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Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Curriculum Evaluation and Implementation Toolkit

With support from the Glen Price Group

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Letter from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond

It is my pleasure to introduce the Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Curriculum Evaluation and Implementation Toolkit, a resource designed to deepen and strengthen teaching and learning in California’s preschool and transitional kindergarten classrooms. This toolkit reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that every young child in our state, regardless of background, language, or zip code, has access to joyful and developmentally appropriate early learning experiences before entering kindergarten.

This toolkit is intended to support all UPK programs using the California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) to inform instruction in two essential ways. First, the toolkit supports programs in the selection of curriculum that are fully aligned with the PTKLF and that advance children’s learning across all domains. Second, the toolkit helps programs ensure that their implementation of a curriculum, or combination of curricula, includes the critical, research-based components that lead to improved and equitable outcomes for all children.

I want to thank the committee of subject matter experts and state agency partners who provided input in developing this toolkit as a resource to the field. Within these pages, you will find many examples of what high-quality curriculum looks like in real early childhood classrooms, particularly for children who are three- and four-years-old.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to California’s youngest learners and their families. Together, through thoughtful use of this toolkit and a strong commitment to equity, we can ensure that UPK fulfills its promise for every child.

Sincerely,

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the California Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), **Tony Thurmond**, for setting a vision to leverage historic investments in public education to transform our California schools and ensure equity for all children. This toolkit is intended to support Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) through Third Grade programs to serve all children.

The California Department of Education (CDE) would like to thank the following individuals who supported the development of this toolkit. Support included the curriculum committee, CDE staff, state agency partners, external consultants, and a number of local programs that opened their doors for curriculum-focused site visits.

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Walter Denney Youth Center, BPS

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, BPS

Josiah Quincy Elementary, BPS

Reeves Elementary School, Woburn Public Schools

Mistletoe Elementary, Enterprise Elementary School District (EESD)

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Introduction

Use of a high-quality curriculum or a combination of multiple curricula can be an impactful way for educators and programs to cultivate rich, meaningful early education experiences and interactions for children in preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) that ultimately result in improved child development outcomes. Research shows this is particularly important for children from historically marginalized backgrounds, such as multilingual learners, children of color, and children from low-income families.¹ It is also important to consider how curriculum is implemented in the broader context of the program's or school's philosophy and goals for learning, family engagement, support for educators, and connections to community.

This Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Curriculum Evaluation and Implementation Toolkit provides a collection of resources to support preschool and TK programs to evaluate and implement high-quality preschool curriculum, whether that is a locally-developed curriculum, a curriculum purchased from a publisher, or some combination thereof. This toolkit aligns with recommendations from the 2024 consensus study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), which offered a comprehensive analysis of the current preschool curriculum landscape and identified recommendations for state agencies, researchers and curriculum publishers. See [appendix 3](#) for a summary of preschool curriculum research as presented in the NASEM report.

The resources in this toolkit are meant to support UPK programs and any program using the California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) to:

1. Select curriculum and/or develop and document a curriculum that supports children's learning aligned to the PTKLF; and
2. Ensure their implementation of a curriculum or combination of curricula includes the critical research-based components that support improved and equitable child outcomes

The toolkit includes the following:

- A commitment to focusing on play
- An explanation and graphic of the California Department of Education (CDE) **Critical Curricular Elements Framework**
- A series of rubrics and a workbook for programs to use to reflect on current curricular practices to support continuous improvement, or for the assessment of curricula for potential purchase; these rubrics can also be used by researchers and curriculum

developers to determine whether a curriculum addresses California's expectations for how curricula meet the needs of California's preschoolers

- Background information and reference material on preschool curriculum

The CDE believes that programs should use high-quality curriculum or combination of curricula that appropriately meets the needs of children, families, and communities and is:

- Aligned to all domains outlined in the California PTKLF;
- Play-based; developmentally informed; culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming to cultivate children's sense of belonging; and
- Inclusive and supportive of the needs of all children including multilingual learners and children with disabilities

The CDE believes high-quality curriculum is culturally and linguistically responsive. The CDE also believes high-quality curriculum should have intentional design with appropriate scope and sequence around the teaching of early math, science, language, and literacy skills because research demonstrates that intentionality in these areas in an otherwise whole-child curriculum is needed to optimize diverse children's outcomes in these areas.

This toolkit can be used by any program using the California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF).²

The CDE worked with a committee of subject matter experts and state agency partners to develop this toolkit. This resource includes many examples of what a high-quality curriculum looks like in practice. This toolkit is for any program using the PTKLF. Similar to the PTKLF, the examples in this toolkit are relevant to the developmental stages of three and four year old children. The CDE recognizes there are opportunities to add to and further strengthen these examples through feedback from programs and practitioners. After reviewing the rubrics, please consider sharing additional examples of what these elements look like in your classroom or program so we can ensure they speak to the languages, cultures, and communities in your programs. Email the Early Education Division at UPK@cde.ca.gov.

1 Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Christina Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow, Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education (Washington, DC: Society for Research in Child Development, 2013).

2 The CDE administers the California State Preschool Program, which is required to use the PTKLF, and Transitional Kindergarten (TK), where it is the intent of the Legislature that TK curriculum be aligned to the PTKLF.

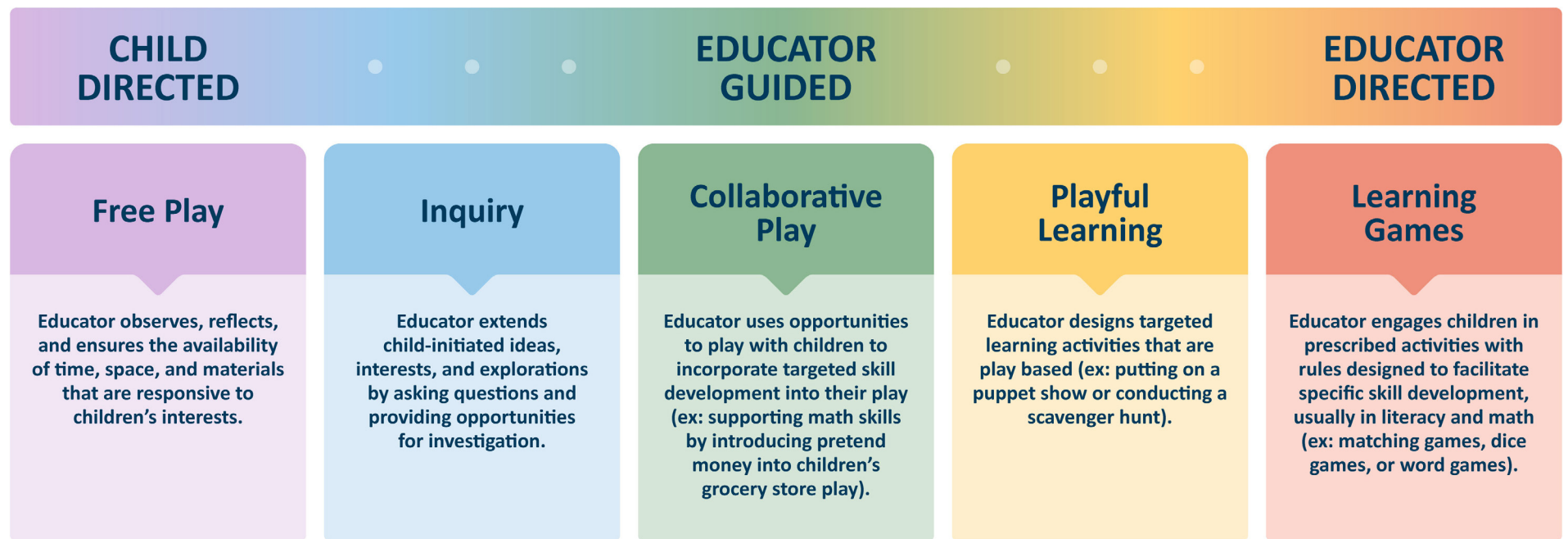
A Commitment to Play

Children have optimal experiences with curriculum when those experiences are grounded in a playful learning philosophy.

Through the implementation of curriculum, children should participate in a range of learning experiences, such as learning centers; small group instruction; whole-group community building; music, movement, and mindfulness; and read-alouds. These playful learning experiences should be culturally and linguistically responsive. Across these learning experiences, the teacher can play various roles to support learning, as detailed in the following figure of Preschool Through Third Grade (P-3) play-based Learning Strategies. For additional guidance on supporting playful learning experiences, please see [The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education](#).

Figure 1: Play-Based Learning Strategies

P–3 Play-Based Learning Strategies



Our youngest learners thrive when at least 50 percent of instructional time relies on child-directed playful learning activities, such as those that occur in learning centers, with the remaining time spread across educator-guided or -directed playful learning activities, such as those available through whole-group or small-group contexts. The Learning Stems from Play graphic below details some of these playful learning contexts.

Figure 2: Learning Stems from Play: Considerations for Implementing UPK Instructional Time

Learning Stems from Play: Considerations for Implementing UPK Instructional Time

Learning thrives in an environment that celebrates and affirms cultural and linguistic diversity, actively combats racism and pursues equity, embraces inclusion and promotes belonging for each and every child.

Our youngest learners thrive when at least 50% of instructional time relies on child-directed playful learning activities, such as those that occur in learning centers, with the remaining time spread across educator-guided or -directed playful learning activities, such as those available through whole group or small group contexts.



Critical Curricular Elements Framework

The CDE’s **Critical Curricular Elements Framework** presents the characteristics of high-quality, equity-driven pre-K curriculum. It is based on recent research and shaped to address the diversity of children in preschool and TK in California and the unique assets, cultures, and needs they bring to preschool and TK programs.

This framework and associated tools can be used by any program serving three to five-year-old children using the PTKLF.

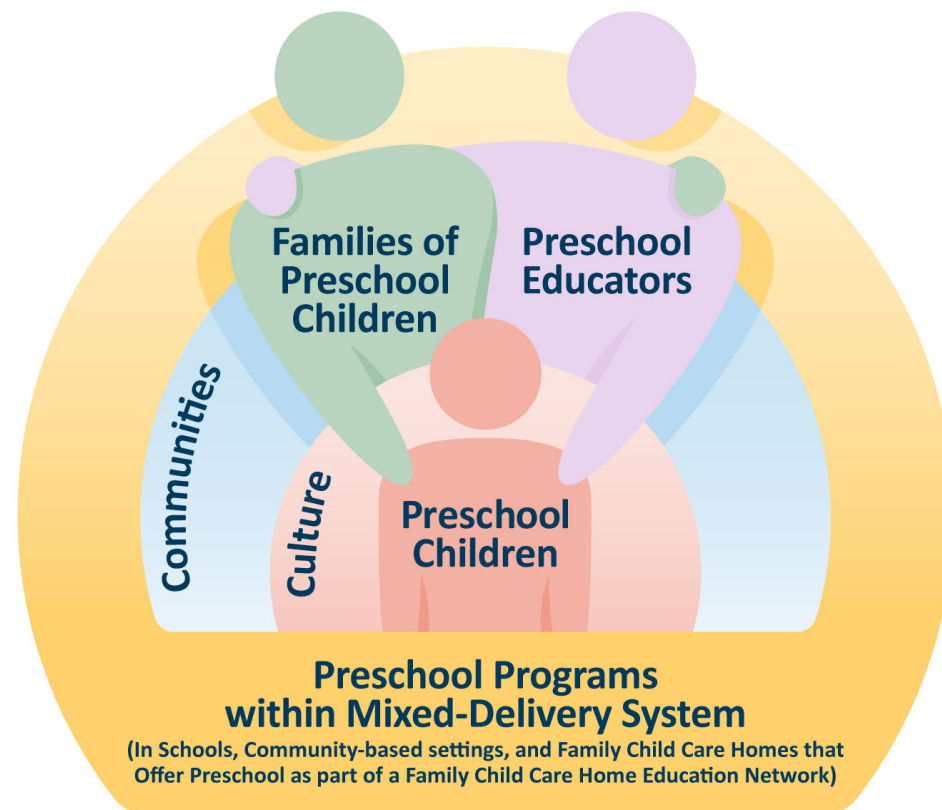
The framework is made up of the following three parts:

Child-Centered Orientation

Figure 3: Child-Centered Orientation

The curricular content and approach combined with each individual program’s approach centers preschool children, their families, their educators, and their culture and communities.

- **Preschool Age (3–5) Children:** Curriculum attends to the languages, cultures, interests, and needs of California’s diverse children with special attention to those children who have been historically positioned furthest from opportunity
- **Families:** Curriculum emphasizes how to engage families to enhance the curriculum and home–school connection so that learning goals are met in ways that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, communities, and cultures
- **Preschool Educators:** Curriculum includes engaging learning opportunities and resources for educators to implement core curriculum components effectively, while providing guidance for thoughtful adaptations and enhancements, such as prompts, demonstration videos, and substitution options that allow educators to respond to children’s needs while maintaining alignment with learning goals and honoring educator expertise, agency, and creativity
- **Culture:** Curriculum reflects the diverse cultures of California’s preschool children and exposes children to new cultures, including engaging with families and community members to enhance the curriculum
- **Community:** Curriculum incorporates opportunities to engage children in their local communities and uplifts the expertise of community members to enhance the curriculum
- **Preschool Programs:** Curriculum provides flexibility for preschool programs to implement the curriculum within their context and program standards

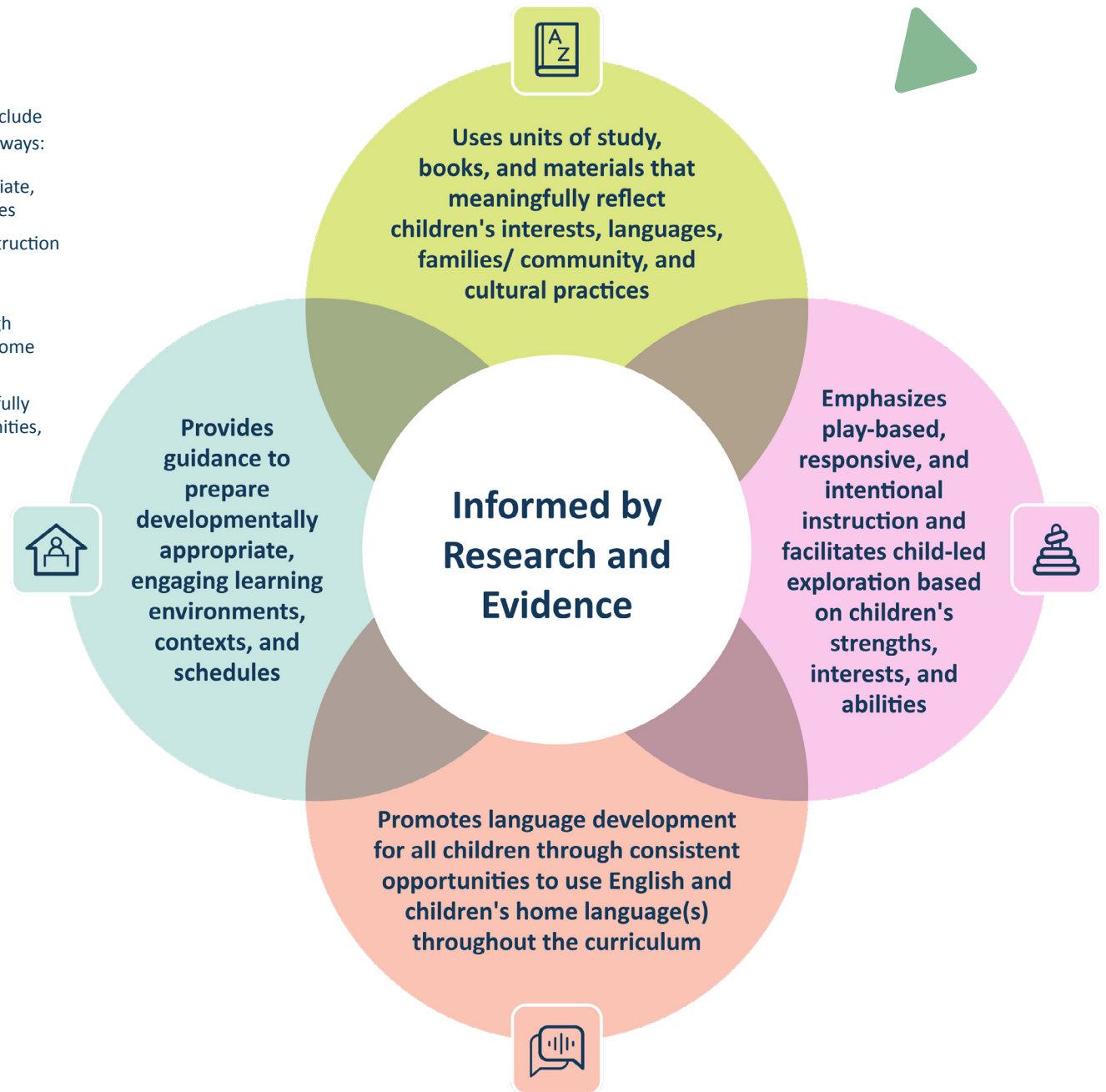


Curricular Approach

Figure 4: Curricular Approach

High-quality curriculum aligned to the PTKLF should also include how to deliver the curricular content in all of the following ways:

- Provides guidance to prepare developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, contexts, and schedules
- Emphasizes play-based, responsive, and intentional instruction and facilitates child-led exploration based on children's strengths, interests, and abilities
- Promotes language development for all children through consistent opportunities to use English and children's home language(s) throughout the curriculum
- Uses units of study, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children's interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices



Curricular Content

Figure 5: Content Areas

Curriculum should clearly define specific developmentally appropriate learning goals in one or more of the domains in the PTKLF. This could be achieved by using one comprehensive curriculum that addresses all domains of learning; or could include using multiple curricula (example: domain-specific pre-K curricula such as math or literacy curricula, locally-developed curricula, etc.). The program’s curriculum or combination of curricula should cover all the curricular content elements listed below.

- Provides consistent opportunities to flexibly support children to develop their motivation to learn, ability to work toward goals, and self-regulation across content areas aligned to the **Approaches to Learning** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities for developing social and emotional skills and content knowledge aligned to the **Social and Emotional Development** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to develop language and literacy skills aligned to the **Language and Literacy Development** domain of the PTKLF and describes an organized framework and sequence to guide teachers’ decision making and children’s development and learning in literacy
- Provides consistent opportunities to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills aligned with the **Mathematics** domain of the PTKLF and describes an organized framework and sequence to guide teachers’ decision making and children’s development and learning in math
- Provides consistent opportunities to foster inquiry-based thinking and exploration aligned to key content areas of the **Science** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities for gross motor and fine motor development integrated with content areas aligned to the **Physical Development** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to learn and practice healthy habits and related content aligned to the **Health** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to explore the social sciences and learn relevant history through integration with other content areas aligned to the **History–Social Science** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to foster creativity through building knowledge of the arts and meaningful arts integration with other content areas aligned to the **Visual and Performing Arts** domain of the PTKLF

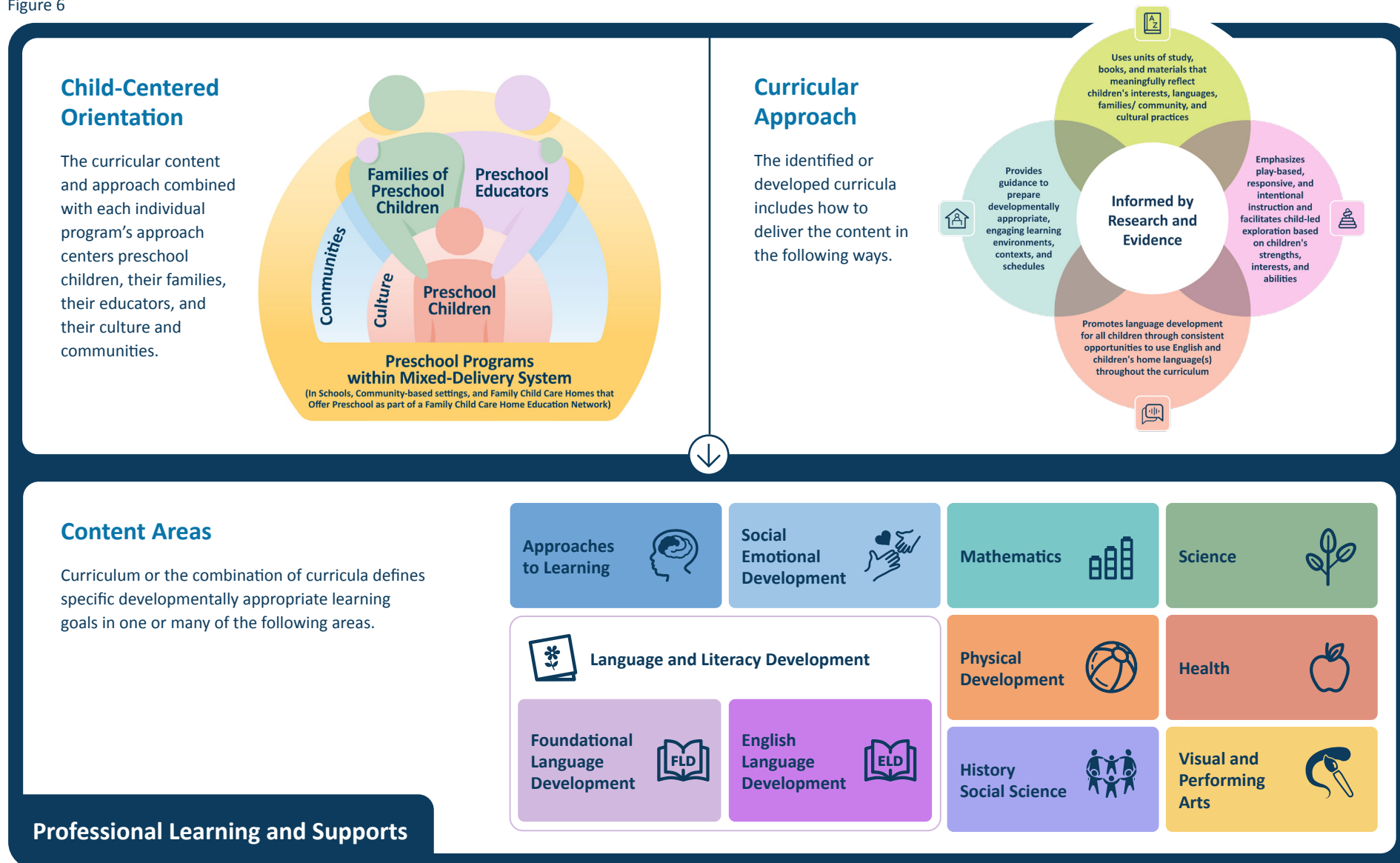
These three parts—a child-centered orientation, curricular approach, and curricular content—come together to create the **Critical Curricular Elements Framework**.



Critical Elements: Selecting, Designing and Implementing High-Quality UPK Curriculum

Use of a preschool curriculum or combination of curricula can be an impactful way for teachers and programs to cultivate high-quality early education experiences and interactions in Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) programs, particularly for children from historically marginalized backgrounds. This graphic outlines a child-centered orientation, preschool content areas, and critical research-based elements found in high-quality preschool curricula.

Figure 6






At a Glance

Child-Centered Orientation	
<p>The curricular content and approach combined with each individual program’s approach centers preschool children, their families, their educators, and their culture and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Age (3–5) Children • Families • Preschool Educators • Culture • Community • Preschool Programs
Curricular Approach Elements	
	<p>Provides guidance to prepare developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, contexts, and schedules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible schedules across days, weeks, and/or months • Design of the indoor physical space, including the set-up of activities • Variety of learning contexts, including center, small-group, and whole-group time • Accessibility of the physical learning space • Print-rich environment • Utilization of outdoor physical space
	<p>Emphasizes play-based, responsive, and intentional instruction and facilitates child-led exploration based on children’s strengths, interests, and abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates child-led exploration with intentional learning goals • Responsive to child interests • Balance of educator, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities • Individualized and responsive teaching for all children including children with disabilities • Individualized and responsive teaching for multilingual learners • Assessment integration with curriculum • Using assessment results and observations to individualize instruction • Communicating assessment results to families to extend curriculum learning in the home
	<p>Promotes language development for all children through consistent opportunities to use English and children’s home language(s) throughout the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating opportunities for children to use language • Creating opportunities for children to use language with peers • Extending children’s language use • Promoting vocabulary use across content areas
	<p>Uses units of study, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity and inclusion in books • Linguistic diversity in books • Cultural diversity and inclusion in learning materials • Linguistic diversity in learning materials • Open-ended and engaging learning materials • Units of study include home-program connections • Units of study are aligned and integrated with Preschool/TK Learning Foundations (PTKLF) domains

Curricular Content Rubrics

	<p>Approaches to Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds perseverance (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF) • Builds curiosity (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF) • Exercises working memory and flexibility (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF) • Exercises inhibitory control (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF) • Facilitates problem-solving skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF) • Facilitates planning skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF)
	<p>Social and Emotional Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness and identity (part of Self in PTKLF) • Emotion knowledge and emotion expression (part of Self in PTKLF) • Social awareness skills (part of Self and Interactions and Relationships with Peers in PTKLF) • Social and emotional content integration across other PTKLF domains • Dedicated time for social and emotional learning
	<p>Language and Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language development (part of Listening and Speaking in PTKLF) • Phonological awareness (part of Foundational Literacy Skills in PTKLF) • Alphabets and letter–sound correspondence (part of Foundational Literacy Skills in PTKLF) • Comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate text (part of Reading in PTKLF) • Writing (part of Writing in PTKLF)
	<p>Mathematics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematical practices (part of Mathematical Practices in PTKLF) • Counting and cardinality (part of Counting and Cardinality in PTKLF) • Operations and algebraic thinking (part of Operations and Algebraic Thinking in PTKLF) • Measurement and data (part of Measurement and Data in PTKLF) • Geometry and spatial thinking (part of Geometry and Spatial Thinking in PTKLF)
	<p>Science</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science and engineering practices (part of Science and Engineering Practices in PTKLF) • Crosscutting concepts (part of Crosscutting Concepts in PTKLF) • Physical science (part of Physical Science in PTKLF) • Life science (part of Life Science in PTKLF) • Earth and space science (part of Earth and Space Science in PTKLF) • Engineering, technology, and applications of science (part of Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science in PTKLF)
	<p>Physical Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills in PTKLF) • Gross motor, locomotor, and perceptual motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills and Perceptual Motor Skills and Movement Concepts in PTKLF) • Active physical play (part of Active Physical Play in PTKLF)

	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body awareness (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF) • Nutrition (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF) • Health and safety habits (part of Health and Safety Habits in PTKLF)
	History–Social Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural communities (part of Self and Social Systems in PTKLF) • Time and historical events (part of Time, Continuity, and Change in PTKLF) • Contributions to community (part of Self and Social Systems; Skills for Democracy and Being a Community Member [Civics]; Sense of Place and Environment; and Economic Systems in PTKLF) • Locations in the environment (part of Sense of Place and Environment in PTKLF)
	Visual and Performing Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual arts (part of Visual Arts in PTKLF) • Music (part of Music in PTKLF) • Dance (part of Dance in PTKLF) • Drama (part of Drama in PTKLF) • Individual expressions with the arts • Arts integration with other content areas (part of Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Drama in PTKLF)

A Note About Serving Children with Disabilities

The needs of all children, especially those with disabilities, are varied and diverse. As a result, the types of instructional strategies and playful learning experiences that will best meet their needs are also varied and diverse.

