC.
4. Do the full **TOUR** checklist. You will find this on the CD. This will help you assess both what materials and supplies you might need to purchase and to identify any physical facility issues. YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO SHOW **THESE STEP ONE TOUR RESULTS** TO NAEYC.
5. While you are collecting the surveys, the **Classroom Observation** can begin. This tool is on the CD. Do what works best in your program. Either have the teachers in each classroom complete the checklist, or have one person do the observations in all classrooms. The Classroom Observations are supported by the **Classroom Portfolio**. If the assessor will not be able to observe a criterion, they will need to see evidence that you are in compliance. Create a system to collect documentation. Download the "Classroom Portfolio Guidance and Checklist" from [www.naeyc.org/selfstudy](http://www.naeyc.org/selfstudy). Many centers are setting up a filing system in the classroom with one file for each criterion on the checklist.
6. The program administrator or her/his designee will begin work on the **Program Portfolio**. This is basically all the documentation that supports the program (i.e. policies, procedures, fiscal information, licensing documents etc.) There is a full checklist, including exactly the way the Academy wants it set up, on the CD. You will find that you have most of these documents already if you are licensed and/or went through accreditation before.
7. The remaining assessments are of the **Child Files** and the **Teachers Files**. There is a checklist for both sets on the CD. A quick check of a couple files will alert you to any documentation that you haven't been collecting. At a later date, all the files should be checked for completeness.

## Analyzing the Data

There are several ways to go about analyzing the data you have collected.

1. Depending on the size of your program, you may want to set up a self-study team. This could consist of just teachers, or teachers and parents. It would be their job to analyze each **self-study** assessment as it is completed in order to let the program administrator know if there are any issues that need improvement immediately (i.e. a new toilet, work on the outdoor space, training for the teachers, improved communication with the parents). You do not want to wait until you finish all the assessments if there are issues that will take considerable time, and/or money, to address.
2. The program administrator or their designee could be the one **to** do the initial analyzing of the data.
3. In either case, the staff would help create plans to bring the issue/s up to compliance.

When all the **self-study** assessments are finished, all staff should be informed of the results and included in the planning process to get the program ready to make their application to NAEYC.

## ATTENTION: RE-ACCREDITATION CANDIDATES

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE TIME BETWEEN YOUR APPLICATION DATE AND YOUR CANDIDACY DATE IS ONLY 3 MONTHS. YOU WILL WANT TO FINISH YOUR SELF STUDY AND BEGIN YOUR SELF-ASSESSMENT WORK EVEN BEFORE YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION.

## STEP TWO – The Application

Step Two is when new programs declare to NAEYC that they are ready to enter the accreditation process. It is also when already accredited programs declare their desire to be reaccredited.

1. There are some basic requirements for becoming an applicant. You will be verifying your compliance on the application form. The application itself is a 16-page document that collects information about the specifics of your program. The Application Form is downloaded from the website.
2. One important criteria of the application is the declaration that all the necessary personnel have been notified of the intent to become accredited and that everyone has “signed on.” This is to insure that programs do not embark on this intense and expensive process without complete support. No one wants to see a program do all the work, and then go to the Executive Director to ask for the candidacy fee and be told that they weren’t authorized to enter the process.
3. A number of pages of the application are devoted to establishing the timetable for the submittal of candidacy material and the visit date. New programs are able to pick one of three dates; Jan 31, May 31, or Sept. 30 This date will be the deadline for submitting Candidacy Materials and will determine that a visit will take place within the following 6 months. Programs seeking Re-Accreditation will pick a date according to the schedule

for Accredited Programs which is at the website and which is determined by their current expiration date.

4. The application is submitted with the required fee. The program will receive a letter accepting them as an applicant.

## Preparing for Candidacy

If self-study was the homework/research/improvement period, self-assessment is the take-home test. The program will continue the process of assembling documentation to prove to NAEYC that they are ready to be deemed a candidate for accreditation.

Approximately 8 weeks before the candidacy date (so 12/1 or 4/1 or 8/1) the program will receive the Candidacy Materials. It will contain the Self Assessment Report among other documents. More detail will be provided when we get to that section.

## Work to be done between the end of self study and the candidacy date.

1. All evidence must be dated no earlier than one year before the candidacy date.
2. The evidence that you collect in this phase **will** be shown to the Academy.
3. The order that you decide to do the assessments really depends on the results of your self study. You will want to do the final assessment when you feel you have reached your improvement goals. For example, if you have just instituted a monthly parent newsletter as a result of the parent survey, you would probably want to wait a few months to assess its effectiveness.

