



THE ECE ARCHITECTS™

Designing Systems That Educate With Intention

The ECE Leadership Diagnostic™

*A 5-Pillar Self-Assessment for ECE Owners,
Directors, and Administrators*

A complimentary tool from **The ECE Architects™**
to help you identify where your school's leadership systems are strong
and where they need attention.

Welcome

You took the time to download this diagnostic, which tells me something important about you. You care about doing this work well. You want your school to be strong, your team to be supported, and your operations to run with intention, not chaos.

After more than two decades of working alongside early childhood educators, directors, and owners, one truth has become clear: **most schools are not failing for lack of effort. They are failing for lack of systems.** Brilliant educators burn out under poor structures. Strong directors lose good staff because the leadership pipeline was never built. Families leave because operational gaps become culture problems.

This diagnostic is built on a 5-pillar framework that examines the layers every ECE program needs to operate with intention. It will take about 10–15 minutes to complete. By the end, you will have a clear picture of which layers of your school are strong, and which need attention.

How to use this diagnostic

1. Set aside 10–15 minutes when you can think clearly. Avoid completing this between meetings.
2. Read each statement and rate honestly on a scale of 1–5. There are no right answers, only honest ones.
3. Check the appropriate box for each question. Use 1 if the system is not in place, 5 if it is fully established.
4. Tally your score at the end of each layer.
5. Use the Scoring Guide at the end to interpret your results and identify next steps.

A note on honesty: The value of this diagnostic depends entirely on how honestly you answer. Inflating scores helps no one. Be the leader who sees clearly. That is where real change begins.

The Foundation layer is your school's identity. It is the mission, philosophy, and core values that every decision flows from. Without a clear Foundation, even strong operations drift.

1. Our school has a written mission statement that every leader, educator, and administrator can articulate without looking it up.

Hint: ask three random staff members to share the mission in their own words.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

2. Our school has defined core values that are visible, repeated, and integrated into daily practice — not just posted on a wall.

Examples: recited at staff meetings, referenced in evaluations, used in coaching conversations.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

3. Our school has a clearly articulated leadership philosophy that defines how we lead, coach, and develop our team.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

4. New educators understand our culture and "why we do what we do" within their first 30 days of employment.

This requires intentional orientation that goes beyond paperwork and policies.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

5. When facing a difficult decision, our leadership team can confidently say "this decision aligns with who we are" — and point to where it does.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

Layer 1 Score:

_____ / 25

The Standards layer defines the behaviors, expectations, and culture protections that every team member is held to. Without clear standards, accountability becomes personal opinion.

1. Our school has documented behavioral standards that every staff member is held to, regardless of title or tenure.

These should be specific enough to be measurable, not vague aspirations.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

2. We have explicit culture protection standards — behaviors that are not aligned with our school and are addressed when they occur.

Examples: gossip, exclusionary behavior, phone distractions, dismissing concerns.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

3. Professional communication standards are clearly defined for staff-to-family, staff-to-staff, and staff-to-leadership interactions.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

4. Classroom management standards are documented and consistent across every classroom in our school.

A parent walking into any classroom should experience the same level of organization, supervision, and engagement.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

5. When a standard is not met, our leadership addresses it within 48 hours with clarity and compassion — not avoidance.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

Layer 2 Score:

_____ / 25

The Frameworks layer is the operational architecture that turns standards into systems. This is where recruiting, onboarding, leadership development, and team structure live.

1. We have a documented recruiting pipeline that tracks every candidate from application to hire, including who is responsible for each step.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

2. We have a structured 30-60-90 day onboarding framework with specific milestones, check-ins, and reviews for every new hire.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

3. We have a clear leadership ladder that shows team members exactly how they can grow within our organization.

Most ECE programs do not have this — it is often the difference between retention and turnover.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

4. We have a formal mentor structure pairing newer educators with experienced ones, with defined expectations for the mentor relationship.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

5. We have an observation framework used for both new-hire interviews and ongoing performance development.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

Layer 3 Score:

_____ / 25

The SOPs layer is where frameworks become daily reality. Standard Operating Procedures ensure that the same task is completed the same way regardless of who is doing it or what site they are at.

1. We have written SOPs for opening and closing procedures, used consistently across every classroom and every shift.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

2. We have a documented parent communication SOP that defines what gets communicated, how, when, and through which channels.