Not all children will benefit from all of the elements described in the curriculum reflection rubrics. For example, while some children may already have levels of independence with self-regulation and problem-solving, many children with or without disabilities may still require adult assistance with these skills. Another example is the inclusion of verbal discussion routines, which is inconsistent with the needs of a child who is nonverbal. To account for these differences, the reflection rubrics include elements such as multimodal communication supports, structured teaching approaches, visual and environmental supports, and guidance on adult facilitation and supported peer interaction.

Children with disabilities benefit from both targeted and scaffolded approaches to instruction and require curricula that will allow for accommodations and approaches for teaching developmental skills across all areas of development.³ When serving children with disabilities, the child’s needs as outlined in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) should be considered. When using the reflection rubrics, programs should consider the extent to which their curricular approach addresses the needs of children with a range of abilities.

A Note About Professional Learning and Supports

Professional learning is a critical part of curriculum implementation. Professional learning does not appear as an explicit item in the rubrics of this toolkit because there is a range of professional learning offerings from publishers, a range of professional learning dosage needed to implement curricula to fidelity, and significant variability in resources and time available to programs to engage in professional learning.

The CDE recommends considering how much professional learning is provided for free by the publisher or open-source curricula, such as demonstrations, facilitating communities of practice, and providing in-person or virtual training and technical assistance when reviewing curricula to purchase.

Instructional coaching and Professional Learning Communities are highly effective professional support systems for implementing curriculum. **The CDE recommends looking for a published curriculum that has a recommended process for coaching (for example, suggested observation/reflection cycles) and process for achieving fidelity of implementation to the curriculum (for example, a fidelity tool).**

When possible, coaching and professional learning should be integrated with other quality practices in the program so that children receive cohesive high-quality learning experiences. For example, implementing curriculum with Universal Design for Learning principles, Teaching Pyramid concepts, Classroom Assessment Scoring System strategies, or Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) strategies, and conducting observations with the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment, among others. **The CDE recommends looking for a published or open-source curricula that already provides these connection points. If these connection points are not articulated, it is up to the program or district to ensure that educators receive professional learning and coaching in an integrated way.** This is not only more efficient, but helps educators see how high-quality practices overlap and can be utilized to strengthen their teaching practice and support cohesive learning experiences for children.⁴

³ NASEM. “A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum.” (2024).

⁴ The CDE has established the Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS), which present the elements of a quality professional learning system that, if well implemented, will benefit educators focused on increasing their professional capacity and performance. Additional information about the QPLS can be accessed at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/qpls.asp>.

Tools for Evaluating and Implementing Curriculum

The elements in the **Critical Curricular Elements Framework** are further explained in a series of rubrics. The rubrics outline a continuum of quality across a number of areas for each curricular content and curriculum approach element in the framework. These rubrics are available in the curriculum reflection workbook. This toolkit is not relevant for assessing a standalone curriculum that focuses on building one very specific skill such as phonemic awareness or handwriting. Programs may be using these types of curricular materials as part of a broader curricular approach, in which case these curricular materials should be considered in conjunction with all other curricular components.

Instructions for Assessing Curricula

Instructions Summary

Work through the following steps to evaluate your current curriculum or a potential new preschool curriculum:

1. Review the graphic Curricular Elements Framework and read the corresponding rubrics
2. Download the toolkit and open in Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Reader in order to use the functionality of the reflection workbook
3. Collect curricular materials to evaluate
4. Follow the directions found in the workbook

Detailed Instructions

1. Collect curricular materials to assess (for example, teacher guides, materials lists, program-developed lesson materials)
2. Reflect on your child-centered orientation and gather information on assets and needs to inform the rest of your curricular evaluation process
3. Review each content element and score how well the curriculum or overall curricular approach addresses each element. Rate each item and add notes in the workbook
4. Review each approach element and score how well the curriculum or curricular approach addresses each element. Rate each item and add notes in the workbook
5. Reflect back on your child-centered orientation and the scores you identified to determine:
 - a. If the curriculum or curricular approach you are assessing meets your program's needs; and
 - b. How the curriculum or curricular approach you are assessing needs to be enhanced

Note: Programs reflecting on their overall curricular approach should consider their program's overall curriculum implementation, including educator practices that are consistent across the program (as a result of training or coaching, for example). Separating curriculum from educator practice is not the intended outcome of this toolkit and reflection workbook. Understanding that some educators may be experts in implementing or supplementing curricula while others may have less experience, programs should consider the typical experience of a child in the program.

Researchers or curriculum developers that are using these tools to assess a curriculum should consider only the guidance and materials contained in the curriculum and should not make assumptions about the types of professional development a program may implement.

Key Considerations

- Take a [child-centered orientation](#). Focus on your population of children, including their culture and community, and how this shapes what they need from the program's curricular approach. Consider the needs and assets of their families and educators, and how families and educators can be best engaged in the development, identification, enhancement, and implementation of the curricular approach. Taking a child-centered orientation means building on your children's interests, home languages, and family cultures, and fostering a sense of belonging. Consider the needs and assets of their preschool or TK program, and how program structures and conditions impact curriculum implementation.
- Ensure the overall curricular approach covers all content areas. All areas of the PTKLF should be covered, through either the implementation of a single curriculum or multiple curricula. If a curriculum does not cover all domains, it will need to be combined with another curriculum or multiple curricula.
- Ensure the overall curricular approach addresses all of the following in ways that meaningfully reflect and incorporate children's interests, languages, and cultural practices:

- Provides guidance to prepare developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, contexts, and schedules
- Emphasizes play-based, responsive, and intentional instruction and facilitates child-led exploration based on children’s strengths, interests, and abilities
- Promotes language development for all children through consistent opportunities to use English and children’s home language(s) throughout the curriculum
- Uses units of study, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging

Scoring Definitions

- **Gap Area** – Not yet addressing the items described in Emerging
- **Emerging** – Emerging in quality implementation practices for the curricular element
- **Progressing** – Continuing to build on quality implementation practices toward fully achieving the curricular element
- **Excelling** – Fully achieving the curricular element at a high level of quality

Software Requirements

- For full functionality of this workbook, please ensure you are using the latest version of either Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you do not already have one of these installed, they are available for download here:

[Adobe Acrobat Pro](#) (subscription required)

[Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (free)

- By default, these programs highlight fillable fields, check boxes, radio buttons, etc. This can sometimes cause minor visual (but not functional) inconsistencies with how radio buttons appear. If you’d like to turn off these highlights:

1. Open Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat
2. In the top left, go to Acrobat Reader (if using Reader) or Acrobat (if using Pro), then select Preferences
3. In the Preferences window, choose Forms
4. Uncheck “Show border hover color for fields”

Curricular Approach Rubrics

Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	19
Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	26
Intentional Language Development Opportunities	35
Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children's interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	41

Curricular Approach Element: **Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules**



★ Overview

High-quality preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) programs rely on developmentally appropriate learning environments, contexts, and schedules that support meaningful learning and foster a sense of belonging. While these structures and supports appear outside of curriculum, the curriculum should still provide clear guidance on daily and weekly schedules for implementing curriculum activities, the physical setup of curriculum activities, and the use of indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure effective implementation of curriculum activities. Overall, these structures should support flexibility and responsiveness to children and families in the program.

Element Areas

The element focuses on the curriculum providing guidance on preparing developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, contexts, and schedules and includes **six** areas:

- Flexible schedules across days, weeks, and/or months
- Design of the indoor physical space, including the set-up of activities
- Variety of learning contexts including center, small-group, and whole-group time
- Accessibility of the physical learning space
- Print-rich environment
- Utilization of outdoor physical space

Additional Resources


- For additional considerations on designing physical learning spaces that are accessible for all children (including guidance you may find outside of a curriculum), reference [Universal Design for Learning: A Checklist for Early Childhood Environments](#). As a note, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has been updated since the checklist was made, so for additional guidance please visit <https://www.openaccess-ca.org/what-is-udl>
- For additional alignment of this rubric with [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), reference Table 4-1 on page 127 which includes “Provides guidance on preparing developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, materials, and schedules” as a high-quality curriculum characteristic. The following are some of the considerations within this characteristic, “Does the curriculum provide flexible guidance on daily, weekly, and/or monthly schedules? Is there guidance on organizing the environment, including using diverse learning contexts designed to meet important, meaningful goals such as centers, small and large groups, and individual experiences?”
- See the video [SEAL Preschool Environment & Families](#) from Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) on the importance of utilizing the indoor and outdoor physical environment to support curriculum learning

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses this element focused on developmentally appropriate environments, contexts, and schedules.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:


 Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Flexible schedules across days, weeks, and/or months		Addresses one of the following: Includes detailed outlines of each learning activity and context (example: center time, ⁵ small-group, ⁶ whole-group ⁷) for each week of the curriculum. Includes optional educator scripts or prompts ⁸ to support educators in setting up a learning activity, providing instructions or guidance to children to best set them up for success, and any example scaffolding prompts to help children reach the learning goal. ⁹	Addresses both of the following: Includes detailed outlines of each learning activity and context (example: center time, small-group, whole-group) for each week of the curriculum. Includes optional educator scripts or prompts to support educators in setting up a learning activity, providing instructions or guidance to children to best set them up for success, and any example scaffolding prompts to help children reach the learning goal.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes guidance on how to adjust the pacing calendar depending on the week and unit of study, ¹⁰ or how to replace or adjust learning activities so that educators can add their own creativity and learning activities to best meet the needs of children in the program (while still aligning with the learning goals set forth in the PTKLF and the curriculum).	

- Center time (also known as “choice time”) is when there are different interest areas set-up (indoors or outdoors) and children can choose to visit a specific area. Example centers may include dramatic play (such as a pretend play kitchen), sensory tables/experiences (such as a sand or water table), art (such as an art table or easels with two- and three-dimensional materials), literacy (such as a library or writing corner), math (such as counting collections, puzzles, or number matching games), science/discovery (such as exploring different science and engineering tools or topics), blocks (such as building with blocks and other props or toys), and a calm center (such as a quiet area for children to take a break). Not all centers may be “open” or available every day, there is usually a limit to the number of children who can visit at one time to avoid overcrowding, and materials are often switched out to increase interest and engagement and align with the specific curriculum theme or unit of study. Educators may rotate to different centers to provide scaffolding and support, and typically at least one educator is stationed at a specific center that requires more support, such as a more complex art activity (and help using glue!) or a new math game the children have never played before. Center time ideally lasts at least 60 minutes to promote deep learning and multiple center time opportunities can be provided per day.
- Small-group time typically consists of a group of (ideally no more than) five children receiving individualized and responsive instruction with an educator. Small-group time should typically last no longer than 15–20 minutes to be developmentally appropriate for four-year-old children, and closer to 10 minutes for three-year-old children. Small-group time can occur during center time (example: while other children are playing independently at centers, a few children are invited to join the educator for small-group), or small-group activities can occur at a designated small-group time if a second or third educator are available to lead multiple small groups at the same time. In a curriculum, you may see small-group opportunities for skills that require more individualized support, like math and literacy, but small-group time can also target other PTKLF domain areas as well.
- Whole-group time provides opportunities to build community and connection with peers through rich discussion, read-aloud books, and other active engagement opportunities. Whole-group time can also be a good opportunity to introduce new learning concepts and skills that can be reinforced in small-group time and center time. Each whole-group session should ideally last no longer than 10 minutes to be developmentally appropriate for 3 and four-year-olds.
- Educator scripts or prompts can be particularly helpful for novice educators or for educators in their first few years of implementing a new curriculum, however a curriculum should note that educators can use different prompts or scripts that are more responsive to children’s interests and individual needs, which supports educator creativity and honors educators’ own knowledge and expertise.
- Learning goals in a curriculum (also referred to as learning objectives or learning foundations) should align closely with Early and Later foundations outlined in each domain of the PTKLF, such as “count 10 objects or more” or “identify basic emotions.”
- Units of study (can also be referred to as “curriculum themes”) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.

 Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Design of the indoor physical space, including the setup of activities		Includes guidance on general set-up of learning activities in the curriculum. For example, the curriculum may provide a list of materials needed each week to set up each center.	Includes detailed guidance on how to set up the learning space or activity to promote peer collaboration, independent learning, creativity, and engagement. For example, the curriculum may provide recommendations on how many children at each center and which materials should be reachable by children, which materials to put away etc., along with example pictures.	Includes the detailed guidance from Progressing, but across all learning contexts in the curriculum, including small-group, and whole-group activities. The curriculum may provide recommendations for how to configure children (example: sitting in a circle) during whole-group time, or how to set up materials or set-up tables to reduce distractions during small-group time, including example pictures of the set-up of an activity.	
Variety of learning contexts including center, small-group, and whole-group time		Includes a variety of learning contexts such as center, small-group, and whole-group time, as well as guidance on how much time is spent in each context, including indoors and outdoors.	Addresses Emerging and one of the following: Includes guidance on a balance of time spent in different learning contexts when implementing curriculum activities; with a majority of time spent in center or small-group time, and less time spent in whole-group instruction. Includes guidance on how to adjust learning contexts of curriculum activities depending on the number of children and educators in the program, as well as how to adjust when some children may need more individual support.	Addresses Emerging and both of the following: Includes guidance on a balance of time spent in different learning contexts when implementing curriculum activities; with a majority of time spent in center or small-group time, and less time spent in whole-group instruction. Includes guidance on how to adjust learning contexts of curriculum activities depending on the number of children and educators in the program, as well as how to adjust when some children may need more individual support.	

 Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Accessibility of the physical learning space		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote child independence with accessing materials and multiple means of engagement (example: if doing a painting activity, curriculum notes how to set up the activity if children want to stand up at an easel, or sit down at the table or on the floor).</p> <p>Includes guidance on incorporating multiple means of representation in the physical learning space, such as visual prompts (example: picture symbols and visual instructions), multisensory supports (example: interactive whiteboards with sound and touch capabilities), and auditory supports (example: audio recordings and music).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote multiple means of action and expression. For example, a curriculum may note how children’s assistive technologies can be utilized in an activity; curriculum notes needing enough space for the activity to allow for children to use gestures/ movement to participate in the activity.</p>	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote child independence with accessing materials and multiple means of engagement (example: if doing a painting activity, curriculum notes how to set up the activity if children want to stand up at an easel, or sit down at the table or on the floor).</p> <p>Includes guidance on incorporating multiple means of representation in the physical learning space, such as visual prompts (example: picture symbols and visual instructions), multisensory supports (example: interactive whiteboards with sound and touch capabilities), and auditory supports (example: audio recordings and music).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote multiple means of action and expression. For example, a curriculum may note how children’s assistive technologies can be utilized in an activity; curriculum notes needing enough space for the activity to allow for children to use gestures/ movement to participate in the activity.</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote child independence with accessing materials and multiple means of engagement (example: if doing a painting activity, curriculum notes how to set up the activity if children want to stand up at an easel, or sit down at the table or on the floor).</p> <p>Includes guidance on incorporating multiple means of representation in the physical learning space, such as visual prompts (example: picture symbols and visual instructions), multisensory supports (example: interactive whiteboards with sound and touch capabilities), and auditory supports (example: audio recordings and music).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to set up curriculum activities to promote multiple means of action and expression. For example, a curriculum may note how children’s assistive technologies can be utilized in an activity; curriculum notes needing enough space for the activity to allow for children to use gestures/ movement to participate in the activity.</p>	

 Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Print-rich environment		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes a variety of printed materials, including in children’s home language(s) (example: charts, signs, word walls, grocery lists on a refrigerator in a family childcare home) to place around the indoor or outdoor space to promote exposure to print related to PTKLF learning domain(s), as well as additional guidance on reducing visual clutter (example: not too many visuals on the walls).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate use of printed materials in the environment with intentional learning activities in the curriculum, such as names and pictures on cubbies and placemats.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate family projects from curriculum activities into the physical space of the classroom or family home, such as “all about me” books made by the children with their families, or including children’s work throughout a family childcare like the kitchen and play spaces.</p>	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <p>Includes a variety of printed materials, including in children’s home language(s) (example: charts, signs, word walls, grocery lists on a refrigerator in a family childcare) to place around the indoor or outdoor space to promote exposure to print related to PTKLF learning domain(s), as well as additional guidance on reducing visual clutter (example: not too many visuals on the walls).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate use of printed materials in the environment with intentional learning activities in the curriculum, such as names and pictures on cubbies and placemats.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate family projects from curriculum activities into the physical space of the classroom or family home, such as “all about me” books made by the children with their families, or including children’s work throughout a family childcare like the kitchen and play spaces.</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes a variety of printed materials, including in children’s home language(s) (example: charts, signs, word walls, grocery lists on a refrigerator in a family childcare) to place around the indoor or outdoor space to promote exposure to print related to PTKLF learning domain(s), as well as additional guidance on reducing visual clutter (example: not too many visuals on the walls).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate use of printed materials in the environment with intentional learning activities in the curriculum, such as names and pictures on cubbies and placemats.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to incorporate family projects from curriculum activities into the physical space of the classroom or family home, such as “all about me” books made by the children with their families, or including children’s work throughout a family childcare like the kitchen and play spaces.</p>	

	Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Utilization of outdoor physical space		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes suggestions on how to incorporate the outdoor environment into curriculum activities (example: collecting leaves for a patterning activity, or taking a walk around the neighborhood at a family childcare home). Includes consistent and varied opportunities¹¹ to implement curriculum activities outdoors (example: establishing learning centers outdoors that align to the curriculum theme or unit of study). Includes outdoor learning activities across multiple domains of the PTKLF (example: science, social and emotional development, math, language and literacy). 	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes suggestions on how to incorporate the outdoor environment into curriculum activities (example: collecting leaves for a patterning activity, or taking a walk around the neighborhood at a family childcare home). Includes consistent and varied opportunities to implement curriculum activities outdoors (example: establishing learning centers outdoors that align to the curriculum theme or unit of study). Includes outdoor learning activities across multiple domains of the PTKLF (example: science, social and emotional development, math, language and literacy). 	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes suggestions on how to incorporate the outdoor environment into curriculum activities (example: collecting leaves for a patterning activity, or taking a walk around the neighborhood at a family childcare home). Includes consistent and varied opportunities to implement curriculum activities outdoors (example: establishing learning centers outdoors that align to the curriculum theme or unit of study). Includes outdoor learning activities across multiple domains of the PTKLF (example: science, social and emotional development, math, language and literacy). 	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 18:					

» For full functionality of this workbook, please ensure you are using the latest version of either Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat Reader. See [Software Requirements](#).

¹¹ Consistent opportunities means opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily or weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

Curricular Approach Element: **Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices



★ Overview

Play-based, responsive, and intentional instructional practices are foundational components of instruction in preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) programs.

- **Play-based instructional practices** ensure that activities are active, playful, and engaging and facilitate child-led exploration.¹²
- **Responsive instructional practices** are individualized to each child's needs such as their abilities, strengths, interests, and home language(s). High-quality curriculum also provides guidance on how to individualize curriculum activities to meet the needs of all children including, children with disabilities and multilingual learners. It is also important for curriculum to note that curriculum-provided prompts or scripts to scaffold children's learning during curriculum activities can be flexible or changed by the educator, which supports educator creativity and honors educator knowledge about child development and the unique needs of their students. Assessments are also a powerful tool to ensure teaching is responsive and individualized, and curriculum should include guidance on assessments tied to curriculum activities, including how to use assessments to inform curriculum and communicate with families to extend learning in the home.
- **Intentional instructional strategies** are both **play-based and responsive** (see above) and can include a range of strategies, like educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed learning experiences, and child-led exploration and learning where there is a specific target or intended learning goal or outcome of the experience.
 - In **educator-led explicit instruction** within a curriculum, educators explain and introduce a new skill or concept children have not learned before, such as sounding out a new letter, but do it in a way that still invites child participation to respond and engage with the new skill in a playful way.
 - In **co-constructed learning** within a curriculum, an educator provides children with guidance and scaffolding to reach a specific learning goal during an activity, such as offering prompts or materials for counting, but follows the child's lead with their engagement in the activity, such as observing how children explore different ways of lining up the objects to count to 10, or inviting children to find additional objects in the environment they want to count.
 - In **child-led exploration and learning**¹³ within a curriculum, an educator may offer a more open-ended learning experience or prompt such as building a zoo for animals, with some expected learning goals in mind (like spatial thinking and measurement), but follows the child's lead if they come up with a completely different idea to instead (for example) build a stream for the animals to drink from, which may target additional learning goals (which the educator should still identify and support children in reaching these goals).

Overall, a curriculum that promotes play-based and responsive practices using intentional instructional strategies ensures meaningful and joyful learning experiences for children.

¹² "Children learn from play, exploration, and pedagogy that are responsive to their interests. Children's play has the potential to contribute to the cultural relevance of early education, as child-initiated play reflects children's cultural experiences and how they see themselves within the larger society, providing teachers with an important lens into their lived experiences" (A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum, page 96)

¹³ There may also be opportunities for child-led exploration and learning outside of the curriculum in the form of free play and more unstructured learning time that may not be captured in explicit curriculum activities.



Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices



Element Areas

The element focuses on how a curriculum should emphasize play-based, responsive, and intentional teaching and facilitate child-led exploration based on children's strengths, interests, and abilities. This element includes **eight** areas:

- Facilitates child-led exploration with intentional learning goals
- Responsive to child interests
- Balance of educator, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities
- Individualized and responsive teaching for all children including children with disabilities
- Individualized and responsive teaching for multilingual learners
- Assessment integration with curriculum
- Using assessment results and observations to individualize instruction
- Communicating assessment results to families to extend curriculum learning in the home

Additional Resources

- For additional alignment of this rubric with [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), reference Table 4-1 on page 127 which identifies several high-quality curriculum characteristics related to this element on play-based and responsive instructional practices.
 - **“Emphasizes responsive, intentional teaching”**: Some of the considerations within this characteristic are “Do learning experiences include both child-focused exploration and investigation and teacher-guided instruction? Is the curriculum responsive to children’s strengths and interests?”

- **“Supports multilingual learners and various language systems”**: One consideration within this characteristic is “Does the curriculum provide instructional support for teachers to scaffold children’s English language development while also supporting multilingual learners’ home languages or their language system?”
- **“Provides individuation and effective supports for children with identified disabilities”**: One consideration within this characteristic is “Does the curriculum provide for adaptations, accommodations, modifications, and effective supports for children with identified disabilities or developmental delays?”
- **“Supports individualized instruction for every child”**: Some considerations include “Does the curriculum offer guidance for teachers to adapt recommended teaching strategies and learning experiences according to individual children’s strengths, interests, abilities, needs, and continuing learning progress? Is the guidance detailed and easy to use, including both key components of high-quality formative assessment, assessing to understand children’s level of thinking, strategies, etc., and modifying tasks and teaching strategies based on understanding?”
- **“Includes ongoing assessment tools and strategies aligned with goals and experiences”**: One consideration is “Is there support for teachers to collect, analyze, and use information from both formative and summative assessments to adapt and individualize instruction and to help children make continued progress?”
- Related sections of [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#) include chapter 6, Specialized and Targeted Curricula and Practices for Supporting Children with Disabilities (page 253) and chapter 7, High-Quality Early Childhood Curriculum for Multilingual Learners. There is also a helpful section on teaching strategies and instructional practices for multilingual learners on page 311, as well as assessment practices for multilingual learners on page 313.

Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices




- [The UDL Guidelines](#): UDL is a framework that embraces variability, removes barriers, and supports learning agency through specific strategies that are based on what we know about how we learn
- [The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education](#): This resource describes in rich detail the importance of play-based learning. Strategies outlined in this resource can be used in tandem with curriculum to ensure curriculum implementation is play-based, responsive, and engaging for children
- [The Desired Results Developmental Profile \(DRDP\) assessment](#): The DRDP is an observational assessment developed by the CDE and is required in state-funded preschool programs. This assessment will be updated to the 2025 version, and updates can be found on the CDE website for this version: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/desiredresults.asp>

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on play-based and responsive instructional practices.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:


	Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Facilitates child-led exploration with intentional learning goals		<p>Includes example center time (also known as choice time) activities where children can choose the learning center they go to and there are opportunities for child-led exploration and learning within the center activities.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one of the following:</p> <p>Includes clear, intentional, learning goals detailed for each learning center that align with the curriculum theme or unit of study. For example, if the curriculum theme is about “Animals,” the block area is set up for children to make a zoo and there are intentional learning goals related to math (example: spatial thinking and measurement), science (such as grouping similar animals together), and approaches to learning skills (example: children planning their zoo design).</p> <p>Includes guidance and example prompts to extend children’s play and help scaffold and individualize children’s learning experience(s) toward learning goals aligned to the PTKLF. This is especially important when children become disengaged or the identified learning goal of the center is too easy or challenging for individual children.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes clear, intentional, learning goals detailed for each learning center that align with the curriculum theme or unit of study. For example, if the curriculum theme is about “Animals,” the block area is set up for children to make a zoo and there are intentional learning goals related to math (example: spatial thinking and measurement), science (such as grouping similar animals together), and approaches to learning skills (example: children planning their zoo design).</p> <p>Includes guidance and example prompts to extend children’s play and help scaffold and individualize children’s learning experience(s) toward learning goals aligned to the PTKLF. This is especially important when children become disengaged or the identified learning goal of the center is too easy or challenging for individual children.</p>	

 Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Responsive to child interests		<p>Includes guidance, such as example questions and provocations, to gather information on child interests, including collaboration with families. For example, a curriculum may include example survey questions or parent conference interview questions to families on children’s interests.</p>	<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning activities to reflect the interests of children during center time. For example, if the unit of study is on Animals, then the curriculum offers suggestions for the dramatic play area to reflect this theme (example: vet clinic, pet shop, zoo), but still notes that educators have the flexibility to choose a different dramatic play area theme to reflect the interests of children.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning activities to reflect the interests of children during small group and whole-group time. For example, if there is a small-group curriculum activity on patterning using natural materials, the curriculum suggests that children can choose the materials they want to use, bring their own from home or from the outdoors etc. Another example may include the curriculum providing multiple options for a whole-group dance activity aligned to the curriculum theme, but encourages educators to choose the activity they think will most interest/engage the children.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning activities to reflect the interests of children during center time. For example, if the unit of study is on Animals, then the curriculum offers suggestions for the dramatic play area to reflect this theme (example: vet clinic, pet shop, zoo), but still notes that educators have the flexibility to choose a different dramatic play area theme to reflect the interests of children.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning activities to reflect the interests of children during small group and whole-group time. For example, if there is a small-group curriculum activity on patterning using natural materials, the curriculum suggests that children can choose the materials they want to use, bring their own from home or from the outdoors etc. Another example may include the curriculum providing multiple options for a whole-group dance activity aligned to the curriculum theme, but encourages educators to choose the activity they think will most interest/engage the children.</p>	
Balance of educator-led, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities		<p>Includes both educator- and child-led learning opportunities although there may be an imbalance where either 1.) most learning activities are educator-led where the educator provides instruction throughout the activity and there is little child agency or incorporation of children’s ideas or 2.) most learning activities involve child-led exploration and learning where the learning goal is vague, and there is limited guidance for different roles the educator could play in the child’s learning to provide scaffolding and support.</p>	<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes play-based and responsive learning activities that detail a balance of educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed activities, and child-led learning activities where child agency and ideas are incorporated.</p> <p>Includes guidance on the different roles the educator can play to support and guide children’s play during curriculum activities outlined in center or choice time to achieve intentional learning goals outlined in the PTKLF (example: the educator can be more of an observer or a collaborator.)</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes play-based and responsive learning activities that detail a balance of educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed activities, and child-led learning activities where child agency and ideas are incorporated.</p> <p>Includes guidance on the different roles the educator can play to support and guide children’s play during curriculum activities outlined in center or choice time to achieve intentional learning goals outlined in the PTKLF (example: the educator can be more of an observer or a collaborator.)</p>	

	Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Individualized and responsive teaching for all children, including children with disabilities		Includes suggestions for how to modify or individualize activities to allow accessibility for all children, including children with disabilities. For example, the curriculum may include a call-out box for accommodations to allow the activity to be accessible for Deaf children, children with sensory sensitivities, or children with physical impairments.	Includes learning activities that already embed principles of Universal Design for Learning, ¹⁴ where a variety of materials, visuals, and educator prompts are embedded within each activity so all children can engage in learning (example: not limited to a separate call-out box focused on a specific disability type).	Addresses Progressing and there is guidance for educators on how to adjust instructional strategies during an activity based on how children are responding. For example, the curriculum may provide additional strategies on what to do if a child is not able to answer a specific prompt or is having difficulty engaging with specific materials. In a family childcare home, guidance may suggest pairing up an older child to help a younger child complete a task or prompt.	
	Individualized and responsive teaching for multilingual learners		Includes suggestions for how to modify or individualize activities for children whose home language(s) is not English. For example, the curriculum may include a call-out box with a few suggestions or tips to keep in mind on adapting the activity for multilingual learners.	Includes learning activities that already embed home language(s) support (example: prompts, sentence frames, modeling in home language(s) and English) to enhance children's understanding of concepts, including the use of optional educator scripts in different language(s) when applicable to individualize instruction.	Addresses both of the following: Addresses Progressing but more robustly across all learning domains in the PTKLF, not just learning activities focused on language and literacy. For example, the curriculum may also include sentence frames and other strategies during science, math, and social and emotional development activities. Includes strategies for meaningful family engagement to reinforce home language(s) development and encourages ongoing input from families about language practices to individualize support for multilingual learners.	