## Tools for the Self Assessment Report (SAR) (in no particular order)

1. Family Surveys
  - a The surveys are done again, this time with a form that has only 26 yes/no questions with no room for comments.
  - b You must obtain surveys from 50% of your parents. You must explain how you publicized the survey collection and how you made it confidential.
  - c You will compile the results of the surveys on the spreadsheet located on either the disc or the online system. This spreadsheet will be part of the evidence submitted with the SAR (Self Assessment Report). You will keep the original surveys for the Assessment Visit.
2. Teachers and Staff Surveys
  - a The surveys are done again, this time with a form that has yes/no questions with no room for comments.
  - b You must obtain surveys from 80% of your teaching staff **and explain how you maintained confidentiality.**
  - c You will compile the results of the surveys on the spreadsheet located on either the disc or the online system. This spreadsheet will be part of the evidence submitted

- with the SAR (Self Assessment Report). You will keep the original observation forms for the Assessment Visit.
3. **Tour:** You will repeat the Tour Assessment and be ready to share any information requested in the SAR.
  4. **Classroom Observations** – You will compile the results of the observations on the spreadsheet located on either the CD or the online system. This spreadsheet will be part of the evidence submitted with the SAR.. You will keep the original surveys for the Assessment Visit.
  5. **Child Files Checklist** – Each file must be checked to be sure they contain all the necessary information from the checklist.
  6. **Staff Files Checklist** – Each file must be checked to be sure they contain all the necessary information from the checklist.
  7. **Program Portfolio** – Using the checklist, all documents must be labeled and in the specific order described by the Academy.
  8. **Classroom Portfolio** – Using the checklist, all documents must be labeled and in the specific order described by the Academy.

## STEP THREE - Candidacy

About 8 weeks before the candidacy date, programs will be notified via email that their candidacy materials are available. They will be given instructions to be able to download the report.

The Candidacy Report will request: (among other things):

1. Evidence of meeting candidacy requirements for Program Administrator and Teachers. Copies of diplomas, transcripts, degrees, and other training will be required.

These requirements are different than the requirements in the criteria. NAEYC is setting baseline qualifications for administrators and teachers in order to better ensure the success of the program through this rigorous and intense process. They want to be sure that they are not “setting up” programs who do not have the educational and experience level to be able to successfully complete the process.

You can find the information online – see the directions at the beginning of the document.

2. Assessment of compliance with the 10 standards.
  - a You will be asked to describe what evidence you have to show compliance in each of the 10 standards.
  - b The report will identify one topic area (Capital letter signifies a topic area) in each standard
  - c You will not be sending items from the classroom portfolio or program portfolio, you will be describing the evidence that you have. (i.e. lesson plans, photos, child work samples, anecdotal records, policies, procedures, documents)

3. The Self Assessment Report is submitted on or before the candidacy date (9/30, 1/31, 5/31).
4. The Academy will review the materials and determine if the program is ready for an assessment visit. A letter will be sent to notify the program if they have been accepted as a candidate. A visit will occur within 6 months of the candidacy date.

## STEP FOUR – The Assessment Visit

1. Your application provided information about the scheduling of the visit. You were able to choose 4 out of 6 months, provide 8 exclusion dates, and identify any schedule changes that might occur on a seasonal basis. The Regional Assessor will be in touch with you to schedule a 15 business day window for the visit. She/he will also call you the business day before the visit
2. You will always be visited by a Regional Assessor. If necessary because of size, a Local Assessor may also be present. The Regional Assessor will **always do** the classroom observations. The Local Assessor may do the file check, the tour, and review the surveys.
3. The assessment tool that the Assessor will use is computer generated by the Academy. It will contain all the required criteria, the “always assessed” criteria, and a **random** sample of all the other criteria across all standards. It may include emerging practice criteria. It will be a research based, statistically relevant set of criteria that will provide the assessor with enough information to determine your overall program compliance with the NAEYC Standards and Criteria.
4. Remember that if you are not in compliance with the “emerging practice criteria” it will not be held against you.
5. The program will be scored either in compliance or not in compliance. Final scoring will be done by computer.
6. The Assessor has certain guidelines that they must adhere to:
  - a Observe one classroom of each age group
  - b Observe 50% of all classrooms
  - c Spend only one hour observing in each targeted classroom
  - d Spend only 30 minutes to review classroom portfolios in each observed classroom
  - e Must only assess what is on the tool.
7. At the end of the visit, the Assessor and the Program Administrator must complete a 2-page checklist indicating that the Assessor followed all the procedures and assessed every area indicated on the assessment tool.
8. The Assessor will not be able to tell the program if they will be accredited.
9. The visit documents will be sent to the Academy, scored, reviewed, and the program should be notified within 12 weeks of the results.