

# **New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards (NJPTLS)**

Division of Early Childhood Services  
New Jersey Department of Education

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## Introduction

The New Jersey Department of Education has established comprehensive Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards that serve as the foundational framework for instruction in early childhood settings. These standards ensure the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices that support preschool students' growth across all domains of development.

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are aligned with the K-12 New Jersey Student Learning Standards and emphasize inclusive, play-based, and culturally responsive approaches to learning. In addition to identifying learning expectations, the standards explicitly include teaching practices designed to guide educators in implementing the standards in developmentally appropriate ways.

Unlike K-12 standards, which primarily define what students must know and be able to do, the preschool standards recognize the unique ways young children learn. As such, they incorporate teaching practices that reflect learning through intentional interactions, hands-on exploration, play-based experiences, and supportive learning environments. These practices are essential for ensuring consistent and effective implementation of the standards across preschool classrooms.

Together, the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and associated teaching practices reflect current research and evidence-based best practices in early childhood education and promote consistency, equity, and high-quality instruction across diverse preschool settings throughout New Jersey.

## Framework

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards provide a comprehensive framework that supports high-quality early childhood education. It defines both required learning outcomes to which curricula for state-funded preschool programs must be aligned and required teacher practices for effective implementation. Particularly when paired with developmentally appropriate practices and aligned instructional planning, these standards help ensure curriculum, assessment, and learning environments that support the diverse needs of all preschool students.

Designed to align with broader educational goals, the standards promote consistency in preschool instruction, ensuring that all students have access to enriching learning experiences to meet the diverse developmental needs of all preschool students in rigorous and responsive early learning environments.

The document concludes with a bibliography of books, articles, and periodicals that are valuable resources for any professional library.

# Summary of Changes to Teaching and Learning Standards

Based on the review of the expert (research) and writing committees, the Department has revised the 2014 Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards in the following ways:

- Preschool standards are aligned with the developmental trajectory of K-12 education, ensuring a seamless and age-appropriate continuum of learning. There are new domains, titles, and standards (e.g., Language Domain), Technology (e.g., Computer Science and Design Thinking) that align with the K-12 Student Learning Standards content areas.
- Pedagogical content knowledge is embedded throughout the preschool teacher practices to promote a deep understanding of the subject matter.
- Research-based practices are throughout the standards and teaching practices.
- Preschool standards intentionally integrate culturally affirming practices and materials to promote inclusivity, respect diversity, and lay the foundation for equitable learning.
- Preschool standards engage students in hands-on experiences that weave science and problem-solving concepts into learning.

## Structure of this Document

Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are grounded in a strong theoretical framework that informs the design and implementation of high-quality educational experiences for young students. Specifically, the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards:

- Define supportive and developmentally appropriate learning environments for preschool students.
- Describe effective partnerships and shared responsibilities among families, the community, and preschool programs.
- Specify expected learning outcomes for preschool students across developmental domains and the developmentally appropriate teaching practices that support those outcomes.

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards define what preschool students must know and be able to do within the context of a high-quality preschool classroom. Early childhood experiences have long-lasting implications for future learning and development. High-quality preschool programs provide developmentally appropriate experiences during the earliest years of schooling that foster independence, support positive developmental outcomes, and optimize learning across domains.

## The Standards and the Classroom Curriculum

Consistent with the K-12 New Jersey Student Learning Standards, the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards apply to all school districts in the state. The standards are to be used as:

- A resource for ensuring appropriate implementation of the curriculum.
- A tool for instructional planning.
- A framework for ongoing professional development.
- A framework for the development of a comprehensive early childhood education assessment system.

Curriculum is defined as a planned, organized scope and sequence of learning experiences designed to support students in achieving identified educational outcomes. It includes descriptions of instructional activities, materials, and practices. The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are not a curriculum; rather, provide a framework of learning targets that define what preschool students must know and be able to do by the end of the four-year old preschool year.

While the standards establish learning expectations, the curriculum outlines *how* those expectations will be addressed through instruction. When implemented together using research-based practices, the standards and curriculum provide a foundation for equitable, high-quality early childhood education.

All preschool programs must implement a comprehensive, evidence-based curriculum that:

- Aligns with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.
- Addresses all content areas and learning domains in depth.
- Responds to students' developmental needs.
- Demonstrates culturally and linguistically responsive.
- Includes students with diverse abilities and backgrounds.

## Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Practices

Developmentally appropriate teaching practices help students meet preschool standards by supporting how they learn and grow, recognizing differences in their development, and providing strategies to best support each child's learning. Although preschool domains are listed separately in this document, programs must deliver them in an integrated way through daily routines, activities, and interactions.

Preschool educational experiences are designed to stimulate, assist, and sustain emergent skills. High-quality preschool programs aim to maximize learning and development, providing each student with a foundation for current and future academic and social success.

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards outline the essential elements of high-quality early childhood programming and define clear, developmentally appropriate student learning outcomes across key learning domains. All standards include both student outcomes and teacher practices. As preschool- aged students develop skills at varying rates, these standards define the foundational skills that students are expected to acquire by the time they enter kindergarten, preparing them for increasingly sophisticated learning in later grade bands.

Standards Included For:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Health, Safety, and Physical Education
- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies, Family, and Life Skills
- World Languages and Cultures
- Computer Science, Innovation, and Society

## The Numbering of the Preschool Standards

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards use a combination of numbers and letters in the column to the left of each indicator or teaching practice. The numbers and letters identify specific learning goals and skills for students. Letters indicate the grade level and the domain within each content area, representing categories of learning (e.g., Numbers and Counting (NC) is a domain for Mathematics). Numbers correspond to performance expectations, specifying the developmental skills or concepts that students are expected to master by the end of preschool.

Grade Level	Domain	Performance Expectation (Skills)	Example
PK	NC	1	PK.NC.1

# Implementation Support and Additional Resources

## Implementation Support

To ensure that all students achieve the standards, the preschool environment, instructional materials, and teaching strategies must be adapted as appropriate to meet the needs of individual students. Research in 2025 highlights that preschool learners have diverse developmental, cultural, and linguistic needs, requiring evidence-based practices that promote inclusion, equity, and individualized learning. Students benefit from specialized and embedded interventions to support and sustain progress, alongside play-based and experiential approaches. Research indicates that embedding targeted interventions in daily routines, alongside play-based and experiential learning, supports students' development and promotes sustained progress, resulting in stronger long-term outcomes. Preschool programs must integrate social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices as core components of instruction.

With a growing population of multilingual learners, programs must also implement strategies such as home-language support, translanguaging, and culturally responsive pedagogy to foster language development and affirm students' identities. By centering cultural and linguistic assets, engaging families as partners, and utilizing adaptive tools and professional development, programs ensure equitable access and high-quality learning experiences for all preschool students.

## Special Education Needs

Programs must engage in deliberate planning to ensure the full inclusion of preschool students with disabilities in general education settings. This planning requires identifying individual needs through ongoing formative assessments, aligning instruction with the preschool curriculum, and implementing evidence-based supports, program modifications, and assistive technology. Continuous evaluation of student progress is essential to guarantee equitable access and meaningful participation.

The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards serve as a resource for developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), ensuring that the students' goals align with age-appropriate expectations and provide meaningful access to the curriculum. Providing appropriate intervention services is required under the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2004, which guarantees students with disabilities the right to general education program adaptations as specified in their IEPs and with parental consent. Federal requirements mandate that these adaptations provide preschool students with disabilities full access to the education program and curriculum. Such adaptations do not lower learning expectations; rather, they enable students to build on their strengths, address learning differences, and work toward the learning outcomes established for all students.

Preschoolers with disabilities demonstrate diverse learning, cognitive, communication, physical, sensory, and social-emotional needs that require individualized approaches. Each student's needs are supported across a range of educational settings, with decisions regarding placement and services made collaboratively by the IEP team to ensure those needs are met. Technology plays a vital role in personalizing learning, supporting communication, and promoting full participation in classroom activities.

## Multilingual Learners (MLs) and Multiculturalism

In public preschool programs across New Jersey and the United States, the population of multilingual learners (MLs) continues to grow, representing a rich mosaic of over 187 home languages, with Spanish being the most prevalent. Many of these students have limited English proficiency and require targeted linguistic supports to ensure equitable access to quality education.

Educators must remain informed about the developmental stages of second language acquisition and implement developmentally appropriate strategies that support both home language maintenance and English proficiency. Best practices emphasize embedding linguistic and cognitive support strategies—such as guided drawing, environmental print, and two-way conversational interactions—within play-based classroom routines.

Translanguaging, in which students fluidly use all linguistic resources, is a powerful pedagogical tool. Research demonstrates that translanguaging enhanced engagement, concept development, identity affirmation, and peer collaboration in early childhood

settings. New Jersey educators are expected to integrate translanguaging strategies across classroom activities, including science, dramatic play, story-sharing, and bilingual interactions, to support MLs' cognitive development and engagement.

Strong home–school–community connections are essential. Programs must honor students' cultural and linguistic assets through inclusive classrooms, diverse materials, culturally relevant books, and multilingual labels. Educators are expected to engage in ongoing self-reflection and professional dialogue to uncover biases and build cultural sensitivity, recognizing how cultural norms influence communication and learning behaviors.

To foster positive identity development, early childhood environments must include materials and activities that celebrate both similarities and differences among students. Programs must intentionally connect the real-life experiences that children bring with them to school to classroom learning to promote belonging, identity formation, and academic growth.

## Professional Development

Implementing the curriculum to meet Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards is an ongoing process. Programs shall ensure that all instructional staff possess a thorough understanding of the curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices through a structured, consistent professional development plan tailored to stakeholder groups. Effective professional development is sustained, collaborative, data-driven, and incorporates coaching and reflective practice. To achieve this, programs must:

- District boards of education, private providers, and local Head Start agencies: Prioritize professional development and allocate resources to support it, including technology-enhanced learning tools and equity-focused training.
- Administrators: Provide curriculum support, resources, materials, and opportunities for staff to improve teaching practices. Preschool directors, principals, education supervisors, and directors of special education must actively pursue and provide professional development activities, as well as allocate time for teachers to reflect on and refine their practice.
- Teachers and instructional teams: Collaboratively review and develop the professional development plan together. Instructional teams include early childhood teachers and assistants/paraprofessionals, special education teachers, bilingual educators, principals, supervisors, coaches, support staff, preschool intervention and referral teams, student study team members, and related service providers.
- Families: Have access to resources that promote students' learning and development and opportunities to participate in the early childhood education program. Introducing families to developmentally appropriate practices and culturally responsive strategies is essential.
- Colleges and universities: Integrate Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards into early childhood education coursework, incorporating current research on social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and multilingual education.