14 Universal Design for Learning provides a framework for creating inclusive environments where all children, regardless of abilities, can participate and thrive. It focuses on proactively addressing the diverse needs of learners by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression (Eva M. Horn, Susan B. Palmer, Gretchen D. Butera, and Joan Lieber “Six Steps to Inclusive Preschool Curriculum” [Brookes Publishing, 2016]).

 Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Assessment integration with curriculum		<p>Includes guidance on how to observe children’s learning across activities in the curriculum to check their understanding of content and learning goals. For example, the curriculum may provide observation sheets for activities that detail the learning goal and notes to take on skills children are demonstrating related to the learning goal.</p>	<p>Includes a valid and reliable curriculum-embedded assessment that uses a combination of observations and prompts, including prompts in a child’s home language(s), for educators to use during learning activities to assess children’s understanding across regular intervals of the curriculum, including guidance on how to document observations.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes explicit guidance or an alignment document with connections to state or district-mandated assessments, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment, to assess children’s progression of skills within each learning activity detailed in the curriculum. Includes guidance on how to assess children’s understanding of content in the curriculum in their home language(s), including strategies for collaborating with families. 	
Using assessment results and observations to individualize instruction		<p>Includes guidance on how to use assessment results to individualize learning opportunities in at least one time point per unit of study, although curriculum suggestions may be more broad. For example, if a child is scoring poorly in math overall at the end of the six-week unit of study, the curriculum suggests offering additional or repeating existing math learning opportunities from that unit.</p>	<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to use more specific (and frequent) assessment results to individualize learning opportunities targeting specific learning goals. For example, if a child is not able to identify rhymes in week 1–2 of the curriculum, the curriculum has suggestions for additional curriculum activities for that child in weeks 3–4. Includes a variety of prompts and strategies within learning opportunities that support children below and above the intended learning goal of the activity. For example, if an activity involves making AB patterns (example: red, yellow, red, yellow), there are specific strategies for one child who is having trouble extending the AB pattern, and other specific strategies for a child where AB patterns are too easy and they need more of a challenge. 	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to use more specific (and frequent) assessment results to individualize learning opportunities targeting specific learning goals. For example, if a child is not able to identify rhymes in week 1–2 of the curriculum, the curriculum has suggestions for additional curriculum activities for that child in weeks 3–4. Includes a variety of prompts and strategies within learning opportunities that support children below and above the intended learning goal of the activity. For example, if an activity involves making AB patterns (example: red, yellow, red, yellow), there are specific strategies for one child who is having trouble extending the AB pattern, and other specific strategies for a child where AB patterns are too easy and they need more of a challenge. 	

	Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Communicating assessment results to families to extend curriculum learning in the home</p>		<p>Includes the sharing of assessment results of children’s progress with families at regular intervals in the curriculum. For example, the curriculum mentions to share assessment results at the end of each unit of study.</p>	<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage with families on sharing and discussing assessment results on specific skills targeted by the curriculum in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. For example, the curriculum provides example templates, including ones in different language(s), as well as conversation starters and tips.</p> <p>Includes detailed guidance on how to extend the learning goals in the curriculum in the child’s home given the child’s individual progress on different parts of the assessment. The curriculum provides one-pagers or templates for each learning goal in the curriculum (example: isolating the first sound of a word) and how to support a child at home to build this skill.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage with families on sharing and discussing assessment results on specific skills targeted by the curriculum in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. For example, the curriculum provides example templates, including ones in different language(s), as well as conversation starters and tips.</p> <p>Includes detailed guidance on how to extend the learning goals in the curriculum in the child’s home given the child’s individual progress on different parts of the assessment. The curriculum provides one-pagers or templates for each learning goal in the curriculum (example: isolating the first sound of a word) and how to support a child at home to build this skill.</p>	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 24:					

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Curricular Approach Element: **Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities



★ Overview

Language is foundational across all content areas in the Preschool/TK Learning Foundations (PTKLF). Supporting the development of children’s home language(s) is critical for strengthening family relationships, building connections to children’s culture and community, and setting them on pathways to bilingualism and biliteracy. While strategies to support children’s language(s) should be embedded throughout the preschool and TK program day and routines, curriculum should include robust strategies and meaningful learning opportunities to develop children’s language skills across content areas that can intentionally be utilized throughout the program day and routines.

Element Areas

The element emphasizes the importance of curriculum promoting language development for all children through consistent opportunities to use English and children’s home language(s) throughout the curriculum. This element includes **four** areas:

- Creating opportunities for children to use language
- Creating opportunities for children to use language with peers
- Extending children’s language use
- Promoting vocabulary use across content areas

Additional Resources

- For additional consideration on implementation of the California English Learner Roadmap policy as a framework to guide practice in preschools/TK classrooms, reference the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Toolkit for English Learner Roadmap Implementation, developed by Californians Together. For specific information on intentional language development opportunities reference pages 53–58, 60–67, 72–73, 79–92, 95–98)
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Language and Literacy Development domain (Foundational Language development sub-domain) for more tips on providing language opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum (in more than one language):
 - [Supporting Vocabulary Growth and Development](#)
 - [Promoting Rich Language Use](#)
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Language and Literacy Development domain (English Language Development sub-domain) for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support language skills of children learning English as a second language:
 - [Supporting Vocabulary Growth and Development \(ELD\)](#)
 - [Promoting Rich Language Use \(ELD\)](#)
- For technical support, guidance, frequently asked questions, and resources for the identification and support of dual language learners, visit [Dual Language Learner \(DLL\) Support – Child Development \(CDE\)](#)
- For additional consideration on school readiness and school success for children who are dual language learners, see [The Importance of Home Language Series](#) by Head Start. The series of handouts is designed to provide staff and families with basic information on topics related to children learning two or more languages. They emphasize the benefits of being bilingual, the importance of maintaining home language, and the value of becoming fully bilingual.

Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities




- See the [Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#) for an online hub for research-based key principles, instructional strategies, and associated, free, practical, and easy-to-use resources that are geared toward educators who teach PreK-3rd multilingual learners
- The video [Affirming Language, Culture, & Identity](#) by SEAL depicts preschool environments where children’s languages, cultures, and identities are welcomed, present, and affirmed.
- The video [Complex Oral Language](#) by SEAL presents strategies to support children to develop and produce rich and complex language, both their home language and English.

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on how the curriculum provides intentional language development opportunities across activities.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

 Intentional Language Development Opportunities	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Creating opportunities for children to use language		Includes some opportunities for children to respond to questions, ask questions, and engage in group discussions (example: most opportunities are during read-alouds or at morning meetings).	Addresses both of the following: Includes multiple opportunities (example: daily and across different learning contexts- not just read-alouds and morning meetings) for children to respond to questions, ask questions, and engage in small group and one-on-one discussions. Includes guidance, scripts and prompts (example: sentence starters/ frames) to encourage and invite children to respond in English, the partner language ¹⁵ (if in a dual-language program), and/or in their home language(s), including nonverbal and verbal means of communication.	Addresses Progressing and both of the following: Includes detailed guidance on how to build on children’s home language(s) and linguistic assets during curriculum activities by encouraging translanguaging and cross-language connections such as highlighting cognates (example: family in English; familia in Spanish; famiglia in Italian; familia in Portuguese) to support language development and affirm their full linguistic repertoire. Includes guidance on how to engage with families to continue supporting home language(s) development including extending children’s use of language (example: asking open-ended questions and follow-up questions to encourage children to communicate in more detail), and supporting use of new vocabulary.	

¹⁵ The partner language is the second language used for teaching in a dual-language program (example: Spanish in an English–Spanish program). It shares instructional time with English so children learn and use both languages every day.

 Intentional Language Development Opportunities	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Creating opportunities for children to use language with peers		Includes informal opportunities for peer-to-peer conversation, such as during play or suggested center time activities.	Includes explicit opportunities for peer-to-peer conversation, such as prompts to engage children in conversation, like turn-and-talk following a read-aloud (example: "Turn to your partner and talk about what you might be feeling if you were the main character."). At this level, the curriculum also includes considerations for pairing children who share the same home language(s).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes a variety of strategies to encourage peer-to-peer conversation across multiple learning contexts (example: whole-group, small-group, free play, read-alouds, etc.), such as use of pictures or realia where children are asked to observe an image or object and describe it to their partner, or another opportunity where children are asked to share their solution to solving a math problem.	
Extending children's language use		Includes open-ended questions and example follow-up questions to ask children during a read-aloud or morning meeting activity.	Addresses Emerging and the following: Includes additional example open-ended questions to extend children's language in multiple learning contexts and during activities targeting different domains of the PTKLF (math, social and emotional, science, etc.).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes a list of multiple follow-up prompts, questions, and strategies for continuously extending children's language use (example: asking them to share more details) to encourage back-and-forth conversations.	

 Intentional Language Development Opportunities	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Promoting vocabulary use across content areas		Includes a list of content-specific vocabulary.	Addresses Emerging and the following: Includes a list of content specific vocabulary, including in English, the partner language (if in a dual-language program), and children’s home language(s) during literacy and read-aloud activities. Ideally, there is also an accompanying recording of the pronunciation of the non-English vocabulary word or video demonstrating a word in American Sign Language, as well as resources for authentic translation for children’s home language(s) if not already provided, and includes additional content-specific vocabulary in activities outside of literacy such as math, science, and social and emotional development.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes guidance on how to reinforce new vocabulary learned in English, the partner language (if in a dual-language program), and children’s home language(s) across different elements of the curriculum. For example, if the curriculum theme is “Insects” and children learn new vocabulary on parts of an insect or types of insects, the curriculum provides reminders across curriculum activities to model the newly learned vocabulary and encourage children to use the new vocabulary during play.	
Totals:					
Overall Score out of 12:					

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Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Curricular Approach Element: **Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging**



★ Overview

Books, materials, and units of study or topical themes are key tools educators use to introduce content and support children’s engagement in learning to meet developmental goals outlined in the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF). While these tools are core components of curriculum, they should also be incorporated in the preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) program outside of the curriculum, such as during free play. In order for books, materials, and units of study to be high quality, they need to be culturally and linguistically responsive, which requires that the curriculum provide guidance on how to engage and partner with families to ensure these elements meaningfully reflect children’s community, culture, language, identities, interests, and abilities. Curriculum may provide explicit signals or entry points of where there is opportunity to replace or enhance books, materials, and units of study to bridge community and family connections, and then provide additional guidance or prompts on how to engage with families and the broader community (example: community elders) to authentically build on children’s lived experiences.

Element Areas

The element focuses on how a curriculum uses units of study, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices. This element includes **seven** areas:

- Cultural diversity and inclusion in books
- Linguistic diversity in books
- Cultural diversity and inclusion in learning materials
- Linguistic diversity in learning materials
- Open-ended and engaging learning materials
- Units of study include home-program connections
- Units of study are aligned and integrated with PTKLF domains

Curricular Approach Element: **Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging**



Additional Resources


- For additional alignment of this rubric with [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), reference Table 4-1 on page 127 which identifies several high-quality curriculum characteristics related to this element on culturally and linguistically responsive units, books and materials:
 - **Supports culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining teaching and learning:** Some of the considerations within this characteristic are “Does the curriculum promote a strength-based approach, recognizing that all development and learning is a product of cultural experiences? Does the curriculum positively promote children’s cultural and racial identities and home languages, and recognize and build on their prior knowledge and competence acquired in their families and communities?”
 - **Supports family engagement:** Some of the considerations within this characteristic are “Does the curriculum promote reciprocal partnerships with families? Are materials and strategies provided for families in their preferred languages so they can engage in school experiences and decisions and extend children’s learning at home?”
- Additionally, on page 20 of [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), the importance of culturally responsive and linguistically affirming pedagogy is highlighted. On page 24, the importance of involving families to provide a culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum is highlighted
- See the [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard](#) by the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, which consists of checklists intended to help place specific practices, instructional materials, and interactions on a continuum from culturally responsive to culturally disruptive
- See the video [SEAL Preschool Environment & Families](#) from SEAL on integrating units of study and fostering home-program connections
- See the video [Using Open-Ended Materials to Spark Curiosity](#) from Edutopia on using open-ended materials to spark curiosity

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Cultural diversity and inclusion in books		Addresses one of the following: Includes books that illustrate a diversity of characters and communities across multiple racial/ethnic groups, identities, abilities (example: children with disabilities), and cultures. ¹⁶ Includes books that illustrate characters and communities that reflect the racial/ethnic demographic, identities, abilities, and culture of children and families in the program.	Addresses both of the following: Includes books that illustrate a diversity of characters and communities across multiple racial/ethnic groups, identities, abilities (example: children with disabilities), and cultures. Includes books that illustrate characters and communities that reflect the racial/ethnic demographic, identities, abilities, and culture of children and families in the program.	Addresses Progressing and includes guidance on how to approve existing books that come with the curriculum, or substitute books with different ones (identified in Progressing) based on engagement with families to ensure authentic representation of children’s culture, abilities, and identities in the books.	

¹⁶ It is important that certain groups are not always playing specific characters in a book or story, for example, characters of color being portrayed as the “bad guy” or expressing more negative emotions, or children with disabilities always being the character that needs help (instead of being the hero of the story).


 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Linguistic diversity in books		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes books in English (and the partner language¹⁷ if in a dual-language program), and most of these books additionally provide translations of key vocabulary in the home language(s) of children in the program (example: English and Spanish, but also the other top languages in California preschools and TK such as Cantonese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, and Arabic).</p> <p>Includes at least two books per unit of study¹⁸ that are available in at least one language other than English.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes books in English (and the partner language if in a dual-language program), and most of these books additionally provide translations of key vocabulary in the home language(s) of children in the program (example: English and Spanish, but also the other top languages in California preschools such as Cantonese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, and Arabic).</p> <p>Includes at least two books per unit of study that are available in at least one language other than English.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to translate key vocabulary from existing English books in less common languages that may be spoken or used to communicate by children in the program (including recordings of accurate pronunciation, or videos of American Sign Language), and/or how to substitute books with different ones based on engagement with families to ensure authentic representation of children’s home language(s) in books.</p> <p>If an additional home language(s) is spoken by children in the program (not Spanish), there is either guidance on how to substitute existing books for books available in those language(s) or the curriculum provides those books.</p>	


17 The partner language is the second language used for teaching in a dual-language program (example: Spanish in an English-Spanish program). It shares instructional time with English so children learn and use both languages every day.


18 Units of study (can also be referred to as “curriculum themes”) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.

 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Cultural diversity and inclusion in learning materials		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes and/or suggests the use of materials, cultural artifacts and toys that reflect a diversity of racial and ethnic groups, identities, and abilities¹⁹. For example, the curriculum includes or suggests the use of dolls with a range of skin tones, authentic cultural dress, and physical characteristics, as well as adaptive equipment such as wheelchairs or feeding tubes. These items should not reflect stereotypes of the specific racial, ethnic, or cultural groups, for example, dolls wearing stereotypical cultural clothing without authentic engagement from families or communities who are part of that culture.</p> <p>Includes and/or suggests the use of multiple materials and real-world objects and artifacts that are representative of the demographic of children and families in the program, as well as representative of the community and geography of the program, for example, suggestions to include a tortilla press in the dramatic play center, or a doll with a cochlear implant if a child in the program has one.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes and/or suggests the use of materials, cultural artifacts and toys that reflect a diversity of racial and ethnic groups, identities, and abilities. For example, the curriculum includes or suggests the use of dolls with a range of skin tones, authentic cultural dress, and physical characteristics, as well as adaptive equipment such as wheelchairs or feeding tubes. These items should not reflect stereotypes of the specific racial, ethnic, or cultural groups, for example, dolls wearing stereotypical cultural clothing without authentic engagement from families or communities who are part of that culture.</p> <p>Includes and/or suggests the use of multiple materials and real-world objects and artifacts that are representative of the demographic of children and families in the program, as well as representative of the community and geography of the program, for example, suggestions to include a tortilla press in the dramatic play center, or a doll with a cochlear implant if a child in the program has one.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage with families to source or suggest learning materials or activities from their culture or community.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to adapt existing curriculum materials to be more meaningful to children. For example, changing a math patterning activity with colored paint to an activity on patterning with basket weaving, which may be a cultural activity that is meaningful to families in the program.</p>	

19 It is important that materials do not portray certain groups of children in one way or another. For example, when teaching emotional skills, the picture of “mad” being the face of a Black child and the picture of “happy” being the face of a white child, or the picture of “scared” or “sad” being the picture of a child with a disability. This reinforces biases toward certain groups.

 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Linguistic diversity in learning materials		<p>Includes bilingual learning materials in one language in addition to English (like Spanish) in the form of posters (such as feelings posters in Spanish), labels (such as “dramatic play center” in Spanish) or other materials (such as cards with Spanish vocabulary and pictures). For dual-language programs, learning materials should be available in both English and the partner language.</p>	<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses Emerging but for two or more languages besides English (like Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic). <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning materials to reflect the home language(s) of children in the program through engagement with families. For example, the curriculum makes suggestions on when learning materials provided by the curriculum (like posters, songs, cards, games) can be adapted or substituted with different languages.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses Emerging but for two or more languages besides English (like Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic). <p>Includes guidance on how to enhance learning materials to reflect the home language(s) of children in the program through engagement with families. For example, the curriculum makes suggestions on when learning materials provided by the curriculum (like posters, songs, cards, games) can be adapted or substituted with different languages.</p>	
Open-ended and engaging learning materials		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes manipulatives and materials for learning activities that are open ended (like loose parts). Includes consistent (daily) opportunities to use movement during learning activities, and how to set up the learning space to promote movement during the learning activity. Includes opportunities to use natural materials (like leaves) and recycled materials (like egg cartons), including how to engage with families to source materials. 	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes manipulatives and materials for learning activities that are open ended (like loose parts). Includes consistent (daily) opportunities to use movement during learning activities, and how to set up the learning space to promote movement during the learning activity. Includes opportunities to use natural materials (like leaves) and recycled materials (like egg cartons), including how to engage with families to source materials. 	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes manipulatives and materials for learning activities that are open ended (like loose parts). Includes consistent (daily) opportunities to use movement during learning activities, and how to set up the learning space to promote movement during the learning activity. Includes opportunities to use natural materials (like leaves) and recycled materials (like egg cartons), including how to engage with families to source materials. 	

 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Units of study include home – program connections		<p>Includes occasional family curriculum resources (like one in the Fall and another in the Spring), such as family newsletters that describe content covered in the curriculum and may include some suggested activities to support learning in the home.</p>	<p>Includes several time points for family newsletters, either monthly or bimonthly, that introduce or extend content covered in a specific unit of study, as well as suggested activities in key learning domains (math, literacy, language, social and emotional development) to support learning in the home, for example, providing ways to include children in everyday tasks.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes family curriculum resources that are available in the home language(s) of the families in the program, or there is guidance on how to authentically translate materials in other languages (if curriculum does not include those languages). Includes materials for families that allow for different ways to engage in weekly home-learning activities, and accounts for individualized needs and access to available materials/ experiences in the child’s home. Includes strategies and tools for teachers to learn about the families in their classroom and integrate that information into the curriculum (example: a Question of the Day at drop-off for families to share something about themselves, like how they get their children to school, which could lead to an investigation on modes of transportation). 	

 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Units of study are aligned and integrated with PTKLF domains		Includes units of study that are developmentally appropriate, including topics that are concrete, and tangible and reflect the interests of three to five-year-old children.	Addresses one of the following: Includes units of study or themes that cover topics in-depth in History–Social Science, Science, and Social and Emotional Development domains in the PTKLF (example: Living Things, People in My Community), including entry points to enhance units of study to reflect children’s families/communities. For example, if the unit of study is on Buildings, there is flexibility and guidance on how to integrate “buildings” from the program’s community. Includes units of study or themes that are meaningfully connected to and integrated across domains in the PTKLF. For example, most math small-group activities provided by the curriculum are integrated with the unit of study, the dramatic play area where children practice social skills is integrated with the unit of study, read-aloud books are integrated with the unit of study, etc.	Addresses both of the following: Includes units of study or themes that cover topics in-depth in History–Social Science, Science, and Social and Emotional Development domains in the PTKLF (example: Living Things, People in My Community), including entry points to enhance units of study to reflect children’s families/communities. For example, if the unit of study is on Buildings, there is flexibility and guidance on how to integrate “buildings” from the program’s community. Includes units of study or themes that are meaningfully connected to and integrated across domains in the PTKLF. For example, most math small-group activities provided by the curriculum are integrated with the unit of study, the dramatic play area where children practice social skills is integrated with the unit of study, read-aloud books are integrated with the unit of study, etc.	
Totals:					
Overall Score out of 21:					

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Curricular Approach Element: **Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:

Content Approach Rubrics

Approaches to Learning	51
Social and Emotional Development	56
Language and Literacy	61
Mathematics	69
Science	74
Physical Development	80
Health	85
History–Social Science	88
Visual and Performing Arts	94



Content Element: Approaches to Learning

★ Overview

Approaches to learning skills support children’s ability to meaningfully engage in learning goals across content areas in a curriculum. While approaches to learning skills can be supported outside of curriculum in different parts of the preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) program day and routines, there are specific areas where curriculum can integrate these important skills. For example, curriculum should include learning activities that promote problem-solving skills, planning skills, and executive functioning skills through meaningful content integration across multiple domains of the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF), like math, literacy, the arts, and science. Curriculum should also include opportunities for project-based learning and immersing in content and sequenced learning goals over a series of days and weeks to build perseverance, curiosity, and interest. Additionally, curriculum should include explicit educator strategies for how to build approaches to learning skills in alignment with the developmental trajectories outlined in the PTKLF, so that children not only have the opportunity to problem solve, plan, and exercise executive functioning skills, but also receive scaffolded support to build these skills over time.

Element Areas

The element emphasizes how curriculum should provide opportunities to flexibly support children to develop their motivation to learn, ability to work toward goals, and self-regulation across content areas aligned to the Approaches to Learning domain of the PTKLF. This element includes **six** areas:

- Builds perseverance (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF)
- Builds curiosity (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF)
- Exercises working memory and flexibility (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF)
- Exercises inhibitory control (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF)
- Facilitates problem-solving skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF)
- Facilitates planning skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- For additional consideration on executive function as a foundation for learning, see pages 83–85 in a [New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Approaches to Learning domain for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support Approaches to Learning skills:
 - [Support Curious Learners](#)
 - [Encourage Children to Be Self-Starters](#)
 - [Supporting Engaged Learners](#)
 - [Supporting Persistent Learners](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Executive Functioning Skills](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Problem-Solving](#)
- See [DREME network resources](#) for integrating executive functioning skills with math learning


Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element

Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the Approaches to Learning domain in the PTKLF.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:

 Approaches to Learning	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Builds perseverance (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF)		Includes learning opportunities that involve children engaging in two-step (or more) processes to solve a problem or accomplish a goal to help build their perseverance (example: the curriculum encourages educators to provide two step directions like “cut out shape, then glue”).	Addresses Emerging and one of the following: Includes several projects (at least one per unit) that may last several days so children can build perseverance and confidence in working toward a goal or product over a longer period of time. Includes guidance to educators on how to build perseverance skills, as well as example prompts to use to validate children’s effort and strengths when completing a task. (Examples: Using positive reinforcement, “I saw you try to build your tower again after it fell and this time it didn’t tip over. Great effort!” “You put your shoes on all by yourself today! I loved seeing you gently take them from the shoe shelf, sit safely and put them on one at a time.” “You put your jacket in your cubby. You are being responsible.” “Would you like to take a break and come back later?”, “You kept trying even when it was hard.”)	Addresses Emerging and both of the following: Includes several projects (at least one per unit) that may last several days so children can build perseverance and confidence in working toward a goal or product over a longer period of time. Includes guidance to educators on how to build perseverance skills, as well as example prompts to use to validate children’s effort and strengths when completing a task.	

 Approaches to Learning	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Builds curiosity (part of Motivation to Learn in PTKLF)		Includes some examples of open-ended questions or example prompts (example: asking “why” and “how” questions).	Includes consistent opportunities (daily) for children to respond to open-ended questions or prompts (verbally or nonverbally, and in more than one languages) across multiple content areas (example: not just science and literacy, but also math, social and emotional development, history–social science, etc.), as well as providing example prompts that encourage children to ask their own questions (example: “what other things might we want to know about ____?”).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Provides guidance for educators on how to individualize teaching strategies to extend children’s thinking and provide scaffolding to help children ask more detailed questions or participate in more open-ended learning experiences and investigations.	
Exercises working memory and flexibility (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF)		Includes some learning opportunities for children to practice working memory skills (example: memory matching card game; asking recall questions from a read aloud book) and flexible thinking skills (example: sorting objects by one attribute like color, and then resorting on a different attribute, like shape).	Includes consistent and varied ²⁰ learning opportunities (at least two or three times per unit of study ²¹) for children to practice working memory skills and flexible thinking skills, gradually increasing the difficulty of the rules or mental loads (example: the curriculum may include playing a game where you learn a pattern of touching your head, shoulders, knees, and toes, and then the pattern is switched to touching head, knees, shoulders, and toes).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Embeds working memory skills and flexible thinking skills across different content areas in the PTKLF and activity types (example: the curriculum may add a working memory component to a small-group adding and subtracting activity by hiding some of the objects, or the curriculum may add a flexible thinking component to a letter–sound match game where first you match the letter to the sound and then the sound to the letter).	
Exercises inhibitory control (part of Executive Functioning in PTKLF)		Includes some learning activities (one or two times per month) that promote self-regulation skills, such as freeze dance, Simon Says, games that involve turn-taking.	Includes consistent and varied learning activities (more than once per week) that promote self-regulation skills, such as, using puppets to learn how to raise your hand to speak, practicing learning to walk in a line as a game, freeze dance, Simon Says, games that involve turn-taking, and role-playing scenarios that model self-regulation skills.	Addresses Progressing and more intentionally integrates self-regulation skills with content in other learning domains, as well as provides a sequence of how to increase the difficulty of self-regulation learning opportunities over time to foster development in this skill, such as increasing the difficulty of rules in a self-regulation game related to curriculum content.	