This includes app usage, email standards, incident reporting, and daily updates.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

3. We have an orientation SOP that ensures every new hire goes through the same experience with the same outcomes.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

4. We have a hiring event SOP for community recruiting, job fairs, or in-house hiring days.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

5. When a new SOP is needed, we have a process for writing, approving, training on, and implementing it — not just emailing a document.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5
Not in place	Early stage	Developing	Strong	Fully established

Layer 4 Score:

_____ / 25

TRAINING & IMPLEMENTATION — *How We Teach & Sustain It*

The final layer is how the previous four layers stay alive. Without ongoing training, evaluation, and implementation discipline, even great systems become "the way we used to do things."

1. We have written training manuals or guides that team members can reference long after their initial training.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

2. Our leadership team receives ongoing coaching or development — not just our entry-level educators.

Directors and admins burn out fastest when their own development is neglected.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

3. We use scorecards or evaluations to measure performance against our documented standards — not just gut feel.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

4. When we identify a gap in our systems, we have a clear process for redesigning, training on, and rolling out the fix.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

5. A new admin or director joining our school today could become operationally confident within 90 days because of our training systems — not because they figured it out alone.

1

Not in place

2

Early stage

3

Developing

4

Strong

5

Fully established

Layer 5 Score:

_____ / 25

Your Results

Add your five layer scores together to get your total diagnostic score out of 125.

Layer 1 Score: _____ / 25

Layer 2 Score: _____ / 25

Layer 3 Score: _____ / 25

Layer 4 Score: _____ / 25

Layer 5 Score: _____ / 25

TOTAL SCORE: _____ / 125

What your score means

What your score means

Locate your total score in the range below to see how your school is currently operating across the five layers.

100–125 <i>Architect Level</i>	Your school is operating with intention across all five layers. Your systems are largely in place. Your focus now should be on refinement, documentation, and ensuring these systems survive leadership transitions. Consider how your work can be modeled for other schools — you are operating at a level most ECE organizations aspire to.
75–99 <i>Builder Level</i>	Your school has a solid foundation with strong systems in some layers and gaps in others. You likely lead with intuition and have built much of what works through experience. The next level requires translating that intuition into documented systems that can survive without you. Identify your lowest-scoring layer and focus there first.
50–74 <i>Foundation Level</i>	Your school has elements of strong leadership in place, but systems are inconsistent or undocumented. You may be carrying too much of the operational load personally. This is the most common range for growing ECE programs — and the most urgent to address. Without systems, growth creates fragility, not strength.
Below 50 <i>Reset Level</i>	Your school is operating reactively rather than systematically. This is not a judgment — many schools live here, especially after periods of growth, leadership transition, or post-pandemic recovery. The good news: this is also where the biggest gains happen fastest. The first three layers (Foundation, Standards, Frameworks) deserve immediate attention.

Where to go from here

Your diagnostic score tells you where you are. What you do next determines where you go. Here is how The ECE Architects can help, based on what your results revealed.

If your lowest layer is Foundation or Standards (Layers 1–2):

You are missing the strategic anchor that everything else depends on. Start with our **Master Template**, which includes Foundation and Standards builder sheets that walk you through defining your mission, philosophy pillars, and behavioral expectations. Without this work, operational fixes do not last.

If your lowest layer is Frameworks (Layer 3):

You need operational architecture — a recruiting pipeline, onboarding system, leadership ladder, and mentor structure that work together. Our **Master Template** includes all of these as ready-to-use tracker sheets. For deeper guidance, our **Director's Operations Manual** walks through how to build and run each framework.

If your lowest layer is SOPs (Layer 4):

You have leadership intentions but inconsistent execution. The fix is documented procedures that ensure every site, every shift, every educator operates the same way. Look for our upcoming SOP Library, or begin with the SOP framework sheets in our **Master Template**.

If your lowest layer is Training & Implementation (Layer 5):

You have built good systems but they are not being taught, sustained, or measured. This requires ongoing training infrastructure. Our upcoming **Lead Educator Manual**, **Admin Task Manual**, and training trackers are designed to solve this layer.

Ready to build your systems?

Visit thecearchitects.com to explore the full library of tools, manuals, and systems designed for ECE owners, directors, and administrators who are ready to lead with intention.

Have questions or want to discuss your diagnostic results? Schedule a Program Readiness Call with The ECE Architects.

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