# Approaches to Learning

## Introduction

The Approaches to Learning standards focus on how young students learn, through skills such as taking initiative, demonstrating curiosity, enacting creativity, and managing their emotions. Students' ability to engage in emotional and cognitive self-regulation is central to their success in the preschool classroom. These skills apply across other standards, and all students—regardless of their learning level, ability, language proficiency, cultural background, or prior experiences—are expected to actively engage in these behaviors during activities in every domain.

Approaches to Learning standards are embedded in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, most early learning standards nationwide, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Principles of Child Development and Learning.

Over recent decades, the focus in early childhood education has shifted from solely what students learn to how students learn, making learning processes a central consideration. Research demonstrates that students with strong executive functioning skills are more attentive, persistent, and eager to learn. They are better at planning, adapting, regulating emotions, and demonstrating overall school readiness. Providing early opportunities to develop these skills increases engagement as children grow. Students thrive in well-structured environments that promote independence, choice, predictable routines, and small-group social interactions. Engagement further deepens when materials and activities reflect students' interests, present appropriate challenges, and include opportunities for extended projects. Supported by educator guidance, these experiences help students understand relationships and concepts and achieve higher levels of learning.

Educators play a critical role in nurturing positive approaches to learning by modeling curiosity, problem-solving, and resilience. Building caring, respectful relationships with students and their families lays the foundations for effective learning and development. Students who feel valued and recognize their capabilities become more engaged and motivated. When educators provide time and support for challenging, developmentally appropriate learning experiences, students apply new skills more effectively and sustain genuine motivation.

This section outlines intentional teaching practices that strengthen educators' ability to support students in meeting the standards. These practices include listening, observing, providing specific feedback, asking thought-provoking questions, offering verbal and non-verbal support, encouraging effort, modeling problem-solving, and helping students apply knowledge to new situations.

## Approaches to Learning Standards

### Standard: Initiative and Engagement (IE)

Students demonstrate initiative, planning, and persistence.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.IE.1

Choose to explore a variety of activities and experiences.

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Demonstrate interest and excitement while being fully attentive to students.
- Exhibit awareness of students who show limited interests and invite students to participate in new experiences that may expand their play ideas.

PK.IE.2

Make plans and decisions to engage in tasks and activities.

- Create a climate of discourse that values all forms of communication—including gestures, conversations, questions, and reflections—for students to put their ideas into action.

PK.IE.3

Focus attention on goals, tasks, and activities, despite distractions.

- Provide students with time, space, and opportunities to make choices from developmentally appropriate materials and activities that are familiar and challenging.
- Intentionally curate classroom materials and experiences that encourage focus and persistence (e.g., puzzles, marble runs, obstacle courses).
- Support students in recognizing and reflecting on distractions through guided conversation (e.g., “I see you did not finish your painting. What distracted you?”).

PK.IE.4

Show persistence when faced with challenging tasks and uncertainty.

- Model strategies to support their own persistence when engaging in a challenging task. (e.g., using materials in new ways, trial and error, breaking tasks into smaller steps, or asking for help from a peer or adult).

PK.IE.5

Seek and accept help when appropriate.

- Scaffold and provide physical, verbal, or emotional support to a student who is facing challenging tasks.
- Model asking students or other adults for help.

## Standard: Creative Thinking and Expression (CTE)

Students show curiosity, creativity, and imagination through exploration and play.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.CTE.1

Express interest through conversational talk, asking questions, gestures, pictures, and facial expressions.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Follow the students' lead by observing, listening, and responding intentionally to students' questions and ideas in ways that extend learning opportunities.
- Model curiosity and inquiry by engaging in "I wonder" conversations, prompted by everyday happenings or experiences a student talk about.

PK.CTE.2

Come up with unique ideas and approaches to tasks/activities.

- View students as curious co-learners and co-constructors of activities by encouraging them to express their ideas, to ask questions, and to share their experiences.
- Support students in generating multiple solutions and weighing options for how they demonstrate their learning.
- Model that there is more than one way to solve a problem or approach a task.
- Design meaningful learning experiences and activities that build on students' thinking, interests, and lived experiences.

PK.CTE.3

Use flexibility in thinking and their imaginations to solve problems.

- Emphasize the creative process over replication of a teacher-made product.
- Structure the environment with opportunities for a student to explore and investigate their questions and wonders.
- Expand, elaborate, and guide a student's inventive ideas and interests to create multi-disciplinary projects or studies where a student asks questions, brainstorms, solves problems, plans, learns new vocabulary, investigates a topic, and produces documentation.

PK.CTE.4

Use multiple means of communication to creatively express thoughts, ideas, feelings, and learnings.

- Offer opportunities for all students, regardless of abilities, individual experiences, language, and cultural background, to communicate what they feel, think, know, and understand.
- Provide opportunities and props for imaginative play and creative storytelling to encourage complex play. Read, write, or role-play stories in which students change or make up their own endings.
- Observe as play becomes more complex (e.g., students take on more diverse roles and use a wider variety of props or create their own) and support students in extending their abstract/symbolic thinking.

## Standard: Problem Solving and Critical Thinking (PSCT)

Students identify and solve problems with teacher support and modeling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.PSCT.1

Show flexibility in approaching tasks by being open to new ideas.

- Model open-mindedness and flexibility by asking for ideas on how to solve a problem.
- Demonstrate a willingness to incorporate ideas, adjust plans, and identify multiple solutions to solve problems.

PK.PSCT.2

Recognize and communicate a problem.

- Offer specific feedback and scaffolding, such as “I noticed how you came to me to share your concern. How could we solve this problem?”

PK.PSCT.3

Experiment to gain new information and solve problems.

- Support students in breaking down problems into manageable parts by posing thought-provoking questions and providing time and space to test ideas, explore materials, draw, use resources, and think aloud.
- Guide students in identifying what information is needed and applying appropriate strategies to solve problems.

PK.PSCT.4

Predict what will happen next based on prior experience and knowledge, and test solutions.

- Model predictive thinking by asking “What if?” questions.
- Support students in making connections to prior experiences and knowledge to inform their predictions.
- Design classroom provocations and provide engaging materials that allow students to test predictions, observe outcomes, and reflect on results.

PK.PSCT.5

Reflect on, evaluate, and communicate what was learned.

- Encourage students to describe their observations.
- Model reflective thinking by asking evaluative “Why do you think?” questions.
- Provide descriptive student feedback (e.g., “I notice...” or “I wonder...”) that names student’s thinking and actions to support reflection, strengthen reasoning, and help students make new connections and apply learning across contexts.

## Standard: Application and Connection of Learning (ACL)

Students apply what they have learned to new situations.

<b>Preschool Learning Outcomes</b> Students will:	<b>Preschool Teaching Practices</b> Effective preschool teachers:
PK.ACL.1 Apply prior knowledge to understand new experiences or problems in a new context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide opportunities for students to explore topics of interest and engage in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences.</li><li>• Intentionally connect new concepts to familiar experiences by guiding students to reflect on and share their prior knowledge and real-life experiences</li><li>• Reference classroom displays and class-made books to encourage connections between learning.</li></ul>
PK.ACL.2 Make connections between ideas and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a connection-rich learning environment by providing materials, experiences, and conversations that encourage students to link new ideas to previously learned concepts.</li><li>• Support students in noticing, collecting, and organizing details through observation, discussion, drawing, and documentation to help them make meaningful connections.</li><li>• Offer multiple, developmentally appropriate ways for students to demonstrate connections they have made, such as through drawings, constructions, storytelling, dramatic play, murals, or shared digital documentation, as appropriate.</li></ul>

## Standard: Emotional Intelligence and Resilience (EIR)

Students manage emotions and demonstrate resilience when faced with adversity in the learning setting.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.EIR.1

Demonstrate understanding of what others think and feel through words or actions.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Use intentional strategies that support the core components of empathy, including recognizing emotions, perspective-taking, and compassionate responses.
- Model and explicitly teach social-emotional skills, providing students with opportunities to practice them throughout the day.
- Use teacher self-talk and guided language to model emotional regulation, name and validate feelings, and help students observe facial expressions and body cues as tools for understanding emotions.
- Incorporate read-alouds that highlight characters' thoughts and feelings, supporting students in identifying and responding to emotions in themselves and others.

PK.EIR.2

Students will rebound from task-based challenges.

- Acknowledge and celebrate a student's efforts to persist and recover from challenges by using individualized, developmentally appropriate gestures and feedback (e.g., verbal encouragement, visual cues, or supportive gestures when appropriate), reinforcing resilience and confidence in learning.

# Social and Emotional Development

## Introduction

The social-emotional development of young students is intricately connected to their physical, creative, and cognitive growth. Brain development shapes these domains, and positive, supportive relationships with adults, peers, and the learning environment directly influence social-emotional growth. Research shows that brain connections begin before birth and develop most rapidly from birth through age five.

High-quality preschool programs must have dedicated, qualified staff who actively partner with families to help students build social competence and confidence. Instructional leaders must maintain a strong understanding of preschool standards and best practices to ensure program quality and effectiveness.

Throughout the preschool day, teachers observe and listen carefully to students, adapting their responses to meet individual social and emotional needs, including those of Multilingual Learners (MLs), students with disabilities, and students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Teachers foster self-concept and self-esteem by acknowledging students' actions and accomplishments and by showing respect for their feelings and cultures.

Teachers coach and guide students as they interact with one another and intentionally plan activities to teach social skills and problem-solving. By cultivating a strong, supportive community that includes teachers, administrators, and families, programs help students develop the social and emotional competencies necessary for full engagement in the preschool day and build the foundation for lifelong learning.

## Social and Emotional Standards

### Standard: Self-Confidence (SC)

Students demonstrate self-confidence.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SC.1

Express individuality by making independent decisions about which materials to use.

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide materials and activities to further learning at the student’s developmental level and to foster feelings of competence (e.g., knobbed, and regular puzzles, looped scissors, open-ended art materials, student-sized manipulatives, dramatic play materials).
- Adapt materials and activities to support English and non-English language speakers (e.g., use labels with pictures to help students negotiate and navigate the classroom and make picture-word associations, dramatize actions while providing words for the actions in multiple languages, provide simple directions in multiple languages, offer books, music, and computer software in multiple languages).
- Provide a classroom environment that supports individual students’ needs (e.g., sensory table, quiet spaces, appropriately sized furnishings, and visuals at eye level).
- Adapt materials, activities, and the environment to support students with disabilities (e.g., clear pathway for physical disabilities, visual prompts/mediators to support language, specialized or customized seating tools or equipment, assistive technology).