20 Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

21 Units of study (can also be referred to as “curriculum themes”) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.

 Approaches to Learning	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Facilitates problem-solving skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF)		Includes learning opportunities for children to practice problem-solving skills, such as playful tasks that have alternative solutions or a sequence of steps to solve the problem (example: building a bridge or color mixing).	Addresses Emerging and one of the following: Includes guidance for educators on how to model problem-solving strategies and scaffold throughout the problem-solving process during learning activities found in the curriculum (example: “you tried using the smaller blocks to make the tower taller; what other blocks can we use to make the tower more stable?”) Includes ongoing opportunities for children to collaborate together to solve problems, and work on more complex and playful problem-solving tasks (example: solving scavenger hunt clues together).	Addresses Emerging and both of the following: Includes guidance for educators on how to model problem-solving strategies and scaffold throughout the problem-solving process during learning activities found in the curriculum (example: “you tried using the smaller blocks to make the tower taller; what other blocks can we use to make the tower more stable?”) Includes ongoing opportunities for children to collaborate together to solve problems, and work on more complex and playful problem-solving tasks (example: solving scavenger hunt clues together).	
Facilitates planning skills (part of Goal-Directed Learning in PTKLF)		Includes some prompts during learning opportunities to ask children what their plan is, such as what they plan to build/draw/write at center time (example: a child may respond, “I am going to draw my sister!”).	Includes consistent and varied learning opportunities that involve children making two-step plans before carrying out a task, such as asking “What will you do first?” and “What will you do next?” when a child is planning to build a tower.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Embeds these learning opportunities across various curriculum activities that gradually increases the difficulty of plans children make, such as children making plans each day during center time, as well as guidance on how to scaffold children’s plan-making so they are able to make more detailed plans for play over time.	
Totals:					
Overall Score out of 18:					

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Content Element: **Approaches to Learning**

Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: Social and Emotional Development

★ Overview

Social and emotional development serves as a foundation for children’s development and learning in all domains of the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF). While social and emotional skills are supported in areas outside of the curriculum in everyday interactions and routines, such as through teaching strategies in the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or Teaching Pyramid Model, social and emotional development is also a key content area in preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) curriculum. Curriculum should include content on children’s development of identity, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, and ability, as well as support the development of a child’s ability to identify personal preferences in their everyday environment. Curriculum should also include content on social awareness skills, such as identifying the preferences of others, navigating conflicts, helping others, and expressing empathy and care for others. Curriculum should also include content on building emotional vocabulary and knowledge, as well as educator strategies for modeling regulation and co-regulation skills to express emotions in productive ways. Social and emotional content should also be meaningfully integrated throughout the curriculum, and appear across content areas such as literacy, the arts, math, and history–social science. Additionally, curriculum should include strategies for engaging families at various entry points to ensure social and emotional content is culturally and linguistically responsive, as well as offer guidance on how to adjust social and emotional learning activities to be tailored to the experiences and needs of children and families in the program.

Element Areas

The content element focuses on how a curriculum can provide consistent opportunity for developing social and emotional skills and content knowledge aligned to the Social and Emotional Development domain of the PTKLF. This element includes **five** areas:

- Self-awareness and identity (part of Self in PTKLF)
- Emotion knowledge and emotion expression (part of Self in PTKLF)
- Social awareness skills (part of Self and Interactions and Relationships with Peers in PTKLF)
- Social and emotional content integration across other PTKLF domains
- Dedicated time for social and emotional learning

Additional Resources


- For additional consideration on social and emotional development as a foundation for learning see pages 82–83 and 139–141 in [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Social and Emotional Development domain for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support Social and Emotional skills:
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Support Children’s Identity Development](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Cultivate Children’s Confidence in Their Own Abilities](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Support Children’s Emotion Expression and Regulation](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers in Building Awareness of Similarities and Differences across People](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Foster Empathy and Caring](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Foster Children’s Cooperative Interactions with Peers](#)
 - [Guidance for Teachers to Promote Equitable Social Interactions](#)


Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the Social and Emotional Development domain of the PTKLF.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

	Social & Emotional Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Self-awareness and identity (part of Self in PTKLF)		Includes content (like read aloud books or a drawing activity) that provides exposure to different expressions of identity and provides opportunity for children to identify aspects of their own identity (like their physical characteristics, race, ethnicity, gender) and preferences (what they like to play, how they like to dress).	Addresses Emerging and one of the following: Includes guidance on how to engage with families to learn more about children’s identities to meaningfully integrate aspects of identity into books, materials, and learning activities. Includes learning opportunities, such as opportunities for classroom or family childcare home discussions on challenging stereotypes, bullying, and injustices some people experience based on their identities, as well as guidance on how to support children in having respectful appreciation for identities that are different from their own.	Addresses Emerging and both of the following: Includes guidance on how to engage with families to learn more about children’s identities to meaningfully integrate aspects of identity into books, materials, and learning activities. Includes learning opportunities, such as opportunities for classroom or family childcare home discussions on challenging stereotypes, bullying, and injustices some people experience based on their identities, as well as guidance on how to support children in having respectful appreciation for identities that are different from their own.	

	Social & Emotional Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Emotion knowledge and emotion expression (part of Self in PTKLF)		<p>Includes content (like read-aloud books, visual prompts, puppet shows, storytelling) that provides exposure to different emotions (like happy, sad, surprised) and provides opportunities for children to identify their own feelings and emotions nonverbally by pointing to a visual or drawing a picture (like responding to questions such as “How are you feeling today?”).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one of the following:</p> <p>Includes exposure to an increased variety of emotion vocabulary (like pride, embarrassment, nervous) in both English and children’s home language(s), with ongoing discussions and exploration into how emotions are expressed, strategies for processing emotions, and how actions affect others’ emotions. At this level, there is also engagement with families to understand the context and cultural influence of children’s emotional expressions, in order to create individualized approaches to supporting each child.</p> <p>Includes guidance on a variety of strategies and materials for processing and regulating emotions (such as mindfulness, self-soothing, breathing exercises, sensory toys), and provides guidance on how to engage families to reinforce emotion recognition and processing in the home in ways that are culturally affirming.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes exposure to an increased variety of emotion vocabulary (like pride, embarrassment, nervous) in both English and children’s home language(s), with ongoing discussions and exploration into how emotions are expressed, strategies for processing emotions, and how actions affect others’ emotions. At this level, there is also engagement with families to understand the context and cultural influence of children’s emotional expressions, in order to create individualized approaches to supporting each child.</p> <p>Includes guidance on a variety of strategies and materials for processing and regulating emotions (such as mindfulness, self-soothing, breathing exercises, sensory toys), and provides guidance on how to engage families to reinforce emotion recognition and processing in the home in ways that are culturally affirming.</p>	
	Social awareness skills (part of Self and Interactions and Relationships with Peers in PTKLF)		<p>Includes content on similarities and differences across people, communities, and cultures (like through read-aloud books), and includes prompts to scaffold children’s identification and processing of similarities and differences, such as when their perspective or experience is different from others (example: some kids are shier; some kids are scared of animals).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and the following:</p> <p>Provides guidance on strategies for modeling empathy, helping others, listening to others’ perspectives, and how to navigate conflicts. Includes guidance for how to engage with families to ensure these strategies are culturally responsive and meet children’s individual needs. For example, narrate feelings and actions to model empathy and helping others. “James seems like something is bothering him, lets go see if we can help him feel better.” Provide opportunities to “turn and talk” to support listening to others perspectives. Teach and model steps for conflict resolution through teacher role-play or puppet play demonstrating how to share, take turns and problem-solve. Ask families how they model these strategies.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and the following:</p> <p>Provides guidance for how educators can check their own biases about perceived similarities and differences of others, and how to respond when children may ask “tough questions” about similarities and differences of people or inequities and injustices in the world, to help foster empathy, understanding, fairness, and respect.</p>	

	Social & Emotional Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Social and emotional content integration across other PTKLF domains		Includes guidance on how to support social and emotional skills and learning goals across different content areas (example: reminders on how to encourage peer collaboration during a small-group math game).	Addresses Emerging and includes consistent and varied opportunities ²² for social and emotional skill integration with at least one or two other content areas such as language and literacy and visual and performing arts where both the content area learning goal(s) and social and emotional learning goal(s) are explicitly identified. For example a curriculum may clearly identify/state that in an activity children will 1) work on collaborating together in pairs to choose materials of their choice (social and emotional learning goal), and 2) design/build one of the “Three Little Pigs” houses (literacy and science/ engineering learning goal).	Addresses Progressing but: Clearly identifies a variety of social and emotional learning goal(s) (not just peer collaboration) in each learning activity across the program day (regardless of content area).	
	Dedicated time for social and emotional learning		Includes informal learning opportunities to support social and emotional development such as encouraging play, peer collaboration, and conflict resolution during center or free choice time.	Addresses Emerging and the following: Includes intentional learning activities with social and emotional development learning goals, such as reading a book with the intended goal of identifying and discussing characters’ emotions, or modeling a conflict resolution strategy using puppets.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes at least one specific learning experience every day that is focused primarily on social and emotional development aligned to the curriculum theme or unit of study ²³ and follows a specific sequence (week one, then week two) that gradually scaffolds children’s skills in key areas of the PTKLF, such as identity development, emotion identification and regulation, and social awareness skills.	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 15:					

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22 Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

23 Units of study (can also be referred to as curriculum themes) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.

Content Element: **Social and Emotional Development**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: Language and Literacy

★ Overview

Strong foundations in language and literacy set children up for later success in all content areas. Reading and writing skills are built on a foundation of oral language and are dependent on vocabulary and the background knowledge that gives meaning to words. Children develop a strong basis in language and literacy by interacting with peers and adults in their home language(s) and English, learning about print and sounds, and having opportunities to engage with reading and writing in playful, enjoyable ways. High-quality preschool and TK curriculum should provide clear guidance and support for embedding rich, meaningful language and literacy experiences throughout the daily routine and across all content areas, nurturing children’s development in English, the partner language²⁴ in dual-language programs, and children’s home language(s), highlighting cross-language connections, and fostering meaningful partnerships with families in this work. For example, curriculum should encourage communications with caregivers to learn more about what language(s) are spoken at home and to inquire about if there are existing stewards of this language who can support working with the educator to incorporate home language into curricular materials and activities. This type of communication can be particularly important when working with children from Tribal Nations and children who speak a language less commonly spoken in California. Curriculum should offer an organized framework and developmental sequence that supports educators in making intentional and responsive decisions about when and how to introduce vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabets, and print concepts. This structure ensures that children’s language and literacy learning builds progressively over time, with each activity, whether reading aloud, engaging in conversation, playing with letters and sounds, or practicing writing. A strong curriculum will encourage meaningful, repeated exposure to literacy content (example: new vocabulary words, letter–sound relationships, narrative and informational books) across varied contexts. By encountering the same words, ideas, and texts across multiple content areas and in a variety of activities, such as during morning meetings, small groups, centers, or outdoor play, children deepen their understanding and are more likely to transfer their language and literacy skills to new contexts.

Element Areas

The element focuses on how a curriculum provides consistent opportunities to develop language and literacy skills aligned to the Language and Literacy Development domain of the PTKLF and describes an organized framework and sequence to guide educators’ decision making and children’s development in language and literacy. This element includes **five** areas:

- Language development
- Phonological awareness
- Alphabets and letter–sound correspondence
- Comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate text
- Writing

24 The partner language is the second language used for teaching in a dual-language program (example: Spanish in an English–Spanish program). It shares instructional time with English so children learn and use both languages every day.





Content Element: Language and Literacy

Additional Resources


- See pages 143–148 in [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#) for an overview of characteristics of language and literacy instruction in a curriculum
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Language and Literacy Development domain (Foundational Language Development sub-domain) for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support language and literacy skills (including in English, the partner language, or a child’s home language(s)):
 - [Supporting Vocabulary Growth and Development](#)
 - [Promoting Rich Language Use](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Phonological Awareness Skills](#)
 - [Developing Children’s Print Knowledge](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Engagement in and Comprehension of Reading](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Early Writing](#)
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Language and Literacy Development domain (English Language Development sub-domain) for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support language and literacy skills of children learning English as a second language:
 - [Supporting Vocabulary Growth and Development \(ELD\)](#)
 - [Promoting Rich Language Use \(ELD\)](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Phonological Awareness Skills \(ELD\)](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Knowledge of Alphabets and Print in English](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Comprehension of Reading in English](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Early Writing in English](#)
- See the Institute of Education Sciences’ resource [Instructional Practices for Teaching Emergent Literacy at the Preschool Level](#)
- See the Institute of Education Sciences’ video on [Integrating Play Into Literacy Instruction](#)
- See videos of sample practices in [Essential Instruction Practices in Early Literacy: Prekindergarten](#) developed by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA)

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element

Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on language and literacy instruction aligned to the PTKLF.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

 Language & Literacy	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Language development (part of Listening and Speaking in PTKLF)		<p>Includes opportunities for children to engage in whole-group discussions related to the learning activity.</p> <p>Includes prompts and questions specific to the learning activity.</p> <p>Includes a list of content-specific vocabulary words (for example, if a unit of study is about plants, there is a list of words and terms related to plants).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and all four of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities²⁵ for children to use and develop language across all lessons and content areas, with emphasis on one-on-one and small-group interactions.</p> <p>Includes guidance and open-ended questions and prompts (example: sentence starters/frames) in more than one language to encourage children to respond, ask questions, share opinions, and offer explanations in their home language(s) and/or English, including nonverbal means of communication.</p> <p>Includes a list of essential vocabulary and language children need to engage in learning tasks across PTKLF content areas in more than one language (example: vocabulary and language needed for expressing emotions, describing, categorizing, explaining, narrating, and sharing opinions) along with supportive materials such as visuals or objects to aid with comprehension.</p> <p>Includes guidance for educators on how to raise awareness of how words come together in a sentence in common and less common ways (example: playfully pointing out how long a sentence was “I’m out of breath!” when reading a story).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage children in extended back-and-forth conversations.</p> <p>Includes guidance and resources (example: cross-linguistic table²⁶) and/or recommendations for partnering with families to build on children’s linguistic assets/home language(s) during curriculum activities to support English and/or the partner language in a dual-language program.</p> <p>Includes resources for families that discuss the importance of supporting language development at home in their home language(s) (example: a letter or flyer with recommended activities families can do with their child at home, such as preparing a meal together or sharing about a memorable event, and home/school connections with prompts related to the specific content that is being explored).</p>	

25 Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.


26 Cross-linguistic tables are side-by-side charts that match key words, sounds, or grammar patterns in children’s home language(s) with the same features in English, making it easy for educators to point out similarities (example: family–familia: both begin with /f/ and have the same meaning) and build on what children already know.

✱	Language & Literacy	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Phonological awareness²⁷ (part of <u>Foundational Literacy Skills in PTKLF</u>)</p>		<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance for encouraging children to notice alliteration²⁸ (see examples in footnote) and rhyme in books, poems, songs, and fingerplays.</p> <p>Includes guidance for encouraging children to create alliterations (example: asking “What other animals start with a /b/ sound?”) or rhymes (example: asking what words rhyme with different body parts, such as head, eye, toe) during everyday situations and in play.</p> <p>Includes a list of books, poems, songs, and fingerplays written alliteratively or in rhyme. Additionally, includes guidance on how to engage with families to learn about rhyming poems and songs they read/sing at home.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and includes consistent and varied play-based activities that allow children to practice all three of the following:</p> <p>Isolating and pronouncing the first sound of words. For example, the curriculum could include an activity where children feed a puppet picture cards only if the object pictured starts with an /s/ sound.</p> <p>Blending syllables and individual sounds into words. For example, children clap the syllables of names as a transition, sing songs with letter sounds, sound out the first letter of a child’s name and have children guess whose name is going to be called based on the sound.</p> <p>Segmenting words into syllables and individual sounds. For example, the curriculum could include an activity where the educator says a word and then has children repeat the word, jumping along a path once per syllable.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes a clear and comprehensive scope and sequence that systematically teaches children increasingly difficult skills (example: moving from repetition to recognition to production), with specific guidance on how to support the learning of skills that build on each other, and allows for flexibility within scope and sequence to accommodate children’s interests and assessed skills, such as revisiting practice recognition if children are struggling with producing -ap rhymes.</p> <p>Includes suggestions and resources (example: cross-linguistic tables) for supporting multilingual learners with extra practice using sound combinations that do not exist in their home language (example: consonant blends such as /sm/ in Japanese), along with authentic opportunities to practice new sounds and words in the context of meaningful interactions.</p> <p>Includes resources for families that discuss the importance of supporting phonological awareness at home in their home language(s), including some examples such as “find a word that starts with the same sound as ___.”</p>	

27 Phonological awareness refers to an individual’s sensitivity to the sound structure of spoken language. It is an important skill that hearing children begin to acquire during preschool and continue to build in early elementary school as they learn to read. Please refer to the CDE resource on Senate Bill 210 language development milestones for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/sb210langmilestones.asp>).

28 Alliteration occurs when two or more words in a phrase begin with the same initial sound (example: big brown bear), creating a playful repetition that draws children’s attention to the sounds inside words.

✳	Language & Literacy	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Alphabets and letter–sound correspondence (part of Foundational Literacy Skills in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance for providing explicit instruction on identifying uppercase and lowercase letters and learning letter–sound correspondences (example: use multisensory cues such as mouth mirrors to help children link letter forms and sounds to articulatory cues).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to practice identifying uppercase and lowercase letters and matching letter names to their printed form through play-based activities (example: letter scavenger hunt), including engaging with families to provide examples of print found in their home or community (example: cereal boxes, tribal names, or pictures of the signs at the local park).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to practice identifying and producing the sounds associated with letters or characters through play-based activities (example: finding the letter magnet that matches a speech sound).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes a clear and comprehensive scope and sequence that moves beyond the “letter of the week” instruction and systematically teaches children increasingly difficult skills (example: identifying high-frequency uppercase letters with distinct shapes before confusable pairs like b/d), with specific guidance on how to support the learning of skills that build on each other (example: introducing lowercase letters that mirror their uppercase, such as c-C, o-O, and s-S) and allows for flexibility within scope and sequence to accommodate children’s interests (such as identifying the letters in children’s names) and assessed skills.</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to practice previously learned letter–sound correspondences.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes specific suggestions for meeting the needs of multilingual children who may take longer to learn certain English letter–sound correspondences because of their home language(s) (example: the letter “j” makes a /h/ sound in Spanish and a /j/ sound in English), may have experienced print in a language that uses a different writing system (such as Arabic), or may bring different concepts about how print conveys meaning (such as the logographic system used in Mandarin).</p> <p>Includes resources for families that discuss the importance of supporting letter–sound correspondence at home in their home language(s), including some examples such as: naming items around the house that begin with the same sound (example: /m/ es para mesa, mamá, y mano. /m/ is for mesa [table], mamá [mom], and mano [hand]) or reading books in the home language(s) and emphasizing beginning or ending sounds of key words (example: - Mira, perro empieza con /p/. Look, perro [dog] starts with /p/).</p>	

 Language & Literacy	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate text (part of Reading in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a wide range of text genres (fiction, nonfiction, poems, rhymes, maps, photographs, storyboards, etc.) that reflect children’s diverse interests, backgrounds, abilities, and languages. Includes a list of key vocabulary to highlight in each text, prompts (example: “What do you think will happen next?”), and sentence frames (example: asking children to repeat and complete the sentence, “I think the character is feeling ____.”) to engage children in discussions about the text. Includes consistent and varied opportunities to help children understand concepts about print, including print conventions (example: in English, print is organized from left to right, top to bottom, and pages are turned from right to left when a book is read). There are also suggestions for providing additional support to children familiar with other writing systems (example: right to left in Arabic and Hebrew). 	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to engage families to enhance text provided by the curriculum, including opportunities for families to share meaningful stories from their culture and background. Includes diverse reading experiences (example: pre-reading activities, dialogic reading, shared reading, and interactive read-alouds) across a variety of content areas in the PTKLF in whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one settings. 	<p>Addresses Progressing and all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a cohesive set of texts with multiple narrative and expository books on the same topic that provide children a deeper understanding of the content/ concepts learned (example: if a unit’s theme is “Animals” texts may include topics related to ecology, habitats, seasons, or professions that intersect with animals). Includes recommendations for meaningful literacy extensions (example: story retelling and story acting) that reflect children’s interests, including engagement with families. Includes resources for families that discuss the importance of reading and discussing texts at home in their home language(s) (example: providing books or audio/video recordings with discussion prompts/questions available in children’s home language(s)). 	

✳	Language & Literacy	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Writing (part of Writing in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage in writing through drawing, dictation, and early writing, and encourages educators to support children in using their full linguistic repertoire to communicate their ideas. For example, a child may dictate a story using a mix of Spanish and English (“El gato [cat] was sleeping on the couch”), and the educator writes it down as told, affirming and validating both languages.</p> <p>Includes recommendations for creating a print-rich environment that helps children understand that their ideas can be represented in print (example: writing down children’s ideas, labeling their artwork) and encourages early writing skills (example: name tags, a well-stocked writing center, and ideas for incorporating writing opportunities throughout the different center areas and outdoor play).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on introducing children to the various purposes of writing and highlighting the connection between spoken language and print through activities such as dictation and modeled and interactive writing (example: determining the purpose/content of the writing, counting the number of words in a sentence, listening for sounds in words, identifying the letter(s) that represent the sounds, and letter formation)</p> <p>Includes guidance for partnering with families to incorporate home language(s) print into the program environment.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes specific cross-language connections for writing. For example, when working on communicating locations, the teacher shares a simple map of the classroom and highlights that map (English) and mapa (Spanish) are cognates or “word twins” - words that have a similar meaning, look, and sound in both languages. The teacher asks students for support in writing the initial letter/sound they hear in map and mapa.</p> <p>Includes resources for families that discuss the importance of writing at home in their home language(s), including some examples, such as helping children write notes or cards together in the home language(s), or engaging in dictation activities where children dictate stories or messages for an adult to write down.</p>	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 15:					

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Content Element: **Language and Literacy**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Content Element: Mathematics



★ Overview

Skillful implementation of curriculum aligned to the Mathematics domain of the Preschool / Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) provides consistent opportunities for young learners to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills through a playful and intentional teaching approach. Curriculum should support increasingly complex, meaningful engagement with mathematical ideas as children explore concepts such as quantity, shape, and size, while engaging in counting, sorting, ordering, measuring, patterning, collecting data, and spatial thinking. A well-designed preschool or TK curriculum should support early childhood educators to build on children’s curiosities and intuitive ideas about math, fostering meaningful connections to real-life contexts and everyday activities; home, family, and community; and other content areas. Curricular activities and scope and sequence should be informed by evidence-based knowledge of the development of children’s mathematical thinking, providing guidance on high-leverage pedagogical practices, connections across domains, and assessment and observations, to ensure that all children receive consistent, developmentally appropriate opportunities.

The curriculum should also support children to, as part of everyday activities and through intentionally planned learning experiences, consistently engage in the mathematical practices outlined in the PTKLF, namely sense-making, persevering, communicating mathematical ideas (in verbal and nonverbal ways), using a variety of tools and manipulatives, and noticing and reasoning about structures and consistencies.

Element Areas

This element focuses on how a curriculum should provide ongoing opportunities to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills aligned with the Mathematics domain of the PTKLF and describe an organized framework and sequence to guide educators’ decision making and children’s development and learning in math. This element includes one overarching practice area and **five** content-specific areas:

- Mathematical practices
- Counting and cardinality
- Operations and algebraic thinking
- Measurement and data
- Geometry and spatial thinking

Additional Resources


- For additional consideration on mathematical learning, see pages 88–91 and 148–155 in [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
- For examples of play-based learning activities for math, see the resources available from the [DREME network](#)
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Math domain for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support math skills:
 - [Supporting Counting Skills and Understanding of Cardinality](#)
 - [Supporting Understanding of Addition and Subtraction](#)
 - [Promoting Number Composition and Decomposition Skills](#)
 - [Developing Patterning Skills](#)
 - [Supporting Ordering and Measurement Skills](#)
 - [Developing an Understanding of Two- and Three-Dimensional Shapes](#)

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element

Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on mathematics instruction aligned to the PTKLF.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:

	Mathematics	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Mathematical practices (part of Mathematical Practices in PTKLF)		Addresses both of the following: Includes guidance for how to create play-based and hands-on activities for children to engage in mathematical problem solving during everyday interactions (example: How many plates do we need for snack time?). Includes some example educator prompts to elicit student thinking both verbally (asking children, “How did you do that?”) and nonverbally (asking children, “Show me what you did?”).	Addresses Emerging and both of the following: Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to reason about quantities in context (example: I have two cars and you have two. We have four cars.). Includes open-ended math activities that invite children’s sensemaking and perseverance (example: counting collections ²⁹ or asking children to draw a map of the obstacle course they created).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes consistent and varied opportunities ³⁰ for children to explain their mathematical thinking and engage with the reasoning of others using a variety of language and vocabulary (including in children’s home language(s)), tools, and representations. (example: communicating through drawings, and modeling with materials, expressive movement, actions, or role-play).	

29 Counting collections is an instructional routine that invites children to count to figure out how many objects are in a collection, and to create a written representation of their collection and how they counted. Rather than an adult showing the child how to count, in Counting Collections children decide how to count and organize their collections. This open-ended activity supports children to make sense of relationships between the number-word sequence, one-to-one correspondence, and cardinality. Varied opportunities to engage in Counting Collections over time allows children to build a rich foundation for number sense and problem solving. Turrou, A. C., Johnson, N. C., & Franke, M. L. (2021). The young child and mathematics. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

30 Consistent opportunities means opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily or weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

	Mathematics	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Counting and cardinality (part of Counting and Cardinality in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children, individually and as a group, to count, recognize, and build quantities within and/or beyond 10.</p> <p>Includes strategies to support children’s current understandings of counting principles (counting sequence, one-to-one, and cardinality) in ways that are responsive to children’s ideas (example: offering a larger collection, encouraging a child to choose from a variety of tools to support their counting, such as trays, ten frames, and hundreds charts (for children indicating readiness to engage with numbers beyond 20). As a group, count how many children are present, count food items during meal times. Use finger play and songs (“5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed”).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage in discourse about their counting strategies, including in their home language(s) (example: using play-based scenarios, visual aids, and storytelling).</p> <p>Includes guidance to support children to make meaningful connections across numbers and quantities in context, including sourcing materials from families and the community (example: bringing counting collection objects from home, counting objects found outside or at the community park).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage children with the mathematical ideas of others during counting and cardinality activities (example: invites children to count together; prompts children to show a partner how they counted and listen and watch their partner’s counting; prompts children to describe what they notice about another child’s process).</p>	
	<p>Operations and algebraic thinking (part of Operations and Algebraic Thinking in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to support children to begin to compose/decompose (add to, take away from, and share equally) objects in the context of everyday situations and play (example: counting how many vegetables are in the pretend soup and then feeding some of the soup to a doll; sharing a set of wooden blocks so each person can build a tower; adding more children’s nametags to the board to keep track of attendance).</p> <p>Includes opportunities and guidance on how to support children to recognize, replicate, and extend simple patterns, including in the context of everyday situations and play (example: noticing striped patterns in clothing; copying and extending a “stomp” and “clap” pattern at circle time).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities to operate on numbers and engage with patterns in ways that extend children’s current understandings with a more comprehensive variety of activities, materials, and tools, including math-specific manipulatives such as interlocking cubes and objects that vary in multiple features (color, size, shape), in addition to everyday options (example: loose parts, objects found in nature, dramatic play materials).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance for how to encourage or prompt children to explain their thinking and engage in problem-solving strategies for operating on numbers and engaging with patterns (example: prompts in English and children’s home language(s) such as “How did you figure out how many carrots are left?”; “Can you show me how you shared the blocks with your friend?” (allows for nonverbal responses); “How do you know if a stomp or a clap comes next?”).</p> <p>Includes problem-solving opportunities for operating on numbers that reflect children’s interests and connections to their community.</p>	

	Mathematics	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Measurement and data (part of Measurement and Data in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance for how to support children to explore concepts of comparing, ordering, estimating, or measuring during every day situations and play (example: using scoops of water to fill a container at the water table; figuring out how many magnetic square tiles are needed to create a track for toy animals; noticing which tower is taller in the wooden block area).</p> <p>Includes opportunities and guidance for how to support children to represent and begin to interpret data (example: children vote on their favorite fruit by placing an object under a picture to represent their vote, children compare totals).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities to engage in measuring and data analysis with a more comprehensive variety of materials and tools (example: children create and compare sizes of block towers, identify differences in appearances between two groups, and communicate results).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance to enhance measurement and data activities where investigations are driven by children’s interests, curiosities, connections to their community, including input from families (example: children wonder how to keep track to make sure everyone gets a turn, children ask their own questions when interpreting data, graphing and comparing data on favorite family foods or restaurants in the community).</p>	
	Geometry and spatial thinking (part of Geometry and Spatial Thinking in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses both of the following</p> <p>Includes opportunities to name, compare, and engage with an increasingly complex variety of two- and three-dimensional shapes (example: rectangles, triangles, cubes, cones).</p> <p>Includes opportunities to identify positions of objects in relation to other objects, which may include the use of spatial language, including in children’s home language(s) (example: children identify in/on, under/over, inside/outside verbally or by moving their bodies or placing objects).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage with open-ended materials (example: blocks, tangrams, containers, and cardboard boxes), and tools (example: geo boards, shape puzzles) to support the conceptual understanding of two- and three-dimensional shapes, their properties, patterns, and spatial awareness concepts.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and the following:</p> <p>Includes guidance to enhance geometry and spatial thinking activities driven by children’s interests, curiosities, and connections to their community, including input from families (example: building their families’ home out of blocks, exploring shape stencils at the art table, scooping or pouring in sand/ water table, participating in movement opportunities like Simon Says) to support conceptual understanding of two- and three-dimensional shapes and their properties, patterns, and spatial awareness concepts.</p>	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 15:					

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Content Element: **Mathematics**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: Science

★ Overview

Science and engineering provide children with the strategies and tools to deepen their understanding of the world and build its future. Although science and engineering learning opportunities can be found in all of children’s daily activities, a strong curriculum will offer children opportunities to engage in the science and engineering practices outlined in the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) (example: asking questions, making observations, or using tools) and to explore crosscutting concepts (example: patterns, cause and effect relationships, or structure and function relationships) in the context of hands-on learning experiences within the four disciplinary core ideas: Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science, and Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science. Curriculum should promote inquiry-based thinking by encouraging children to ask questions and explore real-world problems that are meaningful to them and provide thematic units of study so that children can spend several weeks investigating a scientific topic (example: “growing plants,” “architecture and buildings,” “Animals,” etc.). Curriculum should also provide suggestions on how science can be meaningfully integrated with other content areas like math and the arts to deepen learning across all content areas (example: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)). Lastly, curriculum should include strategies and supports for educators to learn about the families of the children in their programs and connect that information to science investigations to create learning experiences that meaningfully reflect children’s lived experiences and their families’ cultural practices.

Element Areas

The element focuses on fostering inquiry-based thinking and exploration aligned to key content areas of the Science domain of the PTKLF, and includes **six** areas:

- Science and engineering practices (part of Science and Engineering Practices in PTKLF)
- Crosscutting concepts (part of Crosscutting Concepts in PTKLF)
- Physical science (part of Physical Science in PTKLF)
- Life science (part of Life Science in PTKLF)
- Earth and space science (part of Earth and Space Science in PTKLF)
- Engineering, technology, and applications of science (part of Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- For additional consideration of science learning, see pages 92–94 and 155–158 on Science and Engineering in curriculum in [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#), by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
- See the following sections in the PTKLF Science domain for more tips on learning opportunities both within and outside of a curriculum that can support science skills:
 - [Supporting Children’s Observation and Investigation Skills](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Documentation, Analysis, and Communication](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Explorations and Learning in Physical Science](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Explorations and Learning in Life Science](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Explorations and Learning in Earth and Space Science](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Exploration of Engineering and Technology](#)
 - [Supporting Children’s Use of Digital Devices](#)

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element

Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on science instruction aligned to the PTKLF.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:


 Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Science and engineering practices (part of Science and Engineering Practices in PTKLF)		Includes some opportunities (example: a few times per unit of study ³¹) for children to engage in science and engineering practices, like making observations and using tools (example: using a magnifying glass to observe an object more closely).	Includes consistent and varied opportunities ³² for children to engage in a range of science and engineering practices like observing, predicting, using tools, documenting their observations, and explaining solutions in the context of investigations inspired by children’s questions and experiences. For example, the curriculum provides an opportunity to use children’s interests (like noticing insects on the playground) and outlines how to begin an investigation of different animals (like insects), including providing support to children on documenting observations and comparing and contrasting insects’ characteristics and habitats.	Addresses Progressing and both of the following: Includes guidance on how to support children to engage in all science and engineering practices listed in the PTKLF in the context of long-term (several weeks) investigations with specific scientific topics (example: “growing plants,” “architecture and buildings,” “animals,”) inspired by children’s and their families’ questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences. For example, the curriculum may include a suggestion for educators to ask families what animals they have experiences with, and then the curriculum would provide an outline of how to organize a multi-week investigation exploring those animals where children are engaging in all science and engineering practices. Includes guidance or example prompts on when to engage children in science and engineering practices across multiple key areas of science throughout the day and on noticing and labeling when children engage in science and engineering practices during play and every day interactions.	

31 Units of study (can also be referred to as “curriculum themes”) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.

32 Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

	Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Crosscutting concepts (part of Crosscutting Concepts in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes some opportunities for children to notice some crosscutting concepts listed in the PTKLF Science domain, such as noticing patterns (example: the sun is visible during the day and the moon is visible at night) or identifying cause and effect relationships (example: “When there are clouds outside, it may rain” or noticing that ice melts when exposed to warmer temperatures.)</p>	<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to notice and describe (verbally or nonverbally, and in more than one language) crosscutting concepts such as patterns, cause and effect relationships, or stability and change inspired by children’s questions and experiences. For example, children may notice that when they return from winter break some trees look different, but the stoplight at the crosswalk stays the same.</p>	<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to notice and describe (verbally or nonverbally, and in more than one language(s) all crosscutting concepts identified in the PTKLF in the context of long-term (several weeks) investigations within specific scientific topics (example: “ramp and blocks,” “lights and sounds,” “habitats,” etc.) inspired by children’s and their families’ questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences. For example, children may learn about patterns by asking families to send in pictures of cultural jewelry, noticing the patterns through observation, and exploring how the jewelry is made.</p> <p>Includes guidance on when to highlight these crosscutting concepts across multiple key areas of science throughout the day, and how to support children in noticing and describing them when they appear.</p>	
	<p>Physical science (part of Physical Science in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes some opportunities that introduce physical science content, including properties and characteristics (example: color, texture, temperature), and changes in objects and materials (example: change in color, texture, temperature) through block play, sensory experiences, or light and sound (example: using flashlights and colored cellophane to explore light and color).</p>	<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to explore content on physical science (see Emerging) in the context of inquiry-based experiences where children ask questions and explore real-world problems that are meaningful to them with input from families. For example, a curriculum activity where children explore creating shadows by blocking light both inside using a flashlight and outside using their body and the sun or a color mixing activity that includes opportunities to explore transparent versus opaque saturation, or comparing which block is heavier than the other.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that embed physical science in the context of long-term thematic investigations (example: several weeks tied to the curriculum theme) inspired by children’s and their families’ questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences. For example, a curriculum activity where children learn about scale proportion and quantity by inviting a parent to class to make a cultural dish with children, like tamales or bánh xèo, and demonstrate how the ratios of the different ingredients change the thickness of the mixture.</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that integrate physical science with other content domains like math (example: counting the blocks in a child’s tower), language and literacy (example: learning relevant vocabulary like “force” or “steep”), social studies (example: learning how wheels and ramps improve accessibility), and the arts (example: a shadow puppet performance) for hands-on, active learning experiences.</p>	

	Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Life science (part of Life Science in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes some opportunities that introduce life science content, including characteristics, change/growth, and needs of living things, as well as bodily processes (example: eating, sleeping, breathing), heredity and traits (example: comparing baby animals to adult animals), and habitats.</p>	<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to explore content on life science (see Emerging) in the context of inquiry-based experiences where children ask questions and explore real-world problems that are meaningful to them with input from families. For example, the curriculum suggests children start a program garden and learn to care for a plant using soil, water, and sunlight.</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that embed life science in the context of long-term thematic investigations (example: several weeks tied to the curriculum theme) inspired by children's and their families' questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences (example: children learn about the plants that their families use to make tea, how they are grown and prepared, and plant them in their program garden).</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that integrate life science with other content domains like math (example: measuring the growth of their plants over time), language and literacy (example: telling stories about their family pets to build narrative skills), social studies (example: learning how service animals help people), and the arts (example: observing the plants in their neighborhood and documenting their observations in drawings) for hands-on, active learning experiences.</p>	
	<p>Earth and space science (part of Earth and Space Science in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes some opportunities that introduce earth and space science content, including properties and characteristics (example: size, weight, color, texture) of earth materials (example: sand, rocks, soil) and change in objects such as natural objects in the sky (example: sun, moon, stars, clouds), weather (example: change in seasons), and earth and human activity (example: effects on the environment).</p>	<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to explore content on earth and space science (see Emerging) in the context of inquiry-based experiences where children ask questions and explore real-world problems that are meaningful to them with input from families (example: children explore how some materials like sand change when you mix them with water while other materials like rocks stay the same).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that embed earth and space science in the context of long-term thematic investigations (example: several weeks tied to the curriculum theme) inspired by children's and their families' questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences (example: children learn about the different climates of the places that their families are from and the materials that people use to make homes there like wood, stone, or concrete).</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that integrate earth and space science with other content domains like math (example: comparing the weight of different rocks), language and literacy (example: learning letter sounds when describing objects in the sky), social studies (example: reusing and recycling materials can help preserve nature), and the arts (example: drawing a picture of their house during daytime and nighttime) for hands-on, active learning experiences.</p>	

	Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Engineering, technology, and applications of science (part of Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes some opportunities to learn about the engineering design process (example: identify the problem, plan and create solutions, test and refine solutions) and use digital technology (example: taking videos and photos), and analog technology (example: opening up a wind-up toy to see how it works inside).</p>	<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage in the engineering design process and use of technologies in the context of inquiry-based experiences where children ask questions and explore real-world problems that are meaningful to them with input from families (example: children design and construct bird feeders for their school yard).</p>	<p>Addresses Progressing and both of the following:</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that embed engineering, technology, and application of science in the context of long-term thematic investigations (example: several weeks tied to curriculum theme) inspired by children’s and their families’ questions, cultural practices, and everyday experiences (example: children learn about the different materials that different families use to stay warm and dry during winter like wool, fleece, and down feathers; and test how well these materials maintain heat or repel water).</p> <p>Includes learning opportunities that integrate engineering, technology and applications of science with other content domains like math (example: measuring the length of building materials), language and literacy (example: learning relevant vocabulary like stable or design), social studies (example: building a model of a bridge to learn how people cross bodies of water), and the arts (example: painting their model bridge using their favorite colors) for hands-on, active learning experiences.</p>	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 18:					

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Content Element: **Science**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: **Physical Development**

★ Overview

Physical development and physical activity play an important role in children’s health and development throughout their life. While physical development can be supported outside of the curriculum, such as through free play and movement opportunities during recess, physical development should also be explicitly targeted in curriculum activities. For example, learning activities should include a variety of opportunities to build fine motor skills that lay the foundation for pre-writing skills, using utensils, self-dressing, and increased ability to engage with manipulatives in other content learning domains. There should also be explicit opportunities for children to build skills in balance, jumping, throwing, catching, and building endurance, as well as information on how to extend skill building at home. Physical development activities can also be integrated with curriculum content to deepen learning. Lastly, the curriculum should pay special attention to children’s unique needs for movement to support their learning.

Element Areas

This element emphasizes how a curriculum should promote ongoing opportunity for gross motor and fine motor development integrated with content areas aligned to the Physical Development domain of the PTKLF. This element includes **three** areas:

- Fine motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills in PTKLF)
- Gross motor, locomotor, and perceptual motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills and Perceptual Motor Skills and Movement Concepts in PTKLF)
- Active physical play (part of Active Physical Play in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- See the article [Guiding Students to Practice Fine Motor Skills with Natural Loose Parts](#) from Edutopia for more information on how preschool-aged children can develop physical and cognitive abilities necessary for academic progress through creative activities
- See the article [Introducing Yoga in Preschool](#) from Edutopia for information on how teachers can share the benefits of yoga with young learners to help them be mindful of their breath, body, mind, and heart
- See this [excerpt from Big Body Play](#) from NAEYC for strategies to help families understand the value of play with open-ended materials

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on learning opportunities aligned to the Physical Development domain of the PTKLF.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

 Physical Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Fine motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills in PTKLF)		Includes learning activities that require children to practice fine motor skills (example: beading, cutting, drawing, using tongs).	Addresses one of the following: Includes guidance on how to support children’s fine motor skills during learning activities, and adjust activities if children need more support (example: switch out materials for larger objects if a child has trouble picking them up) or if they need more of a challenge (example: switch out materials for smaller objects if a child is able to pick them up easily). Includes consistent and varied ³³ fine motor skill learning opportunities throughout all PTKLF content areas of the curriculum (math, science, visual and performing arts etc.), where fine motor skills are clearly identified as one of the learning goals in the activity.	Addresses both of the following: Includes guidance on how to support children’s fine motor skills during learning activities, and adjust activities if children need more support (example: switch out materials for larger objects if a child has trouble picking them up) or if they need more of a challenge (example: switch out materials for smaller objects if a child is able to pick them up easily). Includes consistent and varied fine motor skill learning opportunities throughout all PTKLF content areas of the curriculum (math, science, visual and performing arts etc.), where fine motor skills are clearly identified as one of the learning goals in the activity.	

33 Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

 Physical Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Gross motor, locomotor, and perceptual motor skills (part of Fundamental Movement Skills and Perceptual Motor Skills and Movement Concepts in PTKLF)		<p>Includes some activities (example: a few times per month) focused on building children’s skills in balance, jumping, other locomotor skills (example: hopping, skipping), gross motor manipulative skills (example: using arms, hands, and feet to interact with objects such as throwing, catching, kicking) and perceptual motor skills (example: moving forward, backward, over and under, side to side like when moving through an obstacle course).</p>	<p>Addresses one or two of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied activities focused on building children’s skills in balance, jumping, other locomotor skills (example: hopping, skipping), gross motor manipulative skills (example: using arms, hands, and feet to interact with objects such as throwing, catching, kicking) and perceptual motor skills (example: moving forward, backward, over and under, side to side like when moving through an obstacle course).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to support children in their physical development skills in ways that are unrestrictive and responsive to their individual physical needs. An example is allowing children to be free in their movement and not be too rigid about reaching perfection. Another example is suggestions for adaptations and accommodations that allow children to participate in activities, such as using hook and loop paddles when catching and throwing.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage families in children’s development of physical skills such as providing activities to do in the home, as well as inviting families to share the type of movement they enjoy or is important in their culture.</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied activities focused on building children’s skills in balance, jumping, other locomotor skills (example: hopping, skipping), gross motor manipulative skills (example: using arms, hands, and feet to interact with objects such as throwing, catching, kicking) and perceptual motor skills (example: moving forward, backward, over and under, side to side like when moving through an obstacle course).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to support children in their physical development skills in ways that are unrestrictive and responsive to their individual physical needs. An example is allowing children to be free in their movement and not be too rigid about reaching perfection. Another example is suggestions for adaptations and accommodations.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to engage families in children’s development of physical skills such as providing activities to do in the home, as well as inviting families to share the type of movement they enjoy or is important in their culture.</p>	

 Physical Development	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Active physical play (part of Active Physical Play in PTKLF)		Includes some opportunities for children to engage in active physical play, including movements that increase children’s physical endurance for sustained periods of time. For example, counting how many times children can run in a circle around the play structure. At this level, the curriculum may provide only a few examples of active physical play activities.	Addresses both of the following: Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage in active physical play indoors and outdoors, including movements that increase children’s physical endurance for sustained periods of time (example: playing hopscotch for 15 minutes) as well as increase strength (example: carrying objects, pushing another child’s wheelchair), and flexibility (example: stretching). At this level, the curriculum provides a variety of explicit active physical play activities that educators can implement at least a few times per week. Includes examples of adaptations and accommodations to participate in curriculum activities focused on active physical play (example: how to modify an obstacle course or substitute with larger or more lightweight balls during play).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes opportunities for children to engage in active physical play that is meaningfully integrated with PTKLF content areas. For example, jumping or waving arms while counting or participating in yoga/stretching to support mindfulness and social and emotional learning. The active physical play learning goal (endurance, strength, flexibility) should be explicitly noted in the curriculum activity.	
Totals:					
Overall Score out of 9:					

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Content Element: **Physical Development**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Content Element: Health



★ Overview

While healthy habits can be well-supported in areas outside of the curriculum, such as during meals and health and safety routines like handwashing, toothbrushing and reminders of playground and program safety rules, health content can also be built into the curriculum. Curriculum that emphasizes health content includes books, activities, and class discussions that are focused on building knowledge of body parts and body awareness, building an understanding of how a variety of foods makes us feel good and grow, and being able to identify health and safety habits and the role of health providers, families, community, and the outdoor environment in promoting good health and nutrition.

Element Areas

This element focuses on how curriculum provides opportunities to learn and practice healthy habits and related content aligned to the Health domain of the PTKLF, and includes **three** areas:

- Body awareness (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF)
- Nutrition (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF)
- Health and safety habits (part of Health and Safety Habits in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- See [How Teachers Can Support Children’s Health and Well-Being](#) in the PTKLF
- See Katie Hylden, “4 Fun Ways to Teach Pre-K Students About Their Classmates’ Lunches,” Edutopia, December 20, 2024, <https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-preschool-students-different-foods> focused, on teaching pre-K students about different foods

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element

Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element, “provides opportunities to learn and practice healthy habits and related content aligned to the Health domain” of the PTKLF.”

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.

The curriculum:

	Health	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Body awareness (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF)		Includes some opportunities to name body parts, typically only external parts (example: singing Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes song).	Includes explicit learning activities ³⁴ on building vocabulary of different body parts and their functions (example: lungs help us breathe), such as through read-aloud books, including vocabulary in children’s home language(s).	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes explicit learning activities and discussions on body boundaries and body awareness, and how feelings/sensations in the body connect to emotions (example: tummy feeling funny may mean you are nervous).	
	Nutrition (part of Understanding Health and Wellness in PTKLF)		Includes some exposure to nutrition, like having a variety of pretend-play foods available in the dramatic play area.	Includes explicit learning activities on building knowledge of nutrition and vocabulary for different foods (including in more than one language), such as through read-aloud books on how eating a variety of foods helps people feel good and grow.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes guidance on how to engage families to learn about nutritional foods that are part of their culture and background, and adding those foods to the curriculum activities and materials (like pretend-play foods).	
	Health and safety habits (part of Health and Safety Habits in PTKLF)		Includes some content on health and safety habits, such as emphasizing when a character in a book made a safe choice.	Includes explicit learning activities centered on fostering health and safety habits, such as through books where that is the main focus, as well as classroom or family childcare home discussions on the topic. For example, the curriculum includes a book about spreading germs followed by a class brainstorm on how to prevent germs from spreading in the classroom or family childcare home.	Addresses Progressing and the following: Includes explicit learning activities centered on the role of health care providers, and how the broader community and environment (including the outdoors) can promote good health and safety practices.	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 9:					

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³⁴ Explicit learning activities are formal activities in the curriculum where there is a primary focus or goal (in this case, health topics).

Content Element: **Health**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: **History–Social Science**

★ Overview

History–Social science builds on children’s curiosity, helping them develop skills for social inquiry and understanding of their immediate and broader communities. Curriculum that includes History–Social science topics should include content that provides exposure to various cultural communities, taking care of the environment and community, the roles people play in the community, and building knowledge of locations in the environment and time and order of events. Curriculum should also include guidance on how to engage with families and the community to ensure History–Social science content is meaningful to children as it relates to their cultural background and the community or neighborhood they live in.

Element Areas

This element emphasizes how a curriculum should promote learning experiences and opportunities to explore the social sciences and learn relevant history through integration with other content areas aligned to the History–Social science domain of the PTKLF. This element includes **four** areas:

- Cultural communities (part of Self and Social Systems in PTKLF)
- Time and historical events (part of Time, Continuity and Change in PTKLF)
- Contributions to community (part of Self and Social Systems; Skills for Democracy and Being a Community Member (Civics); Sense of Place and Environment; and Economic Systems in PTKLF)
- Locations in the environment (part of Sense of Place and Environment in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- See [How Teachers Can Support Children’s Learning in History–Social Science](#) in the PTKLF for ways to facilitate children’s learning during everyday interactions, set up environments that reflect the diversity of learners, and make connections to home and community


Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on learning opportunities aligned to the History–Social science domain of the PTKLF.

“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working toward high quality.


The curriculum:

	History–Social Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Cultural communities (part of Self and Social Systems in PTKLF)		Includes content that provides exposure to a few cultures and communities, primarily through books, art activities, and one-off cultural celebrations.	Addresses one or two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes content that provides exposure to cultures and communities that reflect children in the program, as well as cultures and communities that are less familiar to children. Includes guidance on how to engage families to enhance content related to exploring characteristics, practices, and traditions of cultural groups (example: books, materials, pictures, learning activities). Embeds content on various cultures and communities throughout the curriculum (not just one day or week) in authentic and relevant learning experiences, such as dramatic play. 	Addresses all three of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes content that provides exposure to cultures and communities that reflect children in the program, as well as cultures and communities that are less familiar to children. Includes guidance on how to engage families to enhance content related to exploring characteristics, practices, and traditions of cultural groups (example: books, materials, pictures, learning activities). Embeds content on various cultures and communities throughout the curriculum (not just one day or week) in authentic and relevant learning experiences, such as dramatic play. 	

 History–Social Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Time and historical events (part of Time, Continuity, and Change in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that encourage children to describe change over time and relate past events to one another, emphasizing vocabulary like “before,” “after,” “then,” “next,” “yesterday,” and “tomorrow” (during book read-alouds, comparing routines from one day to the next, or discussion about what children will do over the weekend).</p> <p>Includes age appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to discuss current events (example: natural disasters or other topics that may come up in the news or are present in the program’s community), including navigating responses to questions children may ask about them.</p>	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that encourage children to describe change over time and relate past events to one another, emphasizing vocabulary like “before,” “after,” “then,” “next,” “yesterday,” and “tomorrow” (during book read-alouds, comparing routines from one day to the next, or discussion about what children will do over the weekend).</p> <p>Includes age appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to discuss current events (example: natural disasters or other topics that may come up in the news or are present in the program’s community), including navigating responses to questions children may ask about them.</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that encourage children to describe change over time and relate past events to one another, emphasizing vocabulary like “before,” “after,” “then,” “next,” “yesterday,” and “tomorrow” (during book read-alouds, comparing routines from one day to the next, or discussion about what children will do over the weekend).</p> <p>Includes age appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders).</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to discuss current events (example: natural disasters or other topics that may come up in the news or are present in the program’s community), including navigating responses to questions children may ask about them.</p>	

	History–Social Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Contributions to community (part of <u>Self and Social Systems</u>; <u>Skills for Democracy and Being a Community Member (Civics)</u>; <u>Sense of Place and Environment</u>; and <u>Economic Systems in PTKLF</u>)</p>		<p>Addresses both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes content (like books) on different roles or jobs in the community and the type of work people do, both inside and outside of the home (example: librarian, farmer, and cook). Includes content (example: books) on how to be a “helper” and take care of the program community, neighborhood/city community, and natural environment (example: picking up trash). 	<p>Addresses Emerging and addresses one or two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to engage families and community members to enhance content related to different roles or jobs in the community (example: the curriculum may suggest families visit the program to share their job, take a field trip to the local fire station, or write letters to the dentist office down the street). Includes learning opportunities that embed content on different roles in the community in authentic and relevant learning experiences, such as dramatic play and story acting where children can explore different community roles. Includes consistent and varied³⁵ learning opportunities or applied projects that provide children with practice and experience being “helpers,” contributing to, and taking care of their community and environment. 	<p>Addresses Emerging and addresses all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to engage families and community members to enhance content related to different roles or jobs in the community (example: the curriculum may suggest families visit the program to share their job, take a field trip to the local fire station, or write letters to the dentist office down the street). Includes learning opportunities that embed content on different roles in the community in authentic and relevant learning experiences, such as dramatic play and story acting where children can explore different community roles. Includes consistent and varied learning opportunities or applied projects that provide children with practice and experience being “helpers,” contributing to, and taking care of their community and environment. 	