PK.SC.2

Express ideas for activities and initiate discussions.

- Use open-ended questions to begin a discussion with individual students or groups of students (e.g., “What might happen if?” “What would you do if?” or “How would you feel if?”).
- Repeat students’ communications to seek confirmation or clarification and to encourage them to extend their language (e.g., create cozy places where adults and students engage in conversation). Use students’ ideas, interests, and diverse cultural backgrounds to inspire activities and to engage students in discussions.

PK.SC.3

Actively engage in activities and interactions with peers and teachers.

- Support students in using adults as a resource to meet their needs.
- Demonstrate emotional connection and attachment with students through warmth, empathy, positive interactions, and respectful attention (e.g., smiling, laughter, gentle touch, using students’ names with positive comments, and making eye contact).
- Monitor each student’s social development and provide targeted support to build new social skills, such as offering materials and activities that encourage collaboration and cooperative play among two or more students.

PK.SC.4

Discuss their own actions and efforts with peers and teachers.

- Model verbal descriptions of students’ actions and efforts (e.g., “Anna used the paintbrush to make squiggles.”).
- Respond consistently to students’ nonverbal and verbal communication, supporting them in expressing needs and engaging in give-and-take conversations through one-on-one interactions and guided discussions.

## Standard: Self Direction (SD)

Students demonstrate self-direction.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SD.1

Make independent choices and plans from a broad range of diverse interest centers.

PK.SD.2

Demonstrate self-help skills with minimal adult assistance (e.g., clean up, pour juice, use soap when washing hands, put away belongings).

PK.SD.3

Move through classroom routines and activities with minimal adult direction and transition easily from one activity to the next.

PK.SD.4

Attend to tasks for a developmentally appropriate period of time.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Organize the classroom environment and establish a daily routine that enables students to independently choose materials and put them away on their own. (e.g., keep supplies on low shelves and labeled with pictures and words, use student-sized utensils, arranging centers for easy movement, and use visuals such as a picture schedule and choice board).
- Facilitate open-ended and student-initiated activities to encourage independence and self-direction (e.g., Jorge’s interest in trains might lead a small group of students to build a train station from materials found in the classroom).
- Guide students in developing self-care routines and structure the environment to support independence (e.g., provide visual cues for toileting, ensure handwashing materials and storage for backpacks and lunchboxes are accessible).
- Encourage students to complete everyday tasks independently, such as cleaning up, pouring drinks, washing hands with soap, and putting away personal belongings.
- Follow a predictable schedule so students gain a general idea of what will happen at various times of the day.
- Keep transitions short to adapt to students’ developing attention spans and conduct daily routines individually or in pairs to avoid whole-group waiting times and to support independence (e.g., toileting and washing hands).
- Limit whole-group transitions and use them as learning times (e.g., “Students who ride the #4 bus may get their coats.” or “Students in the Armadillo group may go wash their hands.”).
- Use songs, rhymes, movement, and pictures to reinforce independent functioning in the classroom (e.g., post pictures that represent the daily schedule, sing songs to cue transition times).
- Limit whole-group activities to short periods of time with interactive involvement (e.g., teachers play music for body movement, sing, or finger-plays).

## Standard: Identify and Express Feelings (IEF)

Students identify and express feelings.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.IEF.1

Recognize and describe a wide range of feelings, including sadness, anger, fear, and happiness.

PK.IEF.2

Empathize with the feelings of others (e.g., get a blanket for a friend and comfort them when they feels sad, responding appropriately to character empathy questions while reading literature).

PK.IEF.3

Channel impulses and negative emotions or feelings, such as anger in a developmentally appropriate way.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Directly instruct students about a variety of emotions, both positive and negative, and create a classroom environment that allows and supports all feelings by labeling students' emotions, mirroring their expressions, and validating their experiences.
- Plan activities and provide literature, visuals, and materials that help students interpret and express a wide range of feelings related to themselves and others using appropriate words and actions (e.g., use a feeling chart for daily check-ins, provide mirrors to notice facial expressions, and guide students to observe how their bodies feel when experiencing emotions such as anger or fear).
- Model developmentally appropriate language for students to use when expressing feelings such as anger and sadness during social interactions (e.g., "James, tell John how it made you feel when he pushed you. Did it make you angry?" "I felt angry when you pushed me. I did not like it!").
- Model co-regulation strategies when supporting a student, such as labeling students' emotions, mirroring the student's effect, and validating emotions, before rushing in to support problem-solving.
- Teach students specific techniques to manage emotions such as anger or fear and to calm themselves (e.g., taking deep breaths, using calming words, accessing a designated "safe spot," listening to soft music, drawing or painting feelings, or using sensory materials like playdough or beanbags).
- Intentionally plan opportunities for students to practice these strategies throughout the daily classroom routine to reinforce self-regulation skills.

## Standard: Positive Interactions (PI)

Students exhibit positive interactions with other students and adults.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.PI.1

Engage in a developmentally appropriate manner with peers and teachers in classroom activities.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide positive, descriptive feedback that connects students' actions to classroom rules and expectations (e.g., "Kayla cleaned up the science center's dinosaurs. She used helping hands, just like our classroom rule says").
- Develop classroom rules and expectations collaboratively with students and review the rules and expectations regularly to reinforce understanding and support positive behavior.

PK.PI.2

Demonstrate socially acceptable behavior towards adults and peers.

- Encourage nurturing behavior through modeling, stories, and songs (e.g., give hugs, get a tissue, sit next to a friend/teacher, or hold hands).

PK.PI.3

Appropriately use "thank you," "please," and "excuse me."

- Encourage the use of manners through modeling and role-playing (e.g., hold the door for a friend, use "please," "thank you," and "excuse me").

PK.PI.4

Respect the rights of others (e.g., "This painting belongs to Carlos").

- Teach students to respect the belongings, personal space, and rights of others (e.g., "This painting belongs to Carlos").
- Directly instruct social skills such as kindness, taking turns, and respecting boundaries using books, visuals, and teacher modeling.

PK.PI.5

Express needs verbally or nonverbally to adults and peers without being aggressive (e.g., "I don't like it when you call me dummy. Stop!").

- Encourage expressing needs verbally by modeling appropriate language (e.g., "Ask Nancy if she can please pass the juice to you.").

PK.PI.6

Demonstrate developmentally appropriate verbal or nonverbal problem-solving skills without being aggressive

- Directly teach students steps for solving problems using visuals, social stories, and teacher modeling.
- Provide positive, descriptive feedback to celebrate students' efforts in resolving social conflicts independently (e.g., "Tobias and Olive were problem solvers today! They used the sand timer to take turns at the water table").

## Standard: Pro-Social (PS)

Students exhibit pro-social behaviors.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.PS.1

Play independently and/or cooperatively in pairs and small groups.

PK.PS.2

Engage in pretend play in a developmentally appropriate way.

PK.PS.3

Demonstrate how to enter play when a group of students are already involved in play.

PK.PS.4

Demonstrate the ability to take turns.

PK.PS.5

Demonstrate understanding the concept of sharing by attempting to share.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Pair or group students to foster friendship. Plan for daily opportunities for students to work together in pairs during classroom activities and lessons. (e.g., partners, friends, triads).

- Provide materials and plan activities to encourage cooperative play (e.g., provide two telephones so students communicate with each other in dramatic play).

- Collaborate with students on activities while modeling language and pretend skills as needed for play (e.g., teacher pretends to be mother or father in housekeeping corner and soothes her crying baby; teacher and students make a cave out of a box; teacher pretends to be a mama bear, and the students are bear cubs).
- Acknowledge students' demonstration of pro-social behaviors and provide the appropriate amount of support necessary for students to be successful throughout the daily routine (e.g., the teacher demonstrates pretend play skills, and as students become involved in meaningful interaction with other students, the teacher adjusts the level of support).

- Identify strategies, model appropriate language, and directly instruct how to enter play with another student or group of students (e.g., bring materials into play, give a play suggestion, be helpful, give a compliment).
- Provide opportunities to take turns (e.g., "Maria gets to pull the wagon one time around the yard, and then it is Jack's turn.>").

- Provide opportunities that encourage students to share toys and materials in a developmentally appropriate manner (e.g., "There is one basket of markers for Christen and Jameer to share.>").
- Provide intentional, engaging instruction and practice to strengthen understanding of the skill of sharing.

# Visual and Performing Arts

## Introduction

Preschool students use the creative arts to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The arts provide one of the most effective ways for students to understand and explain their world. All students, including MLs and students with disabilities, participate in and benefit from creative experiences. For young students, the focus is on the creative process rather than the final product. Through these experiences, teachers reinforce learning habits such as initiative, curiosity, engagement, persistence, reasoning, and problem-solving by providing individualized, group and firsthand opportunities for artistic expression.

Educators offer opportunities for students to explore their interests, experiences and personalities through the arts, enabling self-expression, collaboration and full engagement in the classroom community. Environments that support visual arts, music, dramatic play, and movement and dance foster all areas of development and learning. In preschool classrooms, creative arts are closely connected to other areas of the curriculum. Teachers must use the arts as a strategy to explore local communities, diverse cultures, music, movement, language, literacy, self-expression, and content areas such as mathematics and science. When integrated, developmentally and intentionally, the arts support memory, cognition, observation, inquiry, and reflection.

Students often communicate ideas or emotions through artistic work, expressing feelings or ideas that words alone cannot convey. Throughout the day, it is vital to provide students with materials and opportunities to explore, experiment, and create in their own unique ways. Educators support artistic growth by describing students' process to enhance awareness, modeling techniques or ideas, and providing constructive feedback to guide improvement. Additionally, as teachers learn about the diverse cultures represented in their classroom and community, they shall incorporate artistic traditions from those cultures into the classroom environment and daily activities, helping students build knowledge of and appreciation for the wider world.

## Visual and Performing Arts Standards

### Standard: Creative Movement and Dance (CMD)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of creative movement and dance.

<b>Preschool Learning Outcomes</b> Students will:	<b>Preschool Teaching Practices</b> Effective preschool teachers:
PK.CMD.1 Move one's body in a variety of ways, with and without music.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model different dance movements and spatial concepts (e.g., twist, bend, leap, slide, forward, backward, high, and low).</li><li>• Use a variety of rich language when referring to movements (e.g., gallop, twist, and stretch).</li></ul>
PK.CMD.2 Respond to changes in tempo and a variety of musical rhythms through body movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide opportunities for students to participate in both structured and unstructured dance/movement activities that help build motor control and body relationships and that strengthen self-regulation and memory (e.g., provide music and props and encourage students to make up their own dance movements, play musical “freeze” and other games).</li><li>• Participate in all movement and dance activities with the students.</li></ul>
PK.CMD.3 Participate in simple sequences of movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observe and encourage students' curiosity and exploration of dance and movement.</li></ul>
PK.CMD.4 Define and maintain personal space, concentration, and focus during creative movement/dance performances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a setting where students move their body safely. (e.g., place hula hoops or squares on the carpet to have their own personal space to move and dance).</li></ul>
PK.CMD.5 Participate in or observe a variety of dance and movement activities accompanied by music and/or props from different cultures and genres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with music and movement experiences from a range of different cultures and genres for dance and movement activities (e.g., classical, jazz, rock, salsa, reggae, rap, and others).</li><li>• Connect music and movement activities to cultural traditions, supporting exploration and understanding of cultural diversity.</li></ul>
PK.CMD.6 Use movement/dance to convey meaning around a theme or to show feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guide students to use movement and dance to express ideas, emotions, and understandings related to a theme or concept.</li><li>• Connect movement and dance activities to curriculum areas and developmental domains, including literacy, art, and fine- and gross-motor skills, to support integrated learning throughout the day.</li></ul>
PK.CMD.7 Describe feelings and reactions in response to a creative movement/dance performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Play music from a specific genre with either a fast or slow tempo to help students explore rhythm and movement.</li><li>• Encourage students to express their feelings and reactions to the music or dance through movement, facial expressions, or verbal descriptions (e.g., happy, excited, sad, calm).</li></ul>

## Standard: Creative Movement and Dance (CMD)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of creative movement and dance.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.CMD.8

Begin to demonstrate appropriate audience skills during creative movement and dance performances.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide all students with opportunities to experience creative movement and dance performances, including those by peers, family members, or professional artists.
- Encourage students to observe, listen, and respond respectfully as members of the audience, modeling and reinforcing positive audience behavior.

## Standard: Music Appreciation (MA)

Students express themselves through music and develop an appreciation for it.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.MA.1

Sing a variety of songs with expression, independently and with others.

- Incorporate music and singing throughout the day, including during transitions and within lessons as a vehicle for supporting phonological awareness, executive functioning, social-emotional learning, and mathematical reasoning (e.g., rhymes, steady beats, rhythm patterns aligned to number concepts and chanting familiar songs).

PK.MA.2

Use a variety of musical instruments to create music alone and/or with others, using different beats, tempos, dynamics, and interpretations.

- Provide opportunities for students to play musical instruments (e.g., flute, triangle, drums, maracas, instruments from other cultures, homemade instruments) in their own way.

PK.MA.3

Clap or sing songs with repetitive phrases and rhythmic patterns.

- Sing songs that have a repetitive beat, like B-I-N-G-O and Old McDonald, with students during music and movement.

PK.MA.4

Listen to, imitate, and improvise sounds, patterns, or songs.

- Model ways for students to explore instruments, such as echoing rhythms or creating different sounds by striking various parts of the instrument.
- Observe and encourage students' curiosity and experimentation with sound, supporting creative exploration and musical expression.

PK.MA.5

Participate in and listen to music from a variety of cultures from past and present.

- Introduce students to a wide range of culturally diverse music and genres that are developmentally appropriate for classroom activities (e.g., classical, jazz, rock, reggae, rap).
- Encourage active participation, listening, and discussion to help students appreciate musical diversity and cultural traditions.

PK.MA.6

Recognize and name a variety of music elements using appropriate music vocabulary across a variety of cultures.

- Use appropriate musical terminology (e.g., the correct names of instruments, terms such as rhythm and melody).
- Intentionally plan for daily musical experiences that encourage all students to experiment with songs and musical instruments from diverse cultures during free play and group activities. Include instruments made by students found within their classroom and home.

PK.MA.7

Describe feelings and reactions in response to diverse musical genres and styles.

- During music time, play short clips of diverse musical genres. After each clip, engage students in a discussion by asking open-ended questions like:
- “How does this music make you feel?”, “What does it remind you of?”, “Do you want to move or dance when you hear it?”.

## Standard: Music Appreciation (MA)

Students express themselves through music and develop an appreciation for it.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Encourage students to express their reactions through movement, facial expressions, or drawing. For instance, after listening to a lively salsa tune, students might say they feel “happy” and start dancing, while a slow classical piece might make them feel “calm” and lead them to draw soft, flowing lines.
- Provide opportunities for all students to experience musical recordings and/or performances (e.g., by peers, family members, or professional artists in the classroom) and encourage students to observe, listen, and respond as an audience.

PK.MA.8

Begin to demonstrate appropriate audience skills during recordings and music performances.

## Standard: Dramatic Arts (DA)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.DA.1

Play roles observed through life experiences (e.g., mom/dad, baby, firefighter, police officer, doctor, mechanic).

- Provide props and materials that encourage students' active participation in dramatic play and storytelling (e.g., dress-up clothes, culturally diverse objects, storybooks, flannel boards, puppets) and rotate them regularly to reflect different themes.
- Design a clearly defined dramatic play center with sufficient space for play and organized, accessible storage so all students independently engage in the activities.

PK.DA.2

Use memory, imagination, creativity, and language (theme-related and new vocabulary) to make up new roles and act them out.

- Expose students to stories from multiple cultures and varying abilities (e.g., at circle time, informally, during choice times) and provide props to represent diversity.
- Connect dramatic play to curriculum themes, multicultural connections, social emotional learning, content areas, and domains, and use stories and field trips to enrich play.

PK.DA.3

Participate with others in dramatic play, negotiate roles, and set up scenarios using costumes and props from various cultures (e.g., Sari, kimono, poncho, Dashiki, stethoscope, baby carriage, dolls of varying ethnicities, kitchen utensils, etc.).

- Provide a variety of spaces, both indoors and outdoors, and times throughout the day for students to engage in dramatic play and storytelling in ways that reflect their interests (e.g., reenacting a story during circle time, in the block center, or during outdoor play).
- Offer culturally diverse costumes and props (e.g., sari, kimono, poncho, Dashiki, stethoscope, baby carriage, dolls of varying ethnicities, kitchen utensils) to support role exploration.
- Observe and support students' approaches to engagement in dramatic play, facilitating role negotiation and encouraging creativity.
- Provide scaffolded scenarios or prompts to help students initiate and expand their dramatic play experiences.

PK.DA.4

Differentiate between fantasy/pretend play and real events.

- Schedule daily dramatic play experiences during free play and group activities.
- Provide students with the opportunity to act out stories from familiar books.

PK.DA.5

Sustain and extend play during dramatic play interactions (i.e., anticipate what will happen next).

- Encourage students to sustain and extend play by providing ideas for more complex roles (e.g., scaffold students' ideas about playing 'restaurant' by suggesting that everyone in the restaurant has an important job to do).
- Remind students of a role or scenario that they previously played and encourage them to continue the story.

PK.DA.6

Participate in and listen to stories and dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and times.

- Provide opportunities for students to experience cultural, social and diversity awareness, through storytelling and/or performances (e.g., by incorporating peers, family members, materials, or professional artists in the classroom) and encourage students to observe, listen, and respond.

## Standard: Dramatic Arts (DA)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.DA.7

Describe feelings and reactions and make increasingly informed responses to stories and dramatic performances. Begin to empathize with other people's feelings and reactions.

- Model active listening and guiding discussions to deepen comprehension and vocabulary.
- Join in dramatic play to promote the development of cooperation and self-regulation skills, such as managing emotions, focusing attention, solving problems, and developing empathy.
- Provide opportunities for perspective taking and emotional regulation activities (e.g., Guess Who activities, active listening, and real photos).

PK.DA.8

Begin to demonstrate appropriate audience skills during recordings and music performances.

- Encourage and demonstrate how to listen and respond (e.g., clap, ask questions) during whole group times.

## Standard: Visual Arts (VA)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.VA.1

Demonstrate the safe and appropriate use and care of art materials and tools.

- Model the safe and appropriate use of art materials and tools.
- Plan art activities that extend students' understanding of art techniques and art media (e.g., demonstrate how to roll a coil out of clay or how to use the side of a crayon to make a rubbing, demonstrate appropriate grip of writing utensil).
- Create an environment that is conducive to creativity (e.g., rotate and introduce new materials regularly, make materials easily accessible, keep them organized, and minimize commercially purchased decorations).
- Provide space for ongoing art projects that allow students to revisit, reflect on, and revise their work over time.

PK.VA.2

Create two and three-dimensional works of art while exploring color, line, shape, form, texture, and space.

- Provide students with access to a variety of developmentally appropriate and adaptive art materials (e.g., crayons, paint, clay) and emphasize open-ended, process-oriented activities (e.g., the teacher provides students with watercolor paints, paper, and brushes and encourages them to paint rather than to all make a dinosaur puppet with the same materials).
- Extend students' use of art tools and ask questions during activities (e.g., when a student is using a marker to create squiggly lines, "What other kinds of lines can you invent?").
- Display students' artwork at eye level, accompanied by students' explanations about their work.
- Change displays frequently, allowing students to choose artwork for display in the classroom, in the school, or for a project (e.g., a personal book, a class book, or a portfolio).
- Provide materials such as clay, playdough, and tubes to allow students to independently explore and create three-dimensional (3D) art.

PK.VA.3

Use vocabulary to describe various art forms (e.g., photographs, sculpture), artists (e.g., illustrator, sculptor, photographer) and elements in the visual arts.

- Introduce and reinforce visual arts vocabulary (e.g., line, color, shape, sculpture, collage) throughout hands-on activities and explorations, not only during teacher-directed large group time.
- Develop a visual reference library (e.g., photos, museum postcards, books, calendar art, websites, videos) or provide actual objects so students have an opportunity to refer to them for accurate representation, supporting independent creation without imposing adult solutions or drawing for the student.

PK.VA.4

Demonstrate a growing ability to represent experiences, thoughts, and ideas through a variety of age-appropriate materials and visual art media using memory, observation, and imagination.

- Facilitate firsthand experiences that encourage students to develop art concepts and art expression (e.g., go outside to observe and draw a tree during each season).
- Promote emotional expression, mood regulation and resilience by creating drawings to express feelings when they may not yet have the vocabulary (e.g., safe spaces, hideouts, secret islands, or imaginary worlds).