³⁵ Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

 History–Social Science	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Locations in the environment (part of <u>Sense of Place and Environment</u> in PTKLF)		<p>Addresses one of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities to identify characteristics of familiar locations or phenomena (example: home, school, neighborhood, geographic features, and weather), including guidance on engaging with families and the community to enhance the curriculum materials (example: including pictures of children’s homes).</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that introduce location and directionality vocabulary such as “in/on,” “under/over,” “up/down,” and “inside/outside” when describing familiar locations (example: mapping out the program or neighborhood).</p> <p>Includes consistent exposure to globes, maps, and map symbols, including opportunities for children to create their own maps, drawings, and models to describe where things are in a physical space.</p>	<p>Addresses two of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities to identify characteristics of familiar locations or phenomena (example: home, school, neighborhood, geographic features, and weather), including guidance on engaging with families and the community to enhance the curriculum materials (example: including pictures of children’s homes).</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that introduce location and directionality vocabulary (including in more than one language) such as “in/on,” “under/over,” “up/down,” and “inside/outside” when describing familiar locations (example: mapping out the program or neighborhood).</p> <p>Includes consistent exposure to globes, maps, and map symbols, including opportunities for children to create their own maps, drawings, and models to describe where things are in a physical space.</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities to identify characteristics of familiar locations or phenomena (e.g. home, school, neighborhood, geographic features, and weather), including guidance on engaging with families and the community to enhance the curriculum materials (e.g. including pictures of children’s homes).</p> <p>Includes content or discussion topics that introduce location and directionality vocabulary (including in more than one language) such as “in/on,” “under/over,” “up/down,” and “inside/outside” when describing familiar locations (example: mapping out the program or neighborhood).</p> <p>Includes consistent exposure to globes, maps, and map symbols, including opportunities for children to create their own maps, drawings, and models to describe where things are in a physical space.</p>	
Totals:					
Overall Score out of 12:					

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Content Element: **History–Social Science**



Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:





Content Element: Visual and Performing Arts

★ Overview

Visual and performing arts offer children many ways to experience playful exploration, self-expression, creativity, and joy of learning through visual arts, music, dance, and drama. Curriculum that supports visual and performing arts includes opportunities to create two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) art, exposure to different musical genres and facets of music (like rhythm), opportunities for creative movement and dancing, opportunities to act out scripts and stories, and building vocabulary across all areas of the arts. The curriculum should also emphasize individual expression in the arts, where children are free to create art in their own way, whether it involves choosing from different materials to create a visual art product, composing music, choreographing a dance, or acting out a story they have written. Engagement with families is also important, and a strong curriculum should provide guidance on how to engage with families to source various art materials and learn about music, dances, and stories that are meaningful and aligned to their home language(s) or cultural backgrounds. Lastly, the curriculum should meaningfully integrate the arts with other content areas and the **curriculum theme** or **unit of study** to create even deeper and more joyful learning experiences that enhance social and emotional learning, communication skills, fine-motor skills, and appreciation of various cultural backgrounds.

Element Areas

This element emphasizes how a curriculum should foster creativity through meaningful arts integration with other content areas aligned to the Visual and Performing Arts domain of the PTKLF. This element includes **six** areas:

- Visual arts (part of Visual Arts in PTKLF)
- Music (part of Music in PTKLF)
- Dance (part of Dance in PTKLF)
- Drama (part of Drama in PTKLF)
- Individual expressions with the arts
- Arts integration with other content areas (part of Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Drama in PTKLF)

Additional Resources


- See [How Teachers Can Support Children’s Early Visual and Performing Arts Learning](#) in the PTKLF for ways to explore the arts during everyday and planned experiences, set up engaging environments and varied learning materials, and make home and cultural connections to visual and performing arts
- See the blog post, [Let the Drama Games Begin](#), from Edutopia on drama games in preschool
- See [Child-Directed Arts Exploration in Preschool](#) from Edutopia for ways teachers can avoid making judgments about young children’s art, and instead help them imagine next steps and work through frustrations

Assessing How Well the Curriculum Addresses the Element


Use the table below to assess how well the the comprehensive curriculum, the combination of domain-specific curriculum being used, or your overall program curriculum approach addresses the element focused on learning opportunities aligned to the Visual and Performing Arts domain in the PTKLF.


“Excelling” is the “gold standard” of high-quality curriculum implementation, whereas “Emerging” and “Progressing” are working towards high-quality.


The curriculum:


	Visual and Performing Arts	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Visual arts (part of Visual Arts in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes consistent and varied³⁶ opportunities for drawing, painting, mixing colors, and working with play dough or clay.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one or two of the following:</p> <p>Includes a balance of opportunities to create 2D and 3D visual art that are connected to the curriculum theme (example: if the unit of study is on “Animals,” visual art activities are also related to animals), with opportunities to go more in depth with the materials or add materials of children’s own choosing.</p> <p>Includes guidance to support children’s visual art vocabulary, including in more than one language, such as the terms used for different materials and tools. For example, the curriculum highlights art vocabulary during the directions for the activity, or in example prompts for commenting on children’s actions during the activity, emphasizes words like “easel,” “glue,” and “glitter.”</p> <p>Includes guidance on engagement with families to source visual art materials and inform visual arts projects that are meaningful to children and families’ cultural background.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes a balance of opportunities to create 2D and 3D visual art that are connected to the curriculum theme (example: if the unit of study is on “Animals,” visual art activities are also related to animals), with opportunities to go more in depth with the materials or add materials of children’s own choosing.</p> <p>Includes guidance to support children’s visual art vocabulary, including in more than one language, such as the terms used for different materials and tools. For example, the curriculum highlights art vocabulary during the directions for the activity, or in example prompts for commenting on children’s actions during the activity, emphasizes words like “easel,” “glue,” and “glitter.”</p> <p>Includes guidance on engagement with families to source visual art materials and inform visual arts projects that are meaningful to children and families’ cultural background.</p>	

³⁶ Consistent opportunities means learning activities or opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily and weekly schedules and routines. Varied opportunities means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.

 Visual and Performing Arts	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
Music (part of Music in PTKLF)		<p>Includes a selection of songs to play during circle time, including consistent and varied opportunities for children to sing and play musical instruments.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one or two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to support children’s knowledge of rhythm (example: clapping to the beat of the music), tempo (example: fast and slow music), dynamics (example: loud and soft music), and identification of different musical instruments or sounds. Includes guidance to support children’s music vocabulary, including in more than one language, through discussion after listening to a piece of music, such as the terms used to describe the tempo (example: “Is this music fast or slow?”), dynamics (example: “Is this music soft or loud?”), or pitch (example: low notes vs. high notes). Includes a variety of music genres, and offers guidance on engaging with families, local artists, drum circle leaders, and musicians to source musical selections or instruments that are meaningful to children and families’ cultural and linguistic background (example: songs in different languages or from children’s cultures). 	<p>Addresses Emerging and all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes guidance on how to support children’s knowledge of rhythm (example: clapping to the beat of the music), tempo (example: fast and slow music), dynamics (example: loud and soft music), and identification of different musical instruments or sounds. Includes guidance to support children’s music vocabulary, including in more than one language, through discussion after listening to a piece of music, such as the terms used to describe the tempo (example: “Is this music fast or slow?”), dynamics (example: “Is this music soft or loud?”), or pitch (example: low notes vs. high notes). Includes a variety of music genres, and offers guidance on engaging with families, local artists, drum circle leaders, and musicians to source musical selections or instruments that are meaningful to children and families’ cultural and linguistic background (example: songs in different languages or from children’s cultures). 	
Dance (part of Dance in PTKLF)		<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for creative movement and dance, such as dancing to music during circle time.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one or two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes exposure to learning different dance skills and steps during a dance such as jumping, falling, turning, and leaping, as well as responding to music tempo and rhythm (example: dance slowly to slow music, or marching to the beat of the song). Includes guidance for supporting dance vocabulary integrated within dance activities, including in more than one language, such as emphasizing terms for different dance moves (example: “marching,” “swaying”), steps, or types of dances. Includes content that exposes children to different types of dances, including guidance on adaptations for children with physical disabilities and engagement with families to understand dances that are meaningful to children’s and families’ culture and background. 	<p>Addresses Emerging and all three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes exposure to learning different dance skills and steps during a dance such as jumping, falling, turning, and leaping, as well as responding to music tempo and rhythm (example: dance slowly to slow music, or marching to the beat of the song). Includes guidance for supporting dance vocabulary integrated within dance activities, including in more than one language, such as emphasizing terms for different dance moves (example: “marching,” “swaying”), steps, or types of dances. Includes content that exposes children to different types of dances, including guidance on adaptations for children with physical disabilities and engagement with families to understand dances that are meaningful to children’s and families’ culture and background. 	

	Visual and Performing Arts	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Drama (part of Drama in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage in pretend play or act out different roles (like acting out being a doctor).</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and one or two of the following:</p> <p>Includes explicit learning activities linked to the curriculum theme or unit of study on acting out scripts or stories (example: acting out a book or story created by children), including guidance on how to encourage children to add to the plot or script they are acting out.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to scaffold children’s acting during pretend play by encouraging them to experiment with different voices, sounds, movements, gestures, characters/roles, and/or use of different props and costumes.</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to share and act out stories in their home language(s), including guidance on how to engage with families to identify stories or use of different props and costumes that may be meaningful for them and their cultural backgrounds.</p>	<p>Addresses Emerging and all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes explicit learning activities linked to the curriculum theme or unit of study on acting out scripts or stories (example: acting out a book or story created by children), including guidance on how to encourage children to add to the plot or script they are acting out.</p> <p>Includes guidance on how to scaffold children’s acting during pretend play by encouraging them to experiment with different voices, sounds, movements, gestures, characters/roles, and use of different props and costumes.</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to share and act out stories in their home language(s), including guidance on how to engage with families to identify stories or use of different props and costumes that may be meaningful for them and their cultural backgrounds.</p>	

	Visual and Performing Arts	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	Individual expression with the arts		<p>Includes some opportunities for open-ended art expression such as children free coloring, creating their own pretend-play scenarios, and dancing in the way they want to.</p> <p>Note: *While there are some opportunities for open-ended art expression, at this level it is more common to have art experiences where children may have less individual expression (example: all children make identical crafts, all children follow directions on how to dance, there is no opportunity to create music or act out a story a child made up etc.).</p>	<p>Addresses one or three of the following:</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to engage in a variety of visual art forms related to the curriculum theme, and there is creative freedom in how the art is made so that each child's product will look unique (example: collaging with colored paper and different materials of a child's choice to create a rainy day when learning about weather, or using loose parts to create a 3D animal of the child's choice when learning about different animals).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to use vocal skills, instruments, or other tools to create their own music such as producing short melodies, chants, or songs using simple rhythms and tones (example: example, curriculum activities that involve making up a melody on a xylophone, or coming up with a new verse in a song).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to create their own scripts or stories, or reinvent or embellish an existing story and act it out, with educator support (example: curriculum activities that involve making up a different ending to the story and acting it out with the support of peers and an educator).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to make up their own dances, which may include describing what their movements represent (example: dancing like they are moving through water).</p>	<p>Addresses all four of the following:</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to engage in a variety of visual art forms related to the curriculum theme, and there is creative freedom in how the art is made so that each child's product will look unique (example: collaging with colored paper and different materials of a child's choice to create a rainy day when learning about weather, or using loose parts to create a 3D animal of the child's choice when learning about different animals).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to use vocal skills, instruments, or other tools to create their own music such as producing short melodies, chants, or songs using simple rhythms and tones (example: example, curriculum activities that involve making up a melody on a xylophone, or coming up with a new verse in a song).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to create their own scripts or stories, or reinvent or embellish an existing story and act it out, with educator support (example: curriculum activities that involve making up a different ending to the story and acting it out with the support of peers and an educator).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for children to make up their own dances, which may include describing what their movements represent (example: dancing like they are moving through water).</p>	

	Visual and Performing Arts	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Notes
	<p>Arts integration with other content areas (part of Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Drama in PTKLF)</p>		<p>Includes opportunities for arts integration with other content areas, but typically only for visual arts, such as integration with literacy (example: a drawing activity related to a read-aloud book), math (example: using shapes to make a collage), social and emotional development (example: creating a self-portrait), and science (example: drawing a plan for a block tower).</p>	<p>Addresses one or two of the following:</p> <p>Includes opportunities for music experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: discussing how different kinds of music makes them feel), literacy (example: rhyming songs), math (example: identifying patterns in music), and science/engineering (example: building shakers using a folded paper plate and beans).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for dramatic arts experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: acting out different emotions or role-playing two peers having a conflict), literacy (example: a child dictating a story to an educator, then acting it out), math (example: acting out scenarios involving sharing objects evenly between two people), and science/engineering (example: building props or acting out the growth/change of a plant or other living thing).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for dance experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: emotion expression through dance), history–social science (example: fostering an appreciation of diversity for traditional dances in various cultural communities), math (example: dancing in a square or triangle formation), and science (example: dancing like different animals).</p>	<p>Addresses all three of the following:</p> <p>Includes opportunities for music experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: discussing how different kinds of music makes them feel), literacy (example: rhyming songs), math (example: identifying patterns in music), and science/engineering (example: building shakers using a folded paper plate and beans).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for dramatic arts experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: acting out different emotions or role-playing two peers having a conflict), literacy (example: a child dictating a story to an educator, then acting it out), math (example: acting out scenarios involving sharing objects evenly between two people), and science/engineering (example: building props or acting out the growth/change of a plant or other living thing).</p> <p>Includes opportunities for dance experiences integrated with multiple content areas such as social and emotional development (example: emotion expression through dance), history–social science (example: fostering an appreciation of diversity for traditional dances in various cultural communities), math (example: dancing in a square or triangle formation), and science (example: dancing like different animals).</p>	
	Totals:					
	Overall Score out of 18:					

» For full functionality of this workbook, please ensure you are using the latest version of either Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat Reader. See [Software Requirements](#).

Content Element: **Visual and Performing Arts**









Reflection Questions

- What strengths did we identify that we can build on in our improvement efforts?
- What gaps did we uncover?
- How will we work to address these gaps overall and what is our first step?

NOTES:



Curricular Self Assessment Results Summary

Curricular Approach Elements	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Overall Score
 Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules					
 Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices					
 Intentional Language Development Opportunities					
 Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/ communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging					
 Approaches to Learning					
 Social and Emotional Development					

Curricular Approach Elements	Gap Area (=0)	Emerging (=1)	Progressing (=2)	Excelling (=3)	Overall Score
 Language and Literacy					
 Mathematics					
 Science					
 Physical Development					
 Health					
 History–Social Science					
 Visual and Performing Arts					

Glossary

- **Alliteration** occurs when two or more words in a phrase begin with the same initial sound (example: big brown bear), creating a playful repetition that draws children’s attention to the sounds inside words.
- **Center time** (also known as “choice time”) is when there are different interest areas set up (indoors or outdoors) and children can choose to visit a specific area. Example centers may include dramatic play (like a pretend play kitchen), sensory tables/experiences (like a sand or water table), art (like an art table or easels with 2D and 3D art materials), literacy (like a library or writing corner), math (like counting collections, puzzles, or number matching games), science/discovery (like exploring different science and engineering tools or topics), blocks (like building with blocks and other props or toys), and a calm center (like a quiet area for children to take a break). Not all centers may be “open” or available every day. There is usually a limit to the number of children who can visit at one time to avoid overcrowding, and materials are often switched out to increase interest and engagement as well as align with the specific curriculum theme or unit of study. Educators may rotate to different centers to provide scaffolding and support, and typically at least one educator is stationed at a specific center that requires more support, like a more complex art activity (and help using glue!) or a new math game children have never played before. Center time ideally lasts at least 60 minutes to promote deep learning, and multiple center time opportunities can be provided per day.
- In **child-led exploration** and learning within a curriculum, an educator may offer a more open-ended learning experience or prompt such as building a zoo for animals with some expected learning goals in mind (like spatial thinking and measurement), but follows the child’s lead if they come up with a completely different idea to instead (for example) build a stream for the animals to drink from, which may target additional learning goals (which the educator should still identify and support children in reaching).
- In **co-constructed learning** within a curriculum, an educator provides children with guidance and scaffolding to reach a specific learning goal during an activity, such as offering prompts or materials for counting, but follows the child’s lead with their engagement in the activity, such as observing how children explore different ways of lining up the objects to count to 10, or inviting children to find additional objects in the environment they want to count.
- **Consistent opportunities** means opportunities in the curriculum that are regularly integrated in daily or weekly schedules and routines.
- **Counting Collections** is an instructional routine that invites children to count to figure out how many objects are in a collection, and to create a written representation of their collection and how they counted. Rather than an adult showing the child how to count, in Counting Collections children decide how to count and organize their collections. This open-ended activity supports children to make sense of relationships between the number–word sequence, one-to-one correspondence, and cardinality. Varied opportunities to engage in Counting Collections over time allows children to build a rich foundation for number sense and problem-solving³⁷.
- **Cross-linguistic tables** are side-by-side charts that match key words, sounds, or grammar patterns in children’s home language(s) with the same features in English, making it easy for educators to point out similarities (example: family and familia: both begin with /f/ and have the same meaning) and build on what children already know.
- In **educator-led explicit instruction** within a curriculum, educators explain and introduce a new skill or concept children have not learned before, such as sounding out a new letter, but do this in a way that still invites child participation to respond and engage with the new skill in a playful way.
- **Educator scripts or prompts** can be particularly helpful for novice educators or for educators in their first few years of implementing a new curriculum. However a curriculum should note that educators can use different prompts or scripts that are more responsive to children’s interests and individual needs, which supports educator creativity and honors educators’ own knowledge and expertise.
- **Explicit learning activities** are formal activities in the curriculum where there is a primary focus or goal.
- **Intentional instructional strategies** are both play-based and responsive and can include a range of strategies, like educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed learning experiences, and child-led exploration and learning where there is a specific target or intended learning goal or outcome of the experience.
- **Learning goals** in a curriculum (also referred to as learning objectives or learning foundations) should align closely with Early and Later Foundations outlined in each domain of the PTKLF, such as “count 10 objects or more” or “identify basic emotions.”
- **Partner language** is the second language used for teaching in a dual-language program (example: Spanish in an English–Spanish program). It shares instructional time with English so children learn and use both languages every day.
- **Play-based instructional practices** ensure that activities are active, playful, and engaging and facilitate child-led exploration.
- **Responsive instructional practices** are individualized to each child’s needs such as their abilities, strengths, interests, and home language(s). High-quality curriculum also provides guidance on how to individualize curriculum activities to meet the needs of children with disabilities and multilingual learners. It is also important for curriculum to note that curriculum-provided prompts or scripts to scaffold children’s learning during curriculum activities can be flexible or changed by the educator, which supports educator creativity and honors educator knowledge about child development and the unique needs of their students. Assessments are also a powerful tool to ensure teaching is responsive and individualized, and curriculum should include guidance on assessments tied to curriculum activities, including how to use assessments to inform curriculum and communicate with families to extend learning in the home.
- **Small-group time** typically consists of a group of (ideally no more than) five children receiving individualized and responsive instruction with an educator. Small-group time should typically last no longer than 15–20 minutes to be developmentally appropriate for four-year-old children, and closer to 10 minutes for three-year-old children. Small-group time can occur during center time (example: while other children are playing independently at centers, a few children are invited to join the educator for small-group time), or can be a designated small-group time if a second or third educator are available to lead multiple small groups at the same time. In a curriculum, you may see small-group opportunities for skills that require more individualized support, like math and literacy, but small-group time can also target other PTKLF domain areas as well.
- **Units of study** (also referred to as “curriculum themes”) are identified topics in a curriculum that are integrated across a variety of curriculum activities over a series of weeks. For example, a unit of study could be on plants, where the curriculum would include several activities and read-aloud books related to plants.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** provides a framework for creating inclusive environments where all children, regardless of abilities, can participate. It focuses on proactively addressing the diverse needs of learners by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression.
- **Varied opportunities** means learning activities that offer multiple means of engagement.
- **Whole-group time** provides opportunity to build community and connection with peers through rich discussion, read-aloud books, and other active engagement opportunities. Whole-group time can also be a good opportunity to introduce new learning concepts and skills that can be reinforced in small-group time and center time. Each whole-group session should ideally last no longer than 10 minutes to be developmentally appropriate for 3- and four-year-olds.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summaries of Curricular and Content Element Rubrics

This section provides summaries of each curricular approach element within the toolkit, outlining what each element emphasizes, how growth can occur from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe in practice. While these summaries serve as helpful introductory guides and observation tools, they should be used alongside the full rubrics and not regarded as replacements.

Curricular Approach Elements

- Provides guidance to prepare developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, contexts, and schedules
- Emphasizes play-based, responsive, and intentional instruction and facilitates child-led exploration based on children’s strengths, interests, and abilities
- Promotes language development for all children through consistent opportunities to use English and children’s home language(s) throughout the curriculum
- Uses units of study, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging

Content Elements

- Provides consistent opportunities to flexibly support children to develop their motivation to learn, ability to work towards goals, and self-regulation across content areas aligned to the **Approaches to Learning** domain of the Preschool/TK Learning Foundations (PTKLF)
- Provides consistent opportunities for developing social and emotional skills and content knowledge aligned to the **Social and Emotional Development** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to develop language and literacy skills aligned to the **Language and Literacy Development** domain of the PTKLF and describes an organized framework and sequence to guide educators’ decision making and children’s development and learning in literacy
- Provides consistent opportunities to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills aligned with the **Mathematics** domain of the PTKLF and describes an organized framework and sequence to guide educators’ decision making and children’s development and learning in math
- Provides consistent opportunities to foster inquiry-based thinking and exploration aligned to key content areas of the **Science** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities for gross motor and fine motor development integrated with content areas aligned to the **Physical Development** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to learn and practice healthy habits and related content aligned to the **Health** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to explore the social sciences and learn relevant history through integration with other content areas aligned to the **History–Social Science** domain of the PTKLF
- Provides consistent opportunities to foster creativity through building knowledge of the arts and meaningful arts integration with other content areas aligned to the **Visual and Performing Arts** domain of the PTKLF

Curricular Approach Element: **Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules**



This summary of the Curricular Approach Element: Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Curriculum should provide guidance for creating learning spaces, schedules, and activities that match young children’s developmental needs and build a sense of belonging. This includes guidance to inform the physical setup of indoor and outdoor spaces, how time is organized throughout the day and week, and how different types of learning activities (like centers, small groups, and whole groups) are used.

The Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules rubric covers six key areas:

- **Flexible schedules across days, weeks, and/or months:** The curriculum provides guidance on creating daily, weekly, and monthly schedules that can be adjusted based on children’s needs and interests
- **Design of the indoor physical space, including the setup of activities:** The curriculum offers guidance on arranging the classroom and setting up activity areas
- **Variety of learning contexts including center time, small-group, and whole-group time:** The curriculum includes guidance for different ways children learn throughout the day, through center time, small-group activities, and whole-group time
- **Accessibility of the physical learning space:** The curriculum provides guidance on making the classroom accessible for all children, including those with disabilities
- **Print-rich environment:** The curriculum includes guidance on displaying written words in multiple languages throughout the classroom to support early literacy
- **Utilization of outdoor physical space:** The curriculum provides guidance on using outdoor areas for learning activities, not just free play

Why This Matters

How physical learning environments are organized and how time is structured directly affects children’s learning and sense of belonging. When environments are well-designed and schedules are appropriate, children can focus on learning rather than feeling confused or overwhelmed.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Evidence of flexible scheduling that responds to children’s engagement and needs
- Indoor spaces organized according to curriculum guidance with clearly defined, accessible learning centers
- Daily use of varied learning contexts (center time, small-group, whole-group activities)
- Physical accessibility features visible throughout the classroom for all children
- Print-rich environment with labels, word walls, and displays connected to current learning
- Intentional use of outdoor spaces for curriculum activities across content areas
- Educator resources and curriculum guidance readily available and actively referenced
- Environment and schedule adjustments based on children’s cultural backgrounds, interests, and developmental needs
- Rotating materials in learning areas based on the students interests and current unit of study or theme

Curricular Approach Element: **Developmentally Appropriate Environments, Contexts, and Schedules**



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum provides basic guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample daily schedule with fixed time blocks • General suggestions for classroom setup • Includes a variety of learning contexts such as center time, small-group, and whole-group time • Basic mention of accessibility considerations • Some suggestions for displaying print in the classroom • Suggestions for outdoor activities outside <p>The key gap at this level is the amount of guidance provided in these areas.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum needs to add additional guidance and detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed guidance: Includes both guidance and scripts for implementing center time, small-group, and whole-group activities throughout the week • Setup detail: Includes detailed guidance on how to set up the learning space or activity to promote peer collaboration, independent learning, creativity, and engagement • More small group time: Balance time spent in different learning contexts • Expand print environment: Includes detailed suggestions for what print to display and how to change it throughout the year • Accessibility guidance: Provides specific strategies for making materials and spaces accessible (like using picture labels along with words) • Integrate outdoor learning: Provides specific outdoor activities connected to curriculum content areas 	<p>Excelling level practice shows comprehensive, integrated guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and flexible schedule guidance: Curriculum includes detailed guidance for flexible daily, weekly, and monthly schedules with clear explanations of when and how to adjust timing • Integrated learning contexts: Clear guidance on using all three contexts (centers, small-group, whole-group) with purpose explained for each • Detailed environment design: Specific guidance with visual examples for setting up all curriculum activities indoors, including materials placement • Dynamic print-rich environment: Detailed guidance on creating and updating print displays that connect to current learning and support multilingual learners • Universal accessibility: Comprehensive guidance ensuring all children can access and participate in all learning spaces and activities • Outdoor integration: Regular, intentional outdoor activities fully integrated into curriculum units across content areas

Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices



This summary of the Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Play-based and responsive instructional practices describe how educators create learning experiences that are active, engaging, and tailored to each child's unique needs. This should include educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed learning within a curriculum, and child-led exploration and learning.

The Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices rubric covers eight main areas:

- **Facilitates child-led exploration with intentional learning goals:** Educators provide open-ended activities where children explore freely, but the educator still has learning goals in mind
- **Responsive to child interests:** Activities connect to what children are curious about.
- **Balance of educator, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities:** The curriculum includes different types of learning—sometimes the educator leads or guides a lesson, sometimes the educator and children explore together, and sometimes children explore on their own
- **Individualized and responsive teaching for all children, including children with disabilities:** The curriculum supports educators to adapt activities so every child can participate successfully
- **Individualized and responsive teaching for multilingual learners:** Curriculum supports educators to use children's home languages and make sure multilingual learners can fully engage
- **Assessment integration with curriculum:** The curriculum includes assessments that connect directly to learning activities
- **Using assessment results and observations to individualize instruction:** Curriculum supports educators to use what they learn from assessments to adjust their teaching
- **Communicating assessment results to families to extend curriculum learning in the home:** Guidance on how to share what children are learning with families and suggest ways to practice at home

Why This Matters

How physical learning environments are organized and how time is structured directly affects children's learning and sense of belonging. When environments are well-designed and schedules are appropriate, children can focus on learning rather than feeling confused or overwhelmed.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Activities appropriately challenging and engaging for all children
- A balance of educator-led, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities throughout the day
- Child-led exploration with clear learning goals
- Learning activities connected to children's interests and current unit of study or theme
- Frequent opportunities for play-based learning embedded throughout the day (occasionally vs. daily vs. continuously)
- Individualized support and adaptations for children with disabilities
- Support for multilingual learners, including use of home languages and visual supports
- Embedded assessment during curriculum activities
- Evidence that educators use assessment results to adjust instruction
- Flexible implementation of curriculum with educators adapting prompts and scripts based on children's responses
- Evidence of communication and partnership with families about learning goals and ways to extend learning at home

Curricular Approach Element: Play-Based and Responsive Instructional Practices



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic play-based and responsive practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on center activities that allow child choice and exploration • Guidance on how to solicit child interests • Both educator-led and child-led learning • Some adaptations for children with different needs and languages • Limited assessment guidance tied to curriculum activities • Limited guidance on communicating with families about learning <p>The key gap at this level is that play-based and responsive practices are inconsistent and are not deeply integrated across all curriculum activities and areas.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum needs to add additional guidance and intentionality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More child-led opportunities: Provide daily opportunities for children to explore with clear learning goals in mind • Connect to interests regularly: Include guidance on how to adapt activities based on observed child interests at least weekly • Balanced instructional approaches: Ensure balance of explicit educator-led instruction, co-constructed learning, and child-led exploration • Individualization guidance: embed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or learning experiences designed to be flexible and accessible for all children, with built-in supports and choices to meet individual needs • Embed home language support: Use home language to enhance children’s understanding of concepts • Reliable assessments: Include assessments connected to curriculum activities with guidance on documentation • Add family communication: Provide templates or suggestions for sharing learning goals with families 	<p>Excelling level practice shows comprehensive integration of educator-led, co-constructed, and child-led activities and clear learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear learning goals: Daily schedules naturally integrate educator-led, co-constructed, and child-led learning opportunities with clear learning objectives and extension opportunities for each • Systematic interest responsiveness: Curriculum provides tools and strategies for regularly observing and incorporating child interests across all domains • Deep integration of child-led learning: Includes explicit guidance on facilitating educator-led explicit instruction, co-constructed learning, and child-led learning activities • Responsiveness: Detailed guidance for adapting every activity for children with disabilities and multilingual learners, including specific accommodations and extensions • Robust assessment integration: Assessments are embedded throughout curriculum activities with clear guidance on observation, documentation, analysis, and communication with families • Strong family partnerships: Regular communication tools that help families understand learning goals and extend curriculum activities in the home, available in multiple languages

Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities



This summary of the Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Intentional Language Development Opportunities describes how curriculum supports children in building their language skills across all subject areas. This includes helping children communicate in both English and their home language(s), learn new vocabulary words, talk with educators and peers, and use language in meaningful ways.

- **Creating opportunities for children to use language:** Children get regular chances to speak, describe, and express their ideas
- **Creating opportunities for children to use language with peers:** Children practice talking and listening with other children during learning activities and play
- **Extending children's language use:** Educators help children say more and use more complex language
- **Promoting vocabulary use across content areas:** Children learn and practice new words across all learning domains

Why This Matters

Language development is critical for all learning. Children who have strong language skills can better understand directions, express their needs and ideas, make friends, and learn new things. Supporting children's home language(s) is especially important because it strengthens connections to family and culture, and research shows that children who develop their home language also learn English more successfully.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Frequent open-ended questions that prompt thought process, encouraging children to explain, describe, or elaborate (not just yes/no questions)
- Strategies to support children's home language(s), such as asking multilingual children to share words or using translated materials
- Prompts for children to talk with each other, not just with adults, such as turn and talk
- Children use new vocabulary words in their conversations and play
- Multilingual children have opportunities to use both English and their home language(s)
- Activities that require children to communicate with each other to complete tasks
- Visual supports (like picture cards or word walls) help children learn and use new vocabulary
- Vocabulary words being taught are displayed and referenced throughout activities

Curricular Approach Element: Intentional Language Development Opportunities



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic opportunities for children to develop language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some opportunities for children to respond to questions, ask questions, and engage in group discussions • Informal opportunities for conversation between children • Example open-ended questions • Content-specific vocabulary words <p>The key gap at this level is that guidance around language opportunities is fairly minimal and there is little guidance on how to extend children's language or support multilingual learners.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum should include deeper levels of guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question complexity: Include more open-ended questions, scripts, and sentence frames • Extended peer talk: Provide structured opportunities for children to talk with their peers • Extension strategies: Give educators specific techniques to help children elaborate on their ideas (like repeating what the child said with more details) 	<p>Excelling level practice shows deep integration and comprehensive language support, including in children's home language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilingual support: Curriculum includes robust strategies, materials, and guidance for supporting children's home language(s) • Family engagement: Guidance on how families can extend language development at home • Peer interactions: Multiple opportunities for children to engage in extended conversations with peers across all content areas • Sophisticated extensions: Educators have specific techniques to help children use more complex sentences, connect ideas, and develop academic language • Systematic vocabulary development: Carefully selected vocabulary words are introduced, practiced, and reviewed across contexts, and displayed with visuals • Support responses in multiple languages: Encourage and invite children to respond in English, in their home language(s), or with nonverbal communication

Curricular Approach Element: **Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging**



This summary of the Curricular Approach Element: Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Units, Books, and Materials provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Units, Books, and Materials describes how curriculum uses books, materials, and units of study that meaningfully connect to children’s lives. This includes reflecting children’s languages, cultures, families, communities, and interests in the learning tools used every day.

This rubric covers seven main areas:

- **Cultural diversity and inclusion in books:** Books show diverse families, cultures, and experiences that mirror the children in the classroom
- **Linguistic diversity in books:** Books are available in multiple languages, including children’s home languages, and show people speaking different languages
- **Cultural diversity and inclusion in learning materials:** Toys, props, and learning materials reflect the diverse cultures, communities, and experiences of children and their families
- **Linguistic diversity in learning materials:** Learning materials include multiple languages, including children’s home languages, through labels, signs, and activity materials
- **Open-ended and engaging learning materials:** Materials allow children to use them in multiple ways based on their interests and abilities
- **Units of study include home–program connections:** Learning themes connect to children’s home experiences and involve families and communities in meaningful ways
- **Units of study are aligned and integrated with PTKLF domains:** Learning themes connect to multiple domains of the PTKLF while staying culturally responsive

Why This Matters

When children see their languages, cultures, and families reflected in their classroom, they feel valued and confident as learners. These connections help children build on knowledge from home and strengthen their sense of identity. A culturally responsive curriculum also helps all children learn about and respect different cultures, preparing them to live and work in diverse communities. When families feel welcomed and see their culture reflected in the program, they become stronger partners in their children’s education.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Diverse books throughout the classroom and in multiple areas, not just the library corner
- Books available in children’s home languages
- Culturally diverse learning materials across all learning centers (dramatic play, blocks, art, etc.) that reflect children currently enrolled and expand to other cultures.
- Labels, signs, and display materials showing multiple languages, including children’s home languages
- Evidence of family involvement in selecting or providing classroom resources
- Current unit themes include visible connections to children’s families, communities, or cultural practices
- Educator describes how materials or units connect to specific children’s home experiences
- Materials show authentic, diverse representations rather than stereotypical images of cultures
- Units of study address multiple learning domains while maintaining cultural connections

Curricular Approach Element: **Culturally and linguistically responsive units, books, and materials that meaningfully reflect children’s interests, languages, families/communities, and cultural practices to support a sense of belonging**



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes some books showing different cultures and families • Includes some books in languages besides English • Includes suggestions for cultural materials in learning centers (like play food from different cultures) • Includes labels or signs in at least one other language • May include open-ended manipulatives and materials that children can use • Includes occasional family curriculum resources • Units of study that are developmentally appropriate and interesting to children <p>The key gap at this level is that cultural and linguistic connections are limited, surface-level, and not deeply integrated into daily learning.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum needs to add additional cultural and linguistic materials and supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded book collections: Include books showing diverse families, abilities, cultures, and languages • Enhanced materials: Includes or suggests the use of real-world materials, cultural artifacts, and toys that reflect a diversity of racial and ethnic groups, identities, and abilities • Build family partnerships: Includes several time points for family newsletters that introduce or extend upon content covered in a specific unit of study 	<p>Excelling level curriculum shows authentic integration and family partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementation: Includes guidance on how to substitute books with different ones (identified in Progressing) based on engagement with families • Translation: Added guidance on how to translate key vocabulary from existing English books into less common languages • Continuous family engagement: Curriculum provides specific guidance on partnering with families to select and adapt books, materials, and units throughout the year • Expanded languages present: Includes learning materials in multiple languages • Responsive planning: Units are designed to be adapted based on ongoing conversations with families about what matters to them



Content Element: Approaches to Learning

This summary of the Content Element: Approaches to Learning provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Approaches to Learning describes how children engage with learning activities across all subject areas. This includes how children stay focused, problem-solve, work toward goals, and manage their behavior during learning activities. These skills help children succeed in school and beyond.

The Approaches to Learning rubric covers six main areas:

- **Builds perseverance:** Children learn to stick with tasks even when they're challenging. For example, a child continues working on a puzzle even when pieces don't fit right away
- **Builds curiosity:** Children develop interest in learning new things and asking questions. For example, a child asks "why" and "how" questions during science experiments
- **Exercises working memory and flexibility:** Children practice remembering information and changing their thinking when needed. For example, a child sorts blocks by color, then resorts them by shape
- **Practices self-regulation:** Children learn to manage their impulses and follow rules and instructions during activities. For example, a child waits for their turn during a game or stops moving when the music stops
- **Facilitates problem-solving:** Children learn to work through challenges using different strategies. For example, a child figures out how to make a block tower more stable after it falls down, or attempts to solve a conflict with a peer before asking for adult assistance
- **Facilitates planning:** Children learn to think ahead and make plans before starting activities. For example, a child explains what they will build during center time before beginning

Why This Matters

These skills are critical for school success. When children develop strong approaches to learning, they can better handle the demands of kindergarten and beyond. They become confident learners who can focus, persist through challenges, and work effectively with others. These skills support learning in all subjects—from math to reading to art.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Activities that are both age-appropriately challenging and increasing in difficulty
- Learning activities that promote and allow opportunity to practice problem-solving skills and planning skills
- Frequent opportunities to practice these skills (occasionally vs. daily vs. continuously)
- Learning activities that promote these skills across subjects
- Project-based learning and immersing in content and sequenced learning goals over a series of days and weeks
- Positive reinforcement of children's effort and prioritization of effort over results
- Games or activities to support working memory
- Consistent opportunities for children to respond to open-ended questions or prompts (verbally or nonverbally, and in multiple language(s)) across multiple content areas



Content Element: Approaches to Learning

Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic opportunities for children to practice these skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple two-step activities (like “cut the shape, then glue it”) • Some open-ended questions during lessons • Occasional memory games or sorting activities • A few self-regulation games each month (like freeze dance) • Basic problem-solving tasks with clear solutions • Simple prompts asking children about their plans <p>The key gap at this level is that opportunities are limited and not consistently integrated throughout the day or across different subject areas.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, programs need to add consistency and variety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiday projects: Include at least one project per unit that lasts several days, allowing children to work toward a goal over time • Frequency: Provide daily opportunities for open-ended questions across multiple subjects (science, math, dramatic play, writing/literacy, block play, art, music & movement, etc) • Build sequences: Gradually increase the difficulty of activities (like memory games with more steps or harder rules) • More guidance: Provide educators with specific strategies and example prompts to support skill development • Promote peer collaboration: Create opportunities for children to problem-solve together • Add steps: Ask children to make two-step plans regularly during activities 	<p>Excelling level practice shows intentional integration and developmental progression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep integration: Approaches to learning skills are embedded across all content areas throughout the day • Individualized support: Educators receive guidance on how to scaffold support based on each child’s needs and extend thinking • Developmental sequences: Curriculum includes clear progressions showing how to increase complexity over time • Multilingual support: Questions and prompts are available in children’s home languages • Combine skills: Activities combine multiple skills (like adding memory components to math games) • Detailed planning: Children make increasingly detailed plans with educator scaffolding over time

Content Element: Social and Emotional Development



This summary of the Content Element: Social and Emotional Development provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Social and emotional development is the foundation for all learning in preschool and transitional kindergarten. This rubric focuses on how curriculum helps children understand themselves, manage their feelings, and build positive relationships with others.

The Social and Emotional Learning rubric includes five main areas:

- **Self-awareness and identity:** Children learn about who they are, including their race, ethnicity, gender, and abilities. They also discover what they like and prefer
- **Emotion knowledge and expression:** Children learn to recognize different feelings (like happy, sad, nervous, or proud) and express their emotions in healthy ways
- **Social awareness skills:** Children learn about similarities and differences among people. They practice empathy (understanding how others feel), help their peers, and work through conflicts
- **Social and emotional content integration:** These skills are woven throughout other learning areas like math, literacy, science, and the arts
- **Dedicated time for social and emotional learning:** Curriculum includes specific activities focused on teaching new social and emotional skills and provides opportunities to practice and build these skills throughout the day in natural interactions and routines

Why This Matters

This area is critical because children who develop strong social and emotional skills are better prepared for school and life. They can make friends, work in groups, solve problems, and handle challenges. When children feel good about themselves and can manage their emotions, they learn better in all subject areas.

For example, a child who can identify when they feel frustrated and use calming strategies will be able to stick with a challenging puzzle. A child who understands that people have different preferences can work successfully with classmates on a building project.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Books, visual prompts, or puppet shows to introduce emotions and evidence that social and emotional teaching and learning is happening
- Open-ended questions like “How do you think they felt when that happened?” or “What can we do to help our friend?”
- Discussions about similarities and differences among people in respectful, age-appropriate ways
- Intentional social and emotional learning activities connected to the current theme while still honoring free play as a space for skill practice.
- Collaborative activities where children must work together, share materials, or solve problems as a team
- Use of tools like feelings charts, breathing exercises, or calming strategies for strong emotions
- Activities that require children to consider others’ perspectives or practice helping behaviors
- Materials that allow for cooperative play and problem-solving among peers
- Daily schedule with visuals that shows dedicated time for social and emotional learning activities
- Evidence of family engagement, such as materials sent home in multiple languages or family input on children’s cultural backgrounds and preferences

Content Element: Social and Emotional Development



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum provides basic exposure to social and emotional concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children see books that show different types of people and emotions • Children have some chances to talk about feelings during the day formally and informally. • Educators encourage play and help children work out conflicts during free-choice time • Includes guidance on how to support social and emotional skills and learning goals across different content areas <p>The key gap at this level is limited social and emotional vocabulary and fewer opportunities to practice social and emotional skills. It does not include meaningful family connections.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum adds more intentional learning activities with clear goals. Children have regular, varied opportunities to practice social and emotional skills—not just during free play but in planned lessons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More vocabulary: More emotion vocabulary in children’s home languages and English (not just basic feelings but also pride, embarrassment, and nervousness) • Intentionality: Activities focused on social and emotional development, such as reading a book specifically to discuss characters’ emotions or using puppets to model conflict resolution • Make connections: Clear connections between social and emotional goals and other learning areas • Engage families: Guidance for educators on engaging families to understand how children express emotions 	<p>At the Excelling level, social and emotional development is fully integrated throughout the curriculum with a clear sequence that builds skills over time. Every day there are multiple learning experiences focused primarily on social and emotional development that connects to the current unit of study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate families: Guidance on working with families to learn about children’s identities and integrate this information into books, materials, activities, and the environment • Address hard topics: Learning opportunities address challenging topics like stereotypes, bullying, and injustices, with support for educators on how to respond to tough questions • Multiple strategies: Multiple strategies and materials for emotion regulation (mindfulness, breathing exercises, sensory tools, quiet space) with family engagement guidance • Address bias: Guidance for educators on checking their own biases and fostering empathy, understanding, fairness, and respect

Content Element: Language and Literacy



This summary of the Content Element: Language and Literacy provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Language and literacy describes how children develop the communication and reading skills they need for school success. This includes speaking, listening, understanding sounds in words, learning letters, comprehending stories, and beginning to write. These skills form the foundation for all future learning and should be supported in both English and the child's home language.

The Language and Literacy rubric covers five main areas:

- **Language development:** Children learn to use words, have conversations, and express their ideas
- **Phonological awareness:** Children learn to hear and play with sounds in words
- **Alphabets and letter–sound correspondence:** Children learn to recognize letters and connect them to sounds
- **Comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate text:** Children demonstrate understanding of stories and books by staying on topic during discussions, asking and answering questions related to the text, making predictions, retelling the story or connecting the story to their own experiences
- **Writing:** Children begin to form letters and express their ideas through writing

Why This Matters

Strong language and literacy skills are essential for success in all content areas. Children who develop these skills in preschool are better prepared for kindergarten and beyond. Reading and writing open doors to learning math, science, social studies, and the arts. These skills also help children express themselves, understand others, and participate in learning opportunities and play.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Educator following a specific developmental sequence for teaching skills like phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence where activities build on each other
- Educator engages children in extended back-and-forth conversations, beyond “yes” or “no” questions
- Open-ended questions and prompts to encourage children to elaborate and explain their thinking in more depth
- Sentence starters and frames to support children’s language development
- Children participate in small-group and one-on-one conversations
- Play with sounds through songs, rhymes, and games (like clapping syllables)
- Letter identification and letter–sound matching through play-based activities
- Children engage with books independently and during read-alouds
- Use of home languages and English to communicate and learn
- Books are visible, accessible, and include texts in children’s home languages and represent diverse characters, families, and cultures
- Print-rich environment includes labels, charts, and children’s names in multiple languages
- Writing materials are available throughout the classroom (not just in one center)
- Visual vocabulary supports (like picture cards) that are first taught, then displayed and used during activities
- Materials for letter and sound practice (like magnetic letters, alphabet puzzles)

Content Element: Language and Literacy



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic language and literacy opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-group discussions about learning topics • Some questions and prompts to support oral language development • Lists of vocabulary words related to units of study • Guidance on noticing rhymes and alliteration in books and songs • Occasional activities for letter identification and sounds • Some opportunities to practice reading and writing • Recommendations for print-rich environments <p>The key gap at this level is the frequency of opportunities to practice language and literacy skills and the integration of language and literacy development across content areas and throughout the day.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, programs need to add consistency, variety, and developmental sequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and sequence: Includes a clear and comprehensive scope and sequence that moves beyond the “letter of the week” instruction • More structure: Create clear sequences showing how skills build (like teaching high-frequency letters before confusing pairs like b/d) • Expand contexts: Include varied activities for practicing sounds, letters, and words (not just during reading time) • Scaffolds writing: Provide sentence starters, visual supports, and open-ended questions to extend conversations and highlights the connection between spoken language and print • Supports multilingualism: Give educators specific strategies for supporting multilingual learners and building cross-language connections • Increase practice: Create multiple opportunities to revisit vocabulary, sounds, and letters across different activities 	<p>Excelling level practice shows intentional integration and responsive support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep integration: Language and literacy learning happens throughout the day across all content areas • Meaningful repetition: Children encounter the same words, sounds, and concepts in varied contexts (morning meeting, centers, outdoor play) • Individualized support: Educators receive guidance on adapting instruction for each child’s needs and linguistic background • Family partnerships: Resources help families support language and literacy at home in their home languages, recognizing that bilingualism is a strength, not a deficit • Organized sequences: Clear frameworks show when and how to introduce skills, with flexibility for children’s interests • Cross-language connections: Curriculum explicitly highlights similarities and differences across languages children speak or sign

Content Element: Mathematics



This summary of the Content Element: Mathematics provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

The Mathematics content rubric focuses on how curriculum provides ongoing opportunities for young children to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills through playful, intentional learning experiences. Strong math curriculum builds on children’s natural curiosity about numbers, shapes, patterns, and measurement in their everyday lives.

The Mathematics rubric includes five main areas:

- **Mathematical practices:** Children engage in problem-solving, communicate their mathematical thinking, and use tools and a variety of materials to explore math concepts
- **Counting and cardinality:** Children build understanding of counting principles, one-to-one, recognizing quantities, and understanding that the last number counted tells “how many”
- **Operations and algebraic thinking:** With assistance, children compose and decompose numbers (adding to, taking away from, sharing equally) and recognize, create, and extend patterns
- **Measurement and data:** Children are supported to compare, order, estimate, and measure objects, and to collect and interpret simple data (like how many people have red shirts today vs yellow shirts, which is more or less?)
- **Geometry and spatial thinking:** Children explore two- and three-dimensional shapes, their properties, and spatial relationships (like under or over, inside or outside)

Why This Matters

Math learning in preschool and TK is important because it builds foundational skills children need for later academic success. When children engage with math through play and meaningful activities—like counting snack plates, building with blocks, or sorting natural materials—they develop confidence and curiosity about mathematics, which supports learning.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Educator following a specific developmental sequence for teaching math skills where activities build on each other
- Open-ended questions like “How else could we count?” and “What shape could we use next?” in English and children’s home languages
- Children show (not just tell) their mathematical thinking through actions, dialogue, drawings, or using materials
- Vocabulary related to math concepts throughout the day in multiple languages
- Hands-on math exploration during play and structured activities
- Children count objects for real purposes (like setting the table or organizing materials)
- Children sort, pattern, measure, and compare during center time with a variety of materials
- Verbal or nonverbal explanations of mathematical thinking to educators and peers
- Problem-solving activities that have multiple solutions or approaches
- Math manipulatives that are accessible to children in multiple areas (not just a “math center”), including blocks, loose parts, natural materials, and specialized tools
- Number representations are visible throughout the environment and in multiple languages
- Materials that reflect children’s cultures and families (like counting objects from home or culturally relevant pattern examples)

Content Element: Mathematics



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes some basic math opportunities. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have chances to count, compose, and decompose (add to, take away from, and share equally) objects and recognize numbers through play-based and hands-on experiences • Activities include simple two-step processes (like “cut out the shape, then glue it”) • Children explore basic shapes and can identify positions like “in/on” or “under/over” • There are some opportunities to sort objects, share materials, notice simple patterns, and collect data • Curriculum provides basic prompts like “How did you do that?” to encourage children to share their thinking verbally and nonverbally <p>The key gap at this level is inconsistent and varied opportunities to practice mathematical skills and clear sequencing to gradually increase difficulty of activities.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, curriculum builds on Emerging practices through deeper, more consistent learning opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency: More consistent and varied opportunities for children to engage with numbers, patterns, and data across different activities • More materials: A wider range of materials and tools, including both everyday objects and math-specific manipulatives like interlocking cubes or ten frames • Open-ended activities: Open-ended math activities that invite children’s sense-making, like counting collections or creating their own maps • Explanations: Opportunities for children to explain their mathematical thinking using language (including home languages), drawings, or physical demonstrations • Increasing difficulty: Activities that gradually increase in difficulty to match children’s developing skills 	<p>Excelling level practice is distinguished by more opportunities for dialogue and child interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-to-peer engagement: Guidance for educators on how to engage children with each other’s mathematical ideas—prompting children to share strategies, listen to peers, and notice what others did • Integration: Deep integration of math with children’s interests, families, and community connections (like using family counting objects from home or graphing favorite family foods) • Embedded concepts: Intentional embedding of mathematical concepts across content areas and activity types throughout the day • Sequencing: Clear sequences showing how to increase activity difficulty over time while remaining responsive to individual children’s needs • Responsiveness: Specific guidance on how to enhance activities based on children’s curiosities and family input

Content Element: Science



This summary of the Content Element: Science provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

The Science content element focuses on helping young children develop inquiry-based thinking and hands-on exploration skills. Curriculum should provide children with opportunities to ask questions, investigate real-world problems, and explore scientific concepts that are meaningful to them and their families.

The Science rubric includes six main areas:

- **Science and engineering practices:** Children engage in observing, predicting, using tools, documenting observations, and explaining solutions
- **Crosscutting concepts:** Children notice patterns, cause-and-effect relationships, and how things change or stay the same
- **Physical science:** Children explore properties of objects and materials, like color, texture, temperature, and taste when appropriate, and how things move or change
- **Life science:** Children learn about living things and their characteristics, growth, needs, and habitats
- **Earth and space science:** Children investigate earth materials (sand, rocks, soil), weather, seasons, and objects in the sky
- **Engineering, technology, and applications of science:** Children identify problems, plan solutions, test their ideas, and use tools and technology

Why This Matters

Science learning is essential because it builds children's natural curiosity and helps them understand the world around them. For example, when children plant seeds and observe them growing, they learn about life science. When they build ramps and race toy cars, they explore physical science concepts like motion and force. These hands-on experiences develop critical thinking skills that children will use throughout their lives.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Open-ended questions that encourage children to wonder, predict, and explain (example: "What do you think will happen if we add water to the sand?" or "Why do you think the ice melted?")
- Connections between science concepts to children's home languages and cultural experiences (example: discussing different types of homes or foods families eat)
- Educator labels and highlights when children are "being scientists" during everyday activities and play
- Extended investigations over multiple days or weeks, building on previous learning
- Children actively explore materials at a science center or sensory table (example: mixing colors, testing which objects sink or float, observing plants or animals)
- Use of tools to investigate and make observations (magnifying glasses, measuring tools, simple technology like taking photos)
- Children share their discoveries and ideas with peers, both verbally and nonverbally
- Hands-on investigations related to the current theme or unit (example: building structures, caring for classroom plants, exploring light and shadows)
- Science and nature materials that are accessible and integrated throughout learning centers (blocks, dramatic play, art, outdoor areas)
- Space is organized to support hands-on exploration and investigation (sensory tables, construction areas, outdoor exploration spaces), with materials readily available so children can engage independently, with a peer or with educator support, without needing to ask for access (for example the scale is on a low shelf instead of a locked cabinet)

Content Element: Science



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic science opportunities scattered throughout the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have some opportunities for scientific observation (might use a magnifying glass a few times during a unit to observe objects) • Includes simple science-related pattern recognition (like “the sun comes out during the day”) • Some hands-on opportunities for children to engage with each of the main areas of the PTKLF • Science activities mostly during designated “science time” <p>The key gap at this level is that science opportunities are limited and not consistently integrated throughout the day or connected to children’s real questions and experiences.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, programs need to add consistency and meaningful connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing investigations: Include multi-day investigations inspired by children’s interests (like observing insects on the playground over several days) • Frequency: Provide daily opportunities for science exploration across multiple learning centers, not just during science time • Build on questions: Use children’s questions to guide investigations and extend learning over time • Specific strategies: Provide educators with specific strategies for highlighting science concepts throughout the day • Varied experiences: Ensure children engage with multiple science areas (practices, concepts, and disciplinary areas) within each unit and have opportunities to engage in dialogue about science concepts 	<p>Excelling level practice shows deep integration and cultural responsiveness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic investigations: Science learning is embedded in long-term investigations lasting several weeks, inspired by children’s and families’ questions • Discussion: Includes guidance or example prompts on when to engage children in science learning • Cultural connections: Science topics connect to children’s cultural practices and lived experiences (like exploring vegetables families cook with) • Cross-content integration: Science meaningfully integrates with other subjects (measuring plant growth for math, drawing observations for literacy/arts, learning about community farms for social studies)



Content Element: Physical Development

This summary of the Content Element: Physical Development provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

Physical development is essential for children's health, learning, and overall well-being throughout their lives. While children develop physical skills during free play and recess, high-quality curriculum should also include intentional activities that target specific physical development goals.