## Standard: Visual Arts (VA)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.VA.5

Demonstrate planning, persistence, and problem-solving skills while working independently, or with others, during the creative process.

- Support students in breaking tasks into manageable steps (e.g., if a student says, ‘I don’t know how to draw a puppy,’ ask which part they want to start with and guide them using simple shapes).
- Adapt activities to support diversity, multi-abilities, and cultures by supplying varied materials, technology, and resources to encourage and support the creative process.

PK.VA.6

Create more recognizable representations such as eye-hand coordination and fine-motor skills develop.

- Use students’ work as a springboard to explore and discuss concepts individually and in small groups (e.g., highlight patterns, help students’ problem-solve how to modify a sculpture so that it stands up).
- Connect the visual arts to curriculum themes, other content areas, and domains, including fine-motor skills and eye-hand coordination (e.g., patterns when making paper chains).
- Provide students with writing materials in different areas of the classroom and give them opportunities to practice writing during their play and activities.

PK.VA.7

Describe feelings and reactions and make increasingly thoughtful observations in response to a variety of culturally diverse works of art and objects in the everyday world.

- Make specific, nonjudgmental observations about students’ artwork (e.g., “I see you used long, thin lines for the leaves in your painting”) rather than giving evaluative feedback (e.g., “I like the pink flower you painted”).
- Observe and encourage students’ approaches to learning during the process of creation, including initiative, curiosity, problem-solving, and persistence (e.g., “You worked so carefully for a long time to figure out how to make a print without smearing the paint.”).
- Expose students to the visual arts in their own communities, as well as from different cultures, and introduce different types of artists (e.g., illustrators, mural artists, sculptors, painters, architects, photographers) and art mediums (e.g., paint with feet or hands or create graphic art on a computer).
- Encourage students to react to works of art and to reflect on art experiences (e.g., by encouraging a variety of responses to questions such as, “How many things can you think of that are made from clay?” or “What shapes do you see in this painting?”).
- Connect painting with movement to help students explore and express emotions, stimulating creativity and enhancing their visual art experiences.

# Health, Safety, and Physical Education

## Introduction

Health, safety, and physical education in the preschool classroom supports students' sense of self, cognitive and motor development, and emerging independence. The preschool years are among the most energetic and metabolically efficient, making developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) critical to how students navigate and interact with their physical environment.

Preschool programs must provide well-designed indoor and outdoor spaces that allow each student to develop gross- and fine-motor skills while fostering health and safety awareness. Teachers must offer a wide variety of concrete, developmentally appropriate experiences every day, both planned and spontaneous, to support students' growth. These experiences must:

- Address students' basic needs and promote a comprehensive understanding of health.
- Encourage safe practices to prevent illness or injury.
- Promote positive, culturally relevant health behaviors that support lifelong well-being.

### Standard: Health (H)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.H.1

Develop an awareness of fundamental habits to maintain good health (e.g., use clean tissues, wash hands, handle food hygienically, brush teeth, and dress appropriately for the weather).

PK.H.2

Demonstrate emerging self-help skills (e.g., develop independence to help students pour, serve, use utensils, get dressed, use the bathroom, take care of belongings, and brush teeth).

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Model proper hand washing and supervise students' hand washing (e.g., use 20-second songs like the 'Happy Birthday' song; share short videos demonstrating the proper steps; refer to handwashing visuals).
  - Promote regular habits of toothbrushing and bathing (e.g., break down complex activities like brushing teeth into smaller, manageable steps).
  - Explain how germs spread and teach students techniques to limit the spread of infection through fun, interactive activities (e.g., Glitter game: sprinkle glitter on the student's hands, ask the student to touch a toy and observe the glitter spreading; then ask the student to wash their hands and the toy with water, and then with water and soap, noting the differences).
  - Describe the roles of doctors, dentists, and other healthcare workers.
  - Connect healthy behaviors to good personal health (e.g., milk for strong bones, exercise for strong muscles).
  - Recognize and reinforce healthy habits like good nutrition, hydration, hygiene, rest, and sleep through specific positive feedback.
  - Support multilingual students and students with disabilities (e.g., create visual displays for the steps of hand washing; teach and reinforce one step at a time; add infrastructure such as large pump soap dispensers, step stools, or space for wheelchair access).
- 
- Provide opportunities for students to pour and serve themselves and others, and encourage participation in daily classroom chores, such as setting the table and cleaning up toys.
  - Teach and reinforce basic table manners (e.g., sitting with their stomachs facing the table, bringing food to their mouths, and using utensils when culturally appropriate).
  - Use role-play with toys or teddy bears to practice self-care tasks.
  - Follow consistent routines for washing hands and utensils before and after preparing food and eating. Allow enough time for students to participate in self-care activities without feeling pressured or rushed.
  - Provide opportunities for students to independently complete self-help skills, including, but not limited to, toileting, dressing, eating, and putting away belongings.
  - Reinforce independent self-help skills with specific positive feedback.
-

## Standard: Health (H)

Students express themselves through and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.H.3

Demonstrate developing body awareness, including communicating their needs about their health and body boundaries (e.g., name body parts used in health habits and routines; comment, “I’m full!” after eating or “I’m tired” before rest).

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Use the proper names of body parts when teaching health and self-care (e.g., discussing how food nourishes the stomach or describing washing between fingers during handwashing).
- Identify the body parts used in fine and gross motor play (e.g., describe using legs to kick a ball or hands to climb a rock wall).
- Encourage students to notice body cues, such as hunger, satiation, bathroom cues, or energy levels (e.g., discussing that it’s close to lunchtime and they may be getting hungry, or it is after breakfast and they feel full; talking about having to use the bathroom when you notice the student fidgeting).
- Model appropriate body space, physical interactions, and communication about any violations (e.g., having students spread out in a line, giving phrases such as “I need my space” or “we keep our hands to ourselves” when another student enters their space).

## Standard: Nutrition (NU)

Students begin to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food choices.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.NU.1

Explore foods and food groups (e.g., compare and contrast foods representative of various cultures by taste, color, texture, smell, and shape).

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Model proper hand washing and supervise students' hand washing (e.g., use 20-second songs like the 'Happy Birthday' song; share short videos demonstrating the proper steps; refer to handwashing visuals).
- Promote regular habits of toothbrushing and bathing (e.g., break down complex activities like brushing teeth into smaller, manageable steps).
- Explain how germs spread and teach students techniques to limit the spread of infection through fun, interactive activities (e.g., Glitter game: sprinkle glitter on the student's hands, ask the student to touch a toy and observe the glitter spreading; then ask the student to wash their hands and the toy with water, and then with water and soap, noting the differences).
- Describe the roles of doctors, dentists, and other healthcare workers.
- Connect healthy behaviors to good personal health (e.g., milk for strong bones, exercise for strong muscles).
- Recognize and reinforce healthy habits like good nutrition, hydration, hygiene, rest, and sleep through specific positive feedback.
- Support multilingual students and students with disabilities (e.g., create visual displays for the steps of hand washing; teach and reinforce one step at a time; add infrastructure such as large pump soap dispensers, step stools, or space for wheelchair access).

PK.NU.2

Develop awareness of nutritious food choices (e.g., participate in classroom cooking activities, hold conversations with knowledgeable adults about daily nutritious meals and snack offerings).

- Provide opportunities for students to pour and serve themselves and others, and encourage participation in daily classroom chores, such as setting the table and cleaning up toys.
- Teach and reinforce basic table manners (e.g., sitting with their stomachs facing the table, bringing food to their mouths, and using utensils when culturally appropriate).
- Use role-play with toys or teddy bears to practice self-care tasks.
- Follow consistent routines for washing hands and utensils before and after preparing food and eating. Allow enough time for students to participate in self-care activities without feeling pressured or rushed.
- Provide opportunities for students to independently complete self-help skills, including, but not limited to, toileting, dressing, eating, and putting away belongings.
- Reinforce independent self-help skills with specific positive feedback.

## Standard: Safety Practices (SP)

Students begin to develop an awareness of safety practices and procedures.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SP.1

Identify and use safe practices indoors and out (e.g., wear bike helmets, walk in the classroom, understand how to participate in emergency drills, and understand why car seats and seat belts are used).

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Incorporate information about safety into the curriculum to avoid potential hazards (e.g., practice holding scissors correctly, engage students in dramatizing safety procedures by providing "What if" questions, problem solve, and role play scenarios).
- Promote students' understanding of safety within the context of everyday routines (e.g., clean up spills to prevent falling), as well as through intentionally planned activities (e.g., provide books, set-up streets and crosswalks in the classroom to practice safety, role-play safe play behavior in various situations).
- Monitor the indoor and outdoor environment daily to ensure it is safe and hazard-free. (e.g., complete school classroom/playground safety checklist daily, model safety procedures in the classroom and during outdoor time, report facility hazards to administrative personnel promptly).
- Store chemicals, medications, and other hazardous materials securely and out of reach of students, following Health and Safety training recommendations and district guidelines.
- Co-create simple, easy-to-remember classroom safety rules with students, ensuring everyone understands and follows them (e.g., walking inside, keeping hands and feet to oneself).
- Connect classroom rules to safety outcomes, helping students understand the reasons behind the rules (e.g., "We keep our hands and feet to ourselves, so we stay safe." "We walk in the classroom to prevent accidents.").

PK.SP.2

Develop an awareness of warning symbols and their meaning (e.g., red light, stop sign, poison symbol, etc.).

- Make a mural or chart of things that are and are not safe to touch.
- Reinforce students' learning about health habits through take-home activities, lending libraries of read-aloud books in the languages of the families in the group and displays of students' work.

PK.SP.3

Identify community helpers who assist in maintaining a safe environment.

- Invite community representatives of health, fire, and police departments to visit the class to teach about how to follow health and safety precautions. (e.g., plan field trips to the local fire station).
- Introduce students to less familiar medical specialists or essential workers in the community (e.g., chiropractors, grocery workers, sanitation workers, postal workers) who support families.
- Provide information and materials that engage students' curiosity, such as tools used by community helpers, places where they work (e.g., doctor's office, school, hospital, fitness center, portable dental trailer), and how they contribute to health and safety in the classroom and community.

## Standard: Safety Practices (SP)

Students begin to develop an awareness of safety practices and procedures.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SP.4

Know how to follow safety procedures for everyday safety and emergencies.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Routinely practice emergency evacuation procedures with the students (e.g., practice fire and emergency drills, including shelter in place).
- Review when and how to find an adult in specific emergencies (e.g., to help with broken glass or with a medical emergency) or what to do if an adult is not available.
- Engage students in role-plays or provide examples to practice responding safely in potentially unsafe or harmful situations (e.g., “Your grown-up put you in the car seat without buckling the seat belt—what can you say or do?”). Include scenarios that require adult assistance, such as broken glass or medical emergencies, to teach appropriate safety responses.
- Teach students which emergencies require calling 9-1-1 and the proper procedures for both home and school emergencies (e.g., finding a responsible adult, using the emergency screen on a smartphone). Guide students on what essential information to share, such as their location, the type of emergency, and who needs help.

## Standard: Motor Skills (MS)

Students develop competence and confidence in activities that require gross and fine motor skills.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SP.1

Identify and use safe practices indoors and out (e.g., wear bike helmets, walk in the classroom, understand how to participate in emergency drills, and understand why car seats and seat belts are used).

PK.SP.2

Develop an awareness of warning symbols and their meaning (e.g., red light, stop sign, poison symbol, etc.).

PK.SP.3

Identify community helpers who assist in maintaining a safe environment.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Encourage students in games and experiences that support gross motor skills such as hopping, galloping, jumping, running, and marching.
  - Create situations where the students move their bodies in relation to an object or another person (e.g., climbing a ladder, catching, or kicking a ball; going up, around, or behind an obstacle; lining up; mirror dancing with a peer).
  - Use music and dance to practice body control and direction (e.g., playing freeze dance; obstacle course where students quickly change directions).
- 
- Incorporate a variety of manipulative objects in classroom activities (e.g., tongs to sort objects, providing playdough/clay in art or writing center). Also, encourage the use of tabletop toys for building or piecing together (e.g., create challenges that include attaching or detaching the toys from each other to create new structures).
  - Engage students in planned and playful activities for fine motor control and hand-eye coordination that allow them to hold writing utensils and form basic shapes and lines necessary for writing letters and numbers. These include developing a proper pencil grasp, mastering skills such as crossing the midline, and practicing pre-writing shapes, including vertical, horizontal, and circular lines.
  - Provide activities such as playing with playdough, stringing beads, and cutting with scissors to develop the strength and coordination needed for writing.
  - Encourage students to create simple shapes and figures (e.g., a square for a block, circles) and to draw or write more detailed figures, such as faces with features or letters and letter-like forms.
  - Provide materials in each learning center that encourage exploration and creativity while safely supporting the development of fine-motor skills (e.g., paper for drawing or tearing, glue, fabric, cardstock, cardboard, bingo dotters, student-sized scissors).
  - Plan individual/small-group activities with materials that promote success for all students at their developmental level (e.g., using adaptive scissors; offering writing tools of differing lengths or thicknesses, such as shorter crayons or thicker markers; having puzzles with knob handles; stabilizing paper with tape).
- 
- Encourage exploration of movement (e.g., march, jump, gallop) by providing students with various activities and materials (e.g., bean bag games, follow the leader, obstacle course, dancing, outdoor play).
  - Incorporate various movement activities and games which encourage development in students' spatial awareness, body awareness, balance, navigation, and hand-eye coordination.

# English Language Arts

## Introduction

The updated Preschool English Language Arts (ELA) Standards provide educators with a clear, intentional framework for guiding language and literacy development from preschool through later stages of learning. The standards outline milestones such as recognizing letter-sound relationships, expanding vocabulary, exploring diverse text genres, and progressing through developmental stages of writing and composing. They recognize that the earliest years are critical for building the foundation of communication, comprehension, and expression. Students develop literacy through rich, everyday experiences—exploring their world, engaging in play, and interacting with others, which sparks curiosity and supports understanding of spoken and written language. Intentional, systematic, and explicit instruction deepens these skills and builds essential literacy knowledge.

High-quality ELA instruction combines purposeful teaching with nurturing relationships. Students make meaningful connections between sounds, symbols, spoken words, and printed text, fostering cognitive growth, foundational skills, and a lifelong love of reading and writing. The standards emphasize immersion in language-rich environments, instruction in print concepts, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and exposure to a variety of text genres, including stories and informational texts, while connecting learning to real-life experiences. These practices honor the diverse cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds students bring to the classroom, acknowledging that each student’s path to literacy is unique. While kindergarten standards expect mastery of all uppercase and lowercase letters by year’s end, preschool standards focus on students recognizing many letters as they progress at their own pace.

Through interactive read-alouds, rich conversations, and purposeful play, students develop foundational skills such as oral language, phonological awareness, and vocabulary. Teachers embed instruction throughout the day, linking language and literacy with mathematics, science, social studies, physical development, and social-emotional learning. Every moment—structured or spontaneous—provides opportunities for speaking, listening, reading, and writing, creating a literacy-rich environment that fosters joyful engagement and essential skills for future academic success.

Preschool provides a critical window for growth toward grade-level proficiency. The standards outline expected learner outcomes for students completing the program, recognizing that achieving these outcomes requires consistent engagement in literacy-rich environments and instruction from educators with a deep understanding of the developmental continuum in language and literacy. Ongoing professional development ensures educators will implement these practices effectively.

The 2026 Preschool ELA Standards align with K–12 ELA standards and organize learning into four domains: Language, Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each standard includes intentional teaching practices to support skill development in areas such as print concepts, vocabulary, comprehension, and expressive language. By following these standards, educators create engaging, culturally responsive learning environments that foster foundational literacy skills, support each student’s individual path, and lay the groundwork for lifelong success as confident communicators and emergent readers.

### Language Domain

The Language domain builds the foundation for early reading and writing by developing essential skills such as phonological awareness—the ability to recognize and manipulate spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). These skills create strong connections between sounds, spoken language, and written words, supporting both decoding and encoding processes for literacy. The domain also emphasizes expanding receptive and expressive vocabulary, understanding sentence structure, and using language for clear communication through speaking and writing.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

##### Print Concepts

PK.L.RF.1

Students begin to recognize and understand basic concepts of print, such as the direction of text, the difference between letters and words, and that print carries meaning.

Indicate where to start reading on a page and how to move across and down a page.

Begin to understand that spoken words are read and written using letters.

Recognize that words are separated by spaces.

Demonstrate emerging alphabet knowledge by recognizing and naming many uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Systematically teach print concepts by intentionally drawing students' attention to the functions and features of print during daily routines, read-aloud, and small group activities. Model and explain print features such as uppercase letters, spacing between words, punctuation, and directionality (left to right, top to bottom) using consistent language and prompts (e.g., "Let's look at the letters in your name—the first letter is uppercase 'R' because names begin with uppercase letters and the rest of the letters are lowercase letters.").
- Integrate print awareness into daily classroom routines to build foundational literacy skills. This includes referencing environmental print such as helper charts, classroom labels, and calendars to demonstrate the functional use of print. Engage students in interactive writing experiences, such as recording their dictations, while modeling key print concepts like spacing between words using tools such as popsicle sticks and exposure to punctuation.
- Model the process of turning spoken words into written text to show how print carries meaning (e.g., by saying, "I want to write a sentence about cats. My sentence will say, 'Cats like to play with yarn.' Let us count how many words I said. I said five words, so I will write five words on the chart paper." Demonstrate each step of this process to reinforce the connection between speech and print.
- Display printed labels and other print examples throughout the classroom environment that has meaning to students during their daily activities. Draw attention to the print (e.g., center labels, rebus labels and stories, picture recipes, traffic signs, digital text, cubbies with names, song charts, signs about how to use an activity, labels on shelves and furniture) and encourage activities and interactions where students interact with the displayed print.
- Provide opportunities for reading and rereading environmental print during the day and while reading track the print with finger to ensure understanding of left to right and top to bottom progression. Include opportunities to emphasize the difference between letters, words, numbers, and sentences (e.g., big books, *Ten Black Dots* (Crews, '68). Encourage students to mimic print concept behaviors while engaging with books.
- Include relevant, topical literacy props with print throughout the classroom (e.g., empty food and household containers, menus, recipe cards, signs and labels, office forms, brochures from field trip experiences, flyers for school events, hand-washing and other routine charts).
- Provide opportunities for students to explore and connect letter knowledge with visual and tactile experiences (e.g., trace letters made of sandpaper; form letters in sand or rice trays or finger paint; form letters out of yarn, play dough, pipe cleaners; use alphabet cookie cutters or pasta alphabets). Examine and compare upper- and lower-case letters by their spatial features.

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

#### Phonological Awareness

PK.L.RF.2

Begin to demonstrate an awareness of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- A. Recognize and produce simple rhyming words through listening and speaking, identifying common ending sound patterns in words.
- B. With support, segment words in a simple sentence by clapping and naming the number of words in the sentence.
- C. With support, count, and blend syllables in spoken words by clapping out the number of syllables.
- D. With support, recognize when two or more words begin with the same sound (alliteration).
- E. Identify and pronounce the initial sounds (i.e., phonemes) in single syllable words and in their own name.
- F. With support, students who demonstrate readiness begin to identify and pronounce more than one distinct sound (phoneme) in a one-syllable spoken word.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Engage students in activities with storybooks and poems, songs and chants that have repetitive patterns, alliterations, and rhymes that are engaging and playful (e.g., sing, “Liz, Liz, bo-biz, banana-fana fo-fiz, fee-fi-mo-miz, Liz! Liz can get her coat.”). Provide frequent opportunities for students to listen to, learn, and recite songs, nursery rhymes, poems, and fingerplays. Provide frequent opportunities for students to listen to, learn, and recite songs, nursery rhymes, poems, and fingerplays.
- Use rhythm sticks, claps, snaps, stomp, jump, or body motions to count/ segment the syllables in students’ names and other words. Clap the syllables in a student’s name and have the students try to guess whose name it could be.
- Encourage students to recognize and produce nonsense and actual words that rhyme. Engage students in a rhyme match game that allows them to find picture cards that rhyme by orally hearing the ending patterns in the word and not by matching written words. When identifying the rhyme, the focus is on the ending patterns of the spoken words (e.g., tune: Skip to My Lou- “fun, sun, they both rhyme, fun, sun, they both rhyme, both words end with “un”).
- Ensure that students will learn that sentences are made up of individual words. Teachers will explain and model this concept by segmenting spoken sentences into separate words. For example, the sentence “Johnny jumps” has two words, and “Pam sits down” has three words. To reinforce this understanding, students use materials such as: Wikki Stix, yarn, or drawn lines to visually separate each word in a sentence, helping them connect spoken language to printed text.
- Engage students in playful, interactive, and intentional phoneme sound activities, while guided by brief and explicit instruction that draws attention to movement of the mouth, tongue, and teeth when articulating sounds (e.g., use mirrors, articulation cue cards, or infusing songs highlighting the focus sound).
- Encourage students to recognize when two or more words begin with the same beginning sounds (alliterations). Provide activities where students sound match with pictures or tangible items that highlight the pure initial sounds in words (e.g., show a picture of a sock and a dog and ask students which one starts with the “s-s-s...” “S” sound).
- Draw students’ attention to the sounds they hear in words (e.g., Students will listen to spoken words and identify the initial sound they hear recognizing that *ball* begins with /b/.
- Offer daily opportunities for students to practice letter names and sounds beyond whole group instruction, including targeted, differentiated small group activities informed by observations and formative assessments. Engage students in brief, explicit instruction that connects letter names to their sounds in a systematic sequence, paced thoughtfully and developmentally appropriately. Include frequent opportunities for practice and review, while supporting students’ success and motivation in learning letters and sounds.