The Physical Development rubric includes three main areas:

- **Fine motor skills:** These are the small muscle movements children use for tasks like cutting, drawing, beading, and using tongs
- **Gross motor, locomotor, and perceptual motor skills:** These include larger movements like balance, jumping, hopping, skipping, throwing, catching, and kicking
- **Active physical play:** This includes movements that build children's physical endurance (like running for sustained periods), strength (like carrying objects or pushing a wheelchair), and flexibility (like stretching)

Why This Matters

Physical development is important because it supports children's ability to participate fully in all learning activities. When children have strong fine motor skills, they can more easily engage with art materials, science tools, and writing implements. When they have strong gross motor skills, they gain confidence in their physical abilities and can focus better on learning. Physical activity also supports children's social and emotional development as they learn to play cooperatively, follow rules in games, and persevere through physical challenges.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Clearly identified physical development goals in activities across different times of the day and content areas
- Modifications to materials or activities based on individual children's needs (example: providing larger objects for a child developing fine motor skills, or offering alternative ways to participate in a gross motor activity)
- Freedom of movement without insisting on perfect form or technique, including flexible seating that is safe during large-group, small-group, and other intentional activities
- Connections between physical activities to other learning goals (example: "We're going to practice our balance while we count to ten")
- Opportunities to practice fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and physical play throughout the day
- Obstacle courses or movement through spaces in different directions (forward, backward, over, under, side to side)
- Variety of fine motor tools are present: scissors (including varying types), tweezers, tongs, small manipulatives, beads, lacing materials, drawing and writing tools
- Gross motor materials and space for movement are available both indoors and outdoors
- Materials that are adapted or modified to support all children's participation (example: larger balls, hook-and-loop paddles, lightweight objects)
- Visual supports or diagrams show children different ways to move or use their bodies
- Schedules that include dedicated time for both fine motor activities (integrated throughout the day) and active physical play (at least a few times per week)
- All children are able to participate in physical activities with appropriate adaptations or accommodations as needed
- Flexibility in lessons to pause an activity and include a movement break when children are losing interest or becoming increasingly wiggly or restless



Content Element: Physical Development

Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes some basic physical development activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some fine motor activities requiring children to practice skills like beading, cutting, drawing, or using tongs • Occasional activities to build gross motor skills, focused on balance, jumping, locomotor skills, and manipulative skills like throwing and catching • Some activities focused on physical play, like opportunities for children to engage in movements that increase endurance <p>The key gap at this level is the frequency of opportunities to practice physical skills and the level of guidance provided.</p>	<p>To reach the Progressing level, curriculum needs to provide more consistent and varied opportunities for physical development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency: Provides consistent activities (at least a few times per week) that support the three areas of physical development • Accommodations: Includes examples of adaptations and accommodations so all children can participate, such as using hook-and-loop paddles for catching games, or allowing a child who uses a wheelchair to use a foam noodle to touch a classmate in a game of tag • Family engagement: Offers guidance on how to engage families in supporting physical development at home and inviting them to share movement practices from their culture 	<p>Excelling level curriculum includes all the components of Progressing level plus additional features that make physical development truly integrated and meaningful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness: Comprehensive guidance helps educators support each child's physical development in ways that are responsive to individual needs and free from rigid expectations • Home-based activities: Specific family engagement strategies provide activities families can do at home and invite families to share movement practices important to their culture • Integration: Active physical play is meaningfully integrated with other learning domains

Content Element: Health



This summary of the Content Element: Health provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

The Health content element focuses on how curriculum provides opportunities for children to learn about and practice healthy habits. This includes building knowledge about their bodies, understanding nutrition, and developing health and safety habits.

The Health rubric includes three main components:

- **Body awareness:** Learning about body parts and their functions, understanding body boundaries, and connecting body sensations to emotions
- **Nutrition:** Building knowledge about different foods and understanding how eating a variety of foods helps people feel good and grow
- **Health and safety habits:** Learning about health care providers, understanding how families and communities promote good health, and developing awareness of how the environment and outdoors support wellness

Why This Matters

Health education is important because it helps children develop lifelong habits that support their physical and emotional well-being. When children understand their bodies and learn healthy practices early, they can make better choices and take care of themselves as they grow.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Books specifically focused on health topics (not just stories with characters who happen to be healthy, but books explicitly teaching about body parts, nutrition, or health practices)
- Class discussions about health topics (like “What helps keep our bodies healthy?” or “Why do we wash our hands?”)
- Vocabulary related to body parts and their functions, including terms in children’s home languages
- Evidence of family engagement related to culturally relevant nutritious foods (Images of ways different cultures gathered for mealtime, conversations on how children eat meals at home)
- Lesson plans that include specific learning objectives related to body awareness, nutrition, or health and safety habits
- Posters or charts displaying body parts, healthy foods, or health and safety practices
- Dramatic play area set up as a doctor’s office, grocery store with diverse foods, or restaurant featuring culturally diverse foods (different spice containers or food boxes that reflect the cultures of the children currently enrolled)
- Visual reminders of health practices (like handwashing steps) posted at child eye level

Content Element: **Health**



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes some basic health content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple songs naming external body parts (like “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”) • Exposure to nutrition, such as pretend-play foods available in the dramatic play area • Occasional mentions when a character in a book made a safe choice <p>The key gap at this level is that health content is incidental rather than intentional, and learning activities are not explicitly focused on building health knowledge.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, programs need to add explicit, intentional learning activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific activities: Includes specific activities related to the three main Health areas • Vocabulary: Include specific lessons using read-aloud books that teach vocabulary for different body parts and their function, food and nutrition, and safe habits; provide vocabulary in children’s home languages • Consistency: Provide regular opportunities to engage with health content, not just occasional mentions 	<p>Excelling level practice shows deeper integration and cultural connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and cultural integration: Connect health content to children’s families, cultures, and lived experiences • Comprehensive approach: Addresses all three main Health areas with depth and intentionality



Content Element: **History–Social Science**

This summary of the Content Element: History–Social Science provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

The History–Social Science content element focuses on helping young children understand their communities, cultures, and environment. Curriculum should provide learning experiences that connect children to the people and places around them through integration with other content areas.

This History–Social Science element includes four main areas:

- **Cultural communities:** Learning about different cultures, traditions, and practices—both familiar and new to children
- **Time and historical events:** Understanding the order of events, past and present, and developing time-related vocabulary like “before,” “after,” and “yesterday”
- **Contributions to community:** Exploring different jobs and roles people have, and learning how to be helpers who take care of their classroom, neighborhood, and environment
- **Locations in the environment:** Identifying characteristics of familiar places and learning directional words like “under,” “over,” and “inside”

Why This Matters

This content area is important because it helps children develop a sense of belonging and understand how they fit into their families, classrooms, and communities. When children learn about different cultures and community roles, they build respect for diversity and begin to see themselves as active members who can contribute to making their world better. These early social science concepts also support children’s identity development and help them understand how people, places, and events are connected.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Dramatic play area includes props representing different cultures within the classroom and community roles
- Books and materials reflect diverse cultures, including those of children in the classroom
- Authentic materials (photos, artifacts, music) from various cultures during lessons
- Maps, globes, or models of the local community that are accessible to children
- Conversations about different community helpers and their roles
- Projects where children contribute to classroom or community care
- Role-playing different community helper roles during dramatic play
- Use of time vocabulary correctly in conversations (yesterday, tomorrow, before, after)
- Use of directional words during activities and play (up, down, over under, etc.)
- Evidence that families are invited to share about their cultural traditions, jobs, or community roles
- Field trips or virtual visits to local community places and businesses or pictures of the local businesses

Content Element: History–Social Science



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic exposure to history–social science concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few books about different cultures, primarily during one-off cultural celebrations • May include activities about community helpers through books, content on familiar locations like home and school, and age-appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders) • Occasional discussions about time concepts using words like “yesterday” or “tomorrow” during read-alouds • Cultural learning that is limited <p>The key gap at this level is that specific content related to social studies concepts is limited, touristic, or may not be included.</p>	<p>To reach the Progressing level, programs need to add depth and authenticity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen historical content: Include more activities about community helpers through books, content on familiar locations like home and school, and age-appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders) • Expand cultural content: Include content about cultures that both reflect children currently in the program and introduce new cultures • Engage families: Add guidance for engaging families to enhance learning about cultural practices and traditions • Deepen time concepts: Cover at least two of the three key areas (time vocabulary, order of events, past/present) consistently 	<p>Excelling level practice shows comprehensive coverage with meaningful engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and varied content: Include regular activities about community helpers through books, content on familiar locations like home and school, and age-appropriate content on historical events, characters, or stories that took place in the past (example: famous historical leaders) • Integration: Integrate cultural concepts throughout the curriculum in authentic ways, like dramatic play, rather than one day or week of activities • Active community learning: Provide consistent opportunities to learn about different jobs through field trips, surrounding buildings and businesses, or family visits • Practice helping: Include projects where children participate as helpers in their classroom and community

Content Element: Visual and Performing Arts



This summary of the Content Element: Visual and Performing Arts provides an overview of what this element focuses on, how to improve from one level to the next, and what an administrator might observe related to this element. While this summary is a helpful introductory guide and observation tool, it should be used in conjunction with and does not replace the full rubric.

Overview of Key Components

What This Area Focuses On

The Visual and Performing Arts content element focuses on how curriculum provides opportunities for children to explore creativity through visual arts, music, dance, and drama. This area is important because the arts offer children many ways to express themselves, experience joy in learning, and develop skills that support growth in other areas like fine motor development, communication, and cultural appreciation.

The Visual and Performing Arts rubric includes six key areas:

- **Visual arts:** Creating 2D and 3D art through drawing, painting, sculpting, and working with various materials
- **Music:** Exposure to different musical genres, rhythm, tempo, and opportunities to create and perform music
- **Dance:** Creative movement experiences and opportunities to choreograph and perform dances
- **Drama:** Acting out scripts and stories, role-playing, and theatrical expression
- **Individual expression:** Giving children freedom to create art in their own way and make choices about materials and methods
- **Arts integration:** Meaningfully connecting the arts with other content areas like math, science, literacy, and social studies

Why This Matters

High-quality curriculum in the arts builds children's vocabulary across all arts areas, engages families to learn about cultural music and art traditions, and connects arts experiences to the curriculum theme or unit of study.

What Administrators Would Observe

When observing, look for:

- Arts activities connected to the current curriculum theme or unit of study
- Balance of 2D and 3D art experiences throughout the week
- Variety of open-ended materials accessible to children without having to ask for them
- Arts-specific vocabulary used in multiple languages
- Open-ended questions that encourage creative thinking
- Integration of arts with other content areas (math, science, literacy, social studies)
- Children making individual creative choices rather than creating identical products
- Opportunities across all four art forms: visual arts, music, dance, and drama
- Family engagement around cultural art forms and traditions
- Arts materials integrated into other learning centers
- Frequent opportunities for arts experiences (daily vs. occasionally)
- Children using arts vocabulary when talking about their work
- A focus on the process of the activity versus the final product

Content Element: Visual and Performing Arts



Moving from Emerging to Excelling

Emerging Level Practice	Moving to Progressing Level	Reaching Excelling Level
<p>At the Emerging level, curriculum includes basic opportunities for arts experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and varied opportunities to create visual arts, sing and play musical instruments, engage in creative movement and dance, and engage in pretend and dramatic play • Includes some opportunities for open-ended art expression such as children free-coloring, creating their own pretend-play scenarios, and dancing <p>The key gap at this level is that arts activities may not be deeply connected to the curriculum theme or integrated with other learning areas. Children have limited opportunities for individual expression and choice.</p>	<p>To reach Progressing level, programs need to add balance and intentionality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance art forms: May include a balance of 2D and 3D visual art activities that connect to the curriculum theme • Materials: Provide a wider variety of open-ended materials and allow children to add materials of their own choosing • Vocabulary: Include guidance for building visual and performing arts vocabulary in multiple languages • Add prompts: Provide specific prompts educators can use during arts activities • Increase variety: Offer more varied music, dance, and drama experiences 	<p>Excelling level practice shows deep integration and cultural responsiveness and integration across content areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect intentionally: More intentionally connect arts experiences to what children are learning in other areas • Individual expression: Children have regular opportunities to express themselves individually through the arts, making their own creative choices about materials, movements, and performances with a focus on process over product • Multilingual support: Arts vocabulary and prompts are available in children’s home languages

Appendix 2: Existing CDE Curriculum Resources

The CDE has developed a number of existing resources that can be used to inform the implementation of curriculum.

Resource	Summary
<u>California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities (2019, CDE)</u>	The California Legislature passed <u>Assembly Bill 2785</u> , calling upon the California Department of Education to develop a manual that provides guidance to educators and specialists in grades transitional kindergarten/Kindergarten–12 to help them appropriately identify and support English learners with disabilities. In response, the Department of Education developed this California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities to provide information on identifying, assessing, supporting, and reclassifying English learners who may qualify for special education services and pupils with disabilities who may be classified as English learners. The manual, or guide, will also assist leaders in developing and implementing policies and practices related to English learners with disabilities.
<u>California-Adopted Instructional Materials (CDE)</u>	Instructional materials programs adopted by the California State Board of Education and supporting documents about the adoption process.
<u>Curriculum Frameworks (CDE)</u>	Instructional materials programs adopted by the California State Board of Education and supporting documents about the adoption process.
<u>Creating Equitable Early Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes (2022, CDE)</u>	<p>Creating Equitable Early Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes was developed in collaboration between the CDE Early Education Division and the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies. It is a resource for early childhood educators committed to improving race equity within their classrooms and programs and disrupting the exclusionary disciplinary practices, including suspensions, expulsions, and pushouts, that disproportionately impact California's youngest boys of color. Drawing on contemporary research, this book presents the rates of exclusionary disciplinary practices in early childhood and the underlying reasons for these patterns, including different forms of oppression, with a focus on structural racism and implicit bias.</p> <p>This book introduces a wide range of practical strategies educators and program leaders can use to create strengths-based, responsive early education environments that support California's youngest boys of color to thrive. Topics addressed include building racial equity awareness, strategies to address implicit bias, responsive relationships with love at the center, culturally responsive practice, effective research-informed strategies for the classroom, and the importance of building reciprocal partnerships with families.</p>
<u>Dual Language Learner (DLL) Support Web Page (CDE)</u>	Technical support, guidance, frequently asked questions, and resources for the identification, reporting, and support of dual language learners in the California State Preschool Program.
<u>Early Education Resources (CDE)</u>	Resources for child development contractors, families and the childcare community.

Resource	Summary
<u>Family Partnerships and Culture (2016, CDE)</u>	<p>This publication begins with a set of guiding principles for moving from theory to practice, from self-reflection, to learning about cultural diversity, and then applying what is learned to teaching and learning. Next, it defines cultural competence and proposes a set of principles to guide efforts to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors associated with cultural competence. These principles are intended to be a foundation for subsequent discussions of culture, family life, and curriculum. The publication has been prepared with early childhood program staff as its principal audience. Examples of strategies for educators and program staff members are provided throughout to help readers understand how to apply the information. However, administrators, families, family support agencies, and parent advocacy organizations may find some of the information useful in performing their roles.</p>
<u>Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students (CDE, 2020)</u>	<p>This publication presents current evidence-based pedagogy and practices in the areas of developing multilingualism, early education, assets-based environments, English language development, and systems that support the implementation of these practices. Further, the publication provides a deeper dive into accessing actionable examples of how evidence-based pedagogy and practices may be implemented in districts, schools, and classrooms to positively impact multilingual and English learner students.</p>
<u>Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Disabilities (CDE, 2021)</u>	<p>In 2009, the California Department of Education published Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs that Promote Belonging for Children with Disabilities, designed to be a resource for providers as they work to provide high-quality care and education to all California’s children, including those with disabilities. This second edition of Inclusion Works! includes updated information about recent policies and position papers pertaining to inclusive programs, additional resources, and updated references.</p>
<u>The Integrated Nature of Learning (2016, CDE)</u>	<p>This publication addresses what teaching and learning look like when working with children birth to five years of age. The aim of this publication is to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what it means to teach when working with children birth to five, using current research evidence as the starting point • Apply this understanding to a broad definition of curriculum that includes the learning that occurs within play, the daily routines, and conversations and interactions • Provide examples of how educators observe, document, and interpret children’s play and interactions in order to plan and implement curriculum, assess learning, and engage children and families as partners in planning the learning experiences
<u>The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education (2021, CDE)</u>	<p>The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education explains why play matters for young children of all cultural, linguistic, and ability groups and the central role of learning in young children’s play. It is important for educators who consider play an essential source of emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development to gain a deeper understanding of play, plan for children’s engagement in a wide range of opportunities to play, and feel confident talking about their play-based program with families and colleagues.</p>

Resource	Summary
<p>PTKLF Presentations</p>	<p>The CDE YouTube channel includes video presentations on recent updates to the PTKLF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to the Preschool Learning Foundations (Video; 18:06) • PTKLF: Introductions (Video; 41:05) • PTKLF: Approaches to Learning (Video; 26:45) • PTKLF: Social and Emotional Development (Video; 25:35) • PTKLF: Language and Literacy Development (Video; 31:26) • PTKLF: Language Development (Video; 34:43) • PTKLF: Mathematics (Video; 32:41) • PTKLF: Science (Video; 20:43) • PTKLF: Physical Development (Video; 16:29) • PTKLF: Health (Video; 21:09) • PTKLF: History–Social Science (Video; 23:15) • PTKLF: Visual and Performing Arts (Video; (22:00)
<p><u>Responsive Early Education for Young Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness</u> (2019, CDE)</p>	<p>To provide responsive care to young children experiencing homelessness, early childhood educators must have knowledge and understanding about the causes of homelessness, the diverse circumstances of families who experience it, and the impact it has on young children’s learning and development. This book includes a list of recommended children’s books that discuss the topic of homelessness in a sensitive and respectful manner and a list of resources that includes national and state organizations and websites, research, reports, fact sheets, and best practices related to family homelessness.</p>

Appendix 3: Understanding the Research on Preschool Curriculum

Clear evidence demonstrates that the impacts of high-quality preschool as an early intervention strategy can be dramatic, particularly for children with disabilities³⁸ and children of color.³⁹

Evidence also suggests that to achieve the outcomes described above, preschool programs, regardless of the setting in which they operate, require programmatic support to implement high-quality early learning opportunities. Such support, including ongoing professional learning, coaching, and continuous improvement efforts, is especially critical for implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum and play-based learning experiences that nurture each child's early development.⁴⁰ High-quality curriculum with a specific scope and sequence across domains of the PTKLF can be implemented through playful learning activities that engage and meet the needs of individual children.

Assessment is another important aspect of the implementation of curriculum. Developmental assessments, like the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), provide preschool educators with information about individual children's development, including children with disabilities and children who are multilingual learners. Developmentally appropriate assessments allow educators to use curriculum as intended and meet each child where they are, in every domain of development.

The California Department of Education (CDE) believes that programs should use high-quality curricula that appropriately meets the needs of children, families, and communities and is:

- Aligned to all domains outlined in the [Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations \(PTKLF\)](#);
- Play based, developmentally informed, culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming;
- Inclusive and supportive of the needs of multilingual learners and children with disabilities

The CDE also believes high-quality curricula should have intentional design with appropriate scope and sequence around the teaching of early math, science, language, and literacy skills because research demonstrates that intentionality in these areas in an otherwise whole-child curriculum is needed to optimize diverse children's outcomes in these areas.

Summary of Preschool Curriculum Research: A Report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

A 2024 consensus study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Math offered a comprehensive analysis of the current preschool curriculum landscape.⁴¹

The Committee on [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#) was formed to conduct a study of the quality of pre-K curriculum in the United States for children aged three to five, with particular attention to the needs of specific subpopulations, including Black and Latine children, multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children experiencing poverty.

Key Characteristics of High-Quality, Equity-Driven Preschool Curriculum

The report offered the following fifteen key characteristics of high-quality, equity-driven preschool curriculum:

- Research- and evidence-based child outcomes
- Scope and sequence
- A focus spanning developmental domains and content areas or coherently incorporated domain-specific curriculum
- Content and learning domains that are covered in depth
- Clearly defined and specific developmentally appropriate learning goals
- Well-designed learning experiences and interactions
- An emphasis on responsive, intentional teaching
- Guidance for preparing developmentally appropriate, engaging learning environments, materials, and schedules
- Support for culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining teaching and learning
- Support for multilingual learners and various language systems
- Individuation and effective supports for children with identified disabilities
- Supports for individualized instruction for every child
- Supports for family engagement
- Ongoing assessment tools and strategies aligned with goals and experiences
- Professional development

38 Lynn A. Karoly, M. Rebecca Kilburn, and Jill S. Cannon, *Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2025).

39 Jorge Luis, García, Frederik H., Bennhoff, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and James Heckman. *The Dynastic Benefits of Early Childhood Education*. Working Paper no. 2021-77 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics, 2021).

40 Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp, eds., *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, revised edition. (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997).

41 Content in this section is drawn directly from [A New Vision for High-Quality Preschool Curriculum](#).

False Dichotomies in Preschool Curriculum

The report also identified false dichotomies, which are common in the early education field and particularly in regard to perceptions of curriculum⁴².

False dichotomies such as these are based on either/or thinking, which assumes there is one right answer to highly complex questions. Resolving the tensions and complexities inherent in educational decisions requires rejecting these false dichotomies and moving from either/or to both/and thinking. False dichotomies uplifted by the report that relate to curriculum included:

- Scripts vs. teacher autonomy
- Constrained vs. nonconstrained goals
- Lower-level vs. higher-level skills
- Family-to-classroom vs. classroom-to-family engagement
- Play vs academics
- Emergent vs. highly-scripted
- Child-initiated vs. teacher directed
- Exploratory vs. content focused
- Comprehensive/whole child vs. domain specific
- Active learning vs. passive acquisition
- Investigatory vs. didactic
- Social and emotional vs. cognitive
- Spontaneous vs. deliberate
- Out-of-school language and reasoning vs. school-based language and reasoning

42 Bredekamp, S., & Willer, B. (2022). Intentional teaching: Complex decision making and the core considerations. Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age, 8, 5-23.

Appendix 4: California Department of Education’s Universal PresKindergarten and Preschool Through Third Grade Approach to Curriculum

The CDE is committed to interrupting and counteracting inequities, racism, and bias; and also to closing opportunity gaps to ensure all children start school ready to succeed and all schools are ready to support every child’s success. California has made considerable investments in the implementation of Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) and Transitional Kindergarten (TK), and the CDE has implemented these initiatives with a focus on preschool through third grade (P–3) alignment. P–3 alignment includes both horizontal and vertical alignment and coherence across grades and systems to improve coordination of policies and practices in preschool, across transitions to TK and kindergarten, and through third grade and beyond. P–3 alignment is important because it ensures children’s skills are seamlessly built on as they transition from one grade to the next, while also ensuring that developmentally appropriate practices such as play-based learning “push up” into the early grades.

Use of the PTKLF and an aligned, high-quality curriculum is one way to support P-3 alignment. The CDE oversees the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) as well as TK through grade 12 schools. Requirements for CSPP and TK are described in the following sections (but this toolkit can be used by all programs who use the PTKLF).

Overview of the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) and Their Connection to UPK Curriculum

It is important for preschool and TK curriculum to address California’s learning standards for these programs. The PTKLF outline key knowledge and skills that most children ages three to five and a half years old can achieve when provided with the kinds of interactions, instruction, and environments that research has shown to promote early learning and development. These foundations can provide preschool and TK educators, parents, and the public with a clear understanding of the wide range of knowledge and skills that children typically attain when given the benefits of a high-quality preschool program, whether it is in center-based, home-based, or TK settings.

The PTKLF were updated in 2024. The new iteration builds upon the California Preschool Learning Foundations (volumes 1–3, 2008–2012) by incorporating the most recent research on child development, such as more robust inclusion of the science of learning and literacy development. The PTKLF provide guidance to all California early education programs, including TK, public preschool programs (example: CSPP, Head Start), private preschool programs, and family childcare homes that offer an early education experience.

The PTKLF describe key competencies children develop in nine domains of learning:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy (including Foundational Language Development and English Language Development)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Physical Development
- Health
- History–Social Science
- Visual and Performing Arts

The foundations reflect attention to the whole child, focusing on all aspects of learning and development, including children’s social and emotional and physical development, while also addressing children’s development in areas that map more directly to academic subjects such as mathematics, language and literacy, and science.

The learning expectations outlined in the PTKLF provide a backbone for aligning multiple dimensions of practice, including curriculum, instructional practices, assessment, and educator professional development. For California early education programs, the PTKLF define the knowledge, concepts, and skills most children learn as they become ready to transition from early education programs to kindergarten, given their experiences at home, in early education programs, and in their communities. The PTKLF can be used by early childhood leaders and educators in California to do the following:

- Set learning goals for children
- Guide developmentally appropriate, equitable, inclusive practice, including planning learning environments, experiences, and strategies for teaching to promote children’s learning across domains
- Select and implement curricula aligned with the PTKLF
- Design and use assessments aligned with the PTKLF
- Design professional development and coaching programs for educators to support understanding and effective use of the learning foundations across domains
- Enhance preschool through third grade continuity
- Inform program planning and ongoing quality improvement

Current California State Preschool Program (CSPP) Requirements Related to Curriculum

At this time, CSPP programs are not required to use a curriculum or curricula, however the standards for the child development and education program component shall include, but are not limited to the following (Education Code [EC] 8261; 5 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 18273):

- A. The program approach is developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate
- B. The program is inclusive of children with special needs
- C. The program encourages respect for the feelings and rights of others
- D. The program supports children’s social and emotional development by:
 - 1. Building trust;
 - 2. Planning routines and transitions so they can occur in a timely, predictable, and unhurried manner; and
 - 3. Helping children develop emotional security and facility in social relationships
- E. The program provides for the development of each child’s cognitive and language skills by:
 - 1. Using various strategies, including experimentation, inquiry, observation, play, and exploration;
 - 2. Ensuring opportunities for creative self-expression through activities such as art, music, movement, and dialogue;
 - 3. Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults; and
 - 4. Supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development
- F. The program promotes each child’s physical development by providing sufficient time, indoor and outdoor space, equipment, materials, and guidelines for active play and movement
- G. The program promotes and maintains practices that are healthy and safe

In addition, programs must complete the age-appropriate Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and should use data from the DRDP to plan and conduct age and developmentally appropriate activities as required by the education program (EC 8203, 8261; 5 CCR 18272).

The CDE is exploring a recommendation from the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Report ([Brief](#) | [Full Report](#)) to require programs to adopt an evidence-based curriculum that is aligned with the PTKLF and the DRDP.

Current TK Requirements Related to Curriculum

As defined in EC Section 48000[d], TK must a curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate and has a requirement for annual instructional minutes of 36,000 minutes per year (EC sections 46207 and 47612.5). Developmentally appropriate curriculum includes both of the following:

1. Instructional practices that promote a child’s development and learning through a strengths- and play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning that addresses the domains of development in the department’s Preschool / Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations
2. A cohesive set of principles, learning goals, intentional teaching strategies, activities, experiences, environments, and materials designed to help children learn and thrive in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, as well as their individual needs, home languages, and cultural experiences.

It is important to note that in California public schools, there are specific requirements around providing services to identified English learner (EL) students. In TK, there is no explicit requirement to require designated and integrated English Language Development instruction, but it is strongly encouraged that if a child is a multilingual learner they are provided with language development services, which can be achieved through a high-quality curriculum that is supportive of children’s home language and English language development.

Current Kindergarten Through Third Grade Requirements Related to Curriculum

With adoption of California EC sections 60040–60045, 60048, and 60200, the California Legislature recognized the essential role of curriculum and instructional materials in California’s public schools in the formation of a child’s attitudes and beliefs.

Instructional materials used in California public schools must comply with EC sections 60040–60045 and 60048 as well as State Board of Education (SBE) guidelines contained in [Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content \(2013 edition\)](#).

The SBE adopted [Guidance for Local Instructional Materials Adoptions](#) in March of 2024, which supports local educational agencies through each stage in the instructional materials adoptions process. The guidance includes links to current legislation, sample timelines, guidance for specific student groups, and implementation considerations.

In kindergarten through third grade there are also requirements to provide designated and integrated ELD instruction to identified EL students.



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