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- With guidance, support, and observation, engage students who are ready to identify multiple sounds in words using visual or auditory cues, such as Elkonin boxes, songs, stretching words to hear each sound, articulation activities, and manipulatives.
- Provide intentional, developmentally appropriate experiences to build phonemic awareness by modeling clear pronunciation, using controlled speech and songs, incorporating explicit mnemonic strategies, and connecting spoken words to meaningful, real-life contexts, while recognizing that some English phonemes may not exist in a multilingual learner’s home language.

### Phonics and Word Recognition

PK.L.RF.3

Demonstrate an understanding of beginning phonics and word analysis skills.

- A. Link an initial sound to a picture of an object that begins with that sound and, with support, to the corresponding printed letter (e.g., link the initial sound /m/ to a picture of a mop and, with support, to a printed or written “M”).
- B. Associate some letters with their most common sounds, focusing on consonants and short vowels as developmentally appropriate.
- C. Recognize their name in print and identify familiar common signs and labels (e.g., STOP, logos).

- Provide students with intentional instruction that’s brief, clear, consistent, systematic (logical sequence), and explicit when fostering the development of letter-sound knowledge and alphabet understanding. Tools and practices such as: teaching letter names and sounds using mnemonics (e.g., embedded familiar actions, objects, or pictures integrated into the shape of the letter), alphabet charts/books (with appropriate keywords—T for “toast” and not for “thumb”, O for “octopus” and not for “orange”) cards with students’ names, and teaching letter names and articulation of corresponding sounds simultaneously (paired associate learning).
- Engage students in meaningful interactive writing activities that support letter-sound knowledge by creating messages, counting the words, illustrating directionality of writing, segmenting words, listening to sounds within words, and thinking about letters that represent those sounds. Students mimic these practices in their own drawings or their developmental stage of writing (e.g., scribbling, letter-like forms, or random letter strings) as they develop their awareness with sound-letter relationships.
- Weave in activities that highlight printed letters and connect them to the sounds in spoken words throughout the day. For example: “Here’s a picture of a mop, Let’s focus on the beginning sound in the word mop:/mmmm/ mop. Did you hear that humming sound at the beginning? I also closed my lips and started humming—that’s the /m/ sound. The word mop begins with the /m/ sound, and the letter m spells the /m/ sound.”).
- Encourage participation with materials that promote the name and identification of the letters of the alphabet including alphabet books, charts, blocks, games, and puzzles, letter stamps, sensory exploration (i.e., sand tracing, playdough tracing, etc.), and minimal time/use on technology devices and software. While students work with letters, intentionally guide students to practice the properties of letters (name, sound, and form).
- Provide name game activities (e.g., recognize student’s name with and without graphic support, differentiate among names, visually match specific letters) throughout the day for students to learn to recognize their names and the letters in their name.

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide opportunities for students to write their name with a purpose such as their artwork, participating in surveys, signing into centers or shared writing experiences in whole/small groups. While writing their names, spell each letter aloud and invite students to read the name and spell each letter with you.
- Encourage students to discuss and interact with functional print materials e.g., labels, signs, directions with pictures, instructions that include pictures) and student-generated writing samples (e.g., class books, signs on block buildings, notes to teacher, labels with pictures on shelves and drawings that incorporate students' writing and dictation).

### Sound-Letter Basics

PK.L.WF.1

Demonstrate understanding of writing conventions by using letters and sounds to represent words.

- A. With support, recognize and associate uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet, using visual cues, prewriting skills (e.g., sensory, fine motor, visual, and cognitive) and letter shapes to make connections.
- B. With support form and write many uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet, using a variety of writing tools and materials.
- C. With support, students demonstrate awareness that writing moves from left to right.
- D. Write a letter or letters to spell some consonant and short vowel sounds.
- E. Students use drawing, dictation, and early writing together to express ideas, tell stories, describe observations, and convey meaning.

- Provide materials for students to attempt to copy one or more letters of the alphabet, while infusing the four properties of the letter (name, sound, shape, and feel). Provide attempts throughout the day for students to print or copy their own name and identify some of the letters. Use shared writing and interactive writing to provide meaning for writing.
- Provide opportunities for students to build sentences orally and visually while using finger spacing and left-to-right direction, with guidance and support.
- Encourage students to connect letter sound relationships by labeling parts in their drawing while exploring writing tools and materials to practice letter formation.
- Provide opportunities throughout the day for students to engage in pre-writing exercises using a variety of materials, including playdough for squeezing and shaping, sensory trays with shaving cream or paint for finger-writing, and building blocks for fine motor control. Explicitly connect the formation of letters with the association of sounds and letter names.
- Integrates multiple senses to help solidify the connection between the name of the letter, the shape of the letters, and its corresponding sounds. Provide multisensory experiences that integrate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements to reinforce the relationship between how letters look, how they sound, and how they are written.

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

#### Spelling

PK.L.WF.2

With support, begin to use letters and writing to represent words and sounds.

- A. Attempt to write letters to represent spoken words, using scribbles, letter-like forms, or letter strings.
- B. Selects or writes a letter that corresponds to the initial sound (e.g., “b” for “ball”) when labeling drawings or writing words.
- C. Experiment and engage with connecting sounds and developmental sound spelling to convey meaning through play and writing activities.

- Model how to draw pictures and represent sounds with matching letters (e.g., “s” for sun) using materials such as using WIKKI Stix, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, etc., during interactive writing and shared writing experiences.
- Support students as they attempt to write their names and encourage them to write their names for a variety of meaningful purposes throughout the day.

#### Sentence Composition (*Grammar, Syntax, and Punctuation*)

PK.L.WF.3

Demonstrate understanding of sentence composition by using familiar words to create simple sentences orally and in written form (e.g., drawings, oral expression with dictation, scribble writing, letter-strings, or sound spelling)

- A. With support, begin to demonstrate awareness of sentence structure by repeating a spoken sentence and identifying the number of words it contains.

- Model drawing lines to connect spoken words (from a picture or teacher prompt) to printed words on a chart or sentence strip.
- Use picture cards alongside word cards to support vocabulary and comprehension.
- Support students as they use felt pieces with words or images on a flannel board to build and read sentences aloud.
- Model awareness of question marks and exclamation points during read-aloud activities. Celebrate students’ efforts when they use questions or exclamations in their responses. Books such as *Where’s Spot* (Hill, 1980) or *Pete the Cat, I Love My White Shoes* (Litman, 2008), include simple questions and exclamations with predictable patterns that encourage students to join in enthusiastically.

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- B. With support, combines oral language with drawings and writing to communicate meaning.
- C. (Begins in kindergarten)
- D. Demonstrate an understanding of different language forms such as questions and exclamations during a read aloud.
- E. With support, students will engage in hands-on activities using a variety of materials to visually connect spoken words to their written form, while demonstrating an emerging understanding of sentence structure.
- F. Use drawing and writing together to express thoughts, stories, or observations.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

#### PK.L.KL.1

Begin to understand the conventions of standard English grammar when speaking during interactions and activities.

- A. Encourage students to use common nouns and verbs during conversations, play, and group activities.
- B. Encourage the use of plural words orally such as “dogs,” “cats,” “blocks,” and “buses” in everyday conversations, storytelling, and shared writing experiences to build understanding of word structure and meaning.
- C. Understand and use question words such as “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how” during conversations, storytelling, and play.

- Ensure that students have many opportunities to practice speaking using plural forms, prepositions, complete sentences, and question sentences by using props and toys (e.g., take turns placing a stuffed animal in various places in the classroom and choose a classmate to describe the location: under the chair, next to the easel, or in the box). Infuse songs, rhymes, and fingerplays to incorporate prepositions (e.g., Open Shut Them, Jack and Jill, and Hokey Pokey).
- Respond to students using their words (“reflect back”) with the correct plural forms, tenses, prepositions, and complete sentences. Also, add new and rich vocabulary to the response when appropriate.
- Emphasize explicit instruction in forming regular plurals by integrating frequently occurring nouns (e.g., cups, tables, or cookies). Encourage oral language development alongside early literacy skills.
- Model sentence structure and provide opportunities for students to express ideas using simple, complete thoughts (e.g., “I see a dog,” “I want more juice,” “I have two red apples.”).

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- D. Demonstrate understanding and the use of common prepositions such as “in,” “on,” “under,” “over,” “next to,” and “behind” during speaking, storytelling, daily routines, play-based activities, and movement (spatial awareness).
- E. With support, encourage students to begin speaking in complete sentences during conversations, storytelling, and classroom activities.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.L.VL.2

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about the meanings of new words and phrases introduced through read-aloud activities, and play.

- A. With support, generate words that are similar in meaning (e.g., happy/glad, angry/mad).
- B. With support, use common word endings like “-s” to help understand the meaning of new words (e.g., “I see one dog.” “Now I see two dogs!”).

- Encourage students to ask questions about unfamiliar words and explore their meanings. Embed ongoing strategies to introduce new vocabulary (tier two and tier three words) using student-friendly language, and clarify word meanings during read-aloud activities, small group activities, play, conversations, and writing. Strategies may include using props, pictures, gestures, and oral expressions to emphasize meaning; pairing unfamiliar words with familiar ones; providing examples and non-examples to build connections; or pointing to illustrations that offer clues to word meanings.
- Support multilingual preschoolers’ vocabulary growth by highlighting cognates—words in the story that sound and mean the same in both English and the student’s home language. During read-alouds, pause to discuss these words and invite students to share them in their language. For example, in the book *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz, words like “family” (familia) and “toffee” (tofi/tofe) help students connect new words to prior knowledge, strengthening understanding and literacy in both languages.
- Introduce new vocabulary in context using multisensory strategies. For example, in the story *The Wolf’s Chicken Stew* by Kasza (1987), the target word “scrumptious” can be taught as a story connector. Provide a student-friendly definition, such as “something that is tasty and yummy.” Before reading, show a picture of a slice of cake and have students imitate a physical movement, like rubbing the stomachs in a circular motion, to connect the gesture to the word. During the read-aloud, students perform the gesture whenever they hear “scrumptious,” linking the word to both the text and illustrations.
- Use props and movement to act out vocabulary words, helping students understand meanings of new and/or similar words. For example, in *Giraffe Can’t Dance* (Giles, 1999), students can act out Gerald the giraffe’s characteristics—tall with a long, slender neck, crooked knees, and thin legs—to connect the words to concrete, memorable experiences.
- Model and intentionally reinforce vocabulary development by introducing and revisiting new and previously learned words across the daily routine. Provide frequent opportunities for students to hear, use, and apply vocabulary during conversations, play, songs, rhymes, shared writing, simple riddles, learning activities, and group discussions. Engage

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

students in repeated read-alouds to deepen word knowledge and support transfer of vocabulary to new contexts (e.g., during snack time, students use the word *scrumptious* to describe their food).

PK.L. VL.3

With adult support, explore how words are related and learn the different meanings words have.

- A. Demonstrate understanding of concepts by sorting common objects into categories (e.g., animals, shapes, colors, foods) to show awareness of similarities and differences.
- B. Begin to recognize opposites of familiar words (e.g., big/small, hot/cold) through conversation and play.
- C. Apply words learned in classroom activities to real-life examples (e.g., using “circle” to describe a plate, “fast” to describe running, or “soft” to describe a pillow).
- D. Explore different ways to describe actions or feelings (e.g., act out walking, marching, or skipping) to notice differences in meaning.

- Provide opportunities for students to determine the meaning of words and phrases by connecting information from texts and illustrations. For example, during a read aloud of *Bear Snores On* (Wilson, 2002) guides students to explore vocabulary by asking: “What does the word ‘itty-bitty’ mean when describing the mouse?” “What does it look like when the mouse goes ‘pitter-pat’?” The word ‘pitter-pat’ is a sound word (onomatopoeia), like the word ‘bang’ when something falls. Encourage students to demonstrate their understanding by identifying or showing something that is “itty-bitty.”
- Sort words, props, topics, or materials into categories to help students understand meaning and relationships. For example: “Gallop is an action word, like crawl, walk, or jump. It is the movement a horse makes when it wants to go fast. Let me show you how to gallop.”
- Support students in making real-life connections during interactive play by using descriptive language, asking thought-provoking questions, incorporating real objects (realia), modeling, and demonstrating words through actions when appropriate.

## Reading Domain

Students build early literacy skills, including print awareness, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, through engaging read-aloud experiences that connect spoken and written language, exposure to diverse genres, nurturing vocabulary, and fostering a love for reading.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.RL.CR.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer key elements in a familiar story or poem.

- Choose books that are developmentally appropriate in terms of age, interest, and cultural affirmation. Books must reflect the identities, home languages, family structures, and cultures of students. Select high quality text that is engaging, purposeful, with rich language, vivid and complex illustrations/photographs, and opportunities for interaction and learning.
- Read aloud to each student individually in small and large groups, two or more times a day in different settings using age-appropriate high-quality books and texts (e.g., picture story books including the Caldecott medal books, picture information books, wordless books, traditional literature including folktales, fantasy, poetry and rhyming books, big books, books that are predictable and repetitive, culturally diverse books and an assortment of alphabet books and math picture books).
- Prepare students for listening to new books by building background knowledge (e.g., connecting the book's topic through students' lives and experiences through discussions, students' work, interests, real-world examples, hands-on activities, relevant visuals, or viewing a few illustrations to build anticipation) and making connections during/after the read to support comprehension.
- Engage students (before, during, and after reading a story) by having them answer questions, ask questions, make connections, and share comments.
- Ask questions that encourage answers from simple to complex conversations and increase the complexity of questions over time. Sequence questions from simple literal questions about the things pictured in the book (e.g., What just happened to Ruby? What was the problem? How did things get better in the story? How was the problem solved?) to inferential questions (e.g., How do you know the character is scared even though the book does not say it? What might happen if the character does not find their way home?).

PK.RI.CR.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about an informational text read-aloud.

- Provide verbal prompts and picture cues to support students' recall and comprehension of text, encouraging responses to 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' 'how,' and 'why' questions through guided discussions and visual exploration, such as asking: 'Who or what is mentioned the most?' or 'Why do you think the author wants us to know this?'
- Read and engage students with a variety of informational texts—such as picture books about animals, science, biographies, how-to guides, recipes, signs, lists, and schedules—that reflect their interests and cultural backgrounds. Use these texts to enrich book studies and thematic units by creating text sets that deepen understanding. For example, pair *Over and Under the Snow* (Messner, 2011), which explores how animals prepare for winter, with *Before We Sleep* (Lent, 2017), which offers a social-emotional perspective on hibernation, to build background knowledge and support comprehension."
- Use student inquiries as a method of understanding what they know and want to know about a topic. Build their desire by being open and responsive to the questions they ask. Use graphic organizers to document student ideas (e.g., KWL chart).

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### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.RL.CI.2

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories or poems through discussion or imaginative play.

- Read and reread stories for different purposes to build deeper connections, develop a body of knowledge, and engage in responsive and interactive discussions. Students are actively involved in asking questions, answering questions, making comments, and making predictions.
- Follow up a read aloud and discussion with a range of auditory, visual, movement and role play opportunities in multiple contexts throughout the day to guide beginning understanding of main events, topics, setting, and characters (e.g., model story retelling and role-playing with props and dialogue in dramatic play, sing songs related to stories, use flannel board and puppets to reenact characters and plot, prepare recipes related to stories, read other books during the day related to stories).

PK.RI.CI.2

With prompting and support, recall important facts from informational texts read-alouds.

- Encourage students to demonstrate their understanding of informational texts by asking or answering questions, recalling facts through discussions, using photos/illustrations to foster language and vocabulary, and visually showing their understanding through drawings/forms of writing. For example, after reading books about the five senses, such as *I Hear a Pickle* (Isadora, 2016) or *The Listening Walk* (Showers, 1991), students can discuss what they see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in their everyday environments. Teachers can extend the learning by leading a sensory walk, creating a five-senses chart, or guiding students to draw and label their observations for each sense.
- Intentionally scaffold students' language and cognitive development by asking questions that progress from simple to complex, beginning with textually explicit prompts and gradually incorporating textually implicit inquiries. For example, when reading the nonfiction picture book *Fry Bread*, students recall ingredients from the words that they heard from the text, while connecting to the text ("What ingredients did Nana pour into the bowl?") and later engage in deeper conversations that foster analysis and evaluation ("Just by looking at this picture, how can we tell the fry bread is important to the family?"). This approach supports students' comprehension, encourages critical thinking and promotes meaningful back-and-forth dialogue that builds on students' responses and deepens their understanding.

PK.RL.IT.3

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a familiar story.

- Choose a variety of narrative texts to promote oral language development through discourse (e.g. *Knuffle Bunny* (Willems,2004), *Jabari Jumps* (Cornwall,2017), *The Bad Seed*,(John, 2017), *A Ball for Daisy* (Raschla, 2011), and narrative poems such as *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, or *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*) that provides opportunities for students to readily identify characters, settings, and major events.
- Include discussions, questions, comments, and role-play to help students make connections to character behaviors and the story elements.
- Place books in different centers to extend center play (e.g., students can act like the characters and role play some of the events from *Rubia and The Three Osos* (Elya,2010) or *The Napping House* (Wood,1984) in the dramatic play center, sand/water tables, book center, and block center).

## Reading Domain

Students build early literacy skills, including print awareness, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, through engaging read-aloud experiences that connect spoken and written language, exposure to diverse genres, nurturing vocabulary, and fostering a love for reading.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.RI.IT.3

With prompting and support, make a connection between pieces of essential information in a familiar text (e.g., between two individuals, events, or ideas).

- Integrate opportunities for read aloud experiences using both literature and informational texts (e.g., big books) throughout the day followed by rich discussions (e.g., large group, small group time, center-time, individually,) to extend and make connections between key concepts in science, social studies, math, music, art, movement, and social and emotional development (e.g., “In our read aloud today, we read about earthworms. Last week we read many books about snakes. Who can tell me how an earthworm and a snake are similar? Yes, both the earthworm and the snake are long and squiggly and crawl on their stomachs.”).
- Compare and contrast students’ favorite storybooks and informational texts, discussing which books are fiction (tell a story) and which are informational (explains or shares real facts). Support learning by creating text sets—curated collections of diverse materials, including books, songs, pictures, and other media—focused on a specific topic or theme.

PK.RL.TS.4

Recognize common types of literature (storybooks and poetry books).

- Provide purposeful and playful exposure to a variety of texts (e.g., fables, folklore, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poetry, picture books, storybooks, recipes, nonfiction text), while explicitly labeling the different genres during the book introductions.
- Guide students to identify texts, such as *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* and *I Don’t Want to Be a Frog* (Petty, 2015), as either poetry or a story. Discuss simple genre features, like rhyming patterns in poetry versus narrative structure in stories and compare both types to highlight differences in form and style.

PK.RI.TS.4

With prompting and support, students will be able to point to and name the front cover, back cover, and title of a book.

- Teach students to identify the front and back covers of a book. Draw attention to illustrations on the covers or title page, highlighting how they provide information or connections before reading the text.
- Display a wide variety of books in different shapes and sizes in locations throughout the classroom where the covers of the books are visible.

PK.RL.PP.5

With prompting and support, identify the role of the author and illustrator in telling the story.

- Bring students’ attention to the names of the authors and illustrators displayed on the front covers of books. Highlight the role of the author and illustrator during a read aloud by focusing on the differences and impact between the words and pictures throughout the read-alouds. Explore books by various authors and illustrators that retell stories in many ways (e.g., folktales, variations of cultural interpretations and fractured fairytales such as *After the Fall* (Santat,2017), *Red Riding Hood* and *Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Turner,2022) or the variety of story plots with *The Princess and the Pea*).
- Encourage students to actively engage with stories by exploring the illustrations on the front and back covers, as well as throughout the book, to deepen their understanding of the text. Help students connect visual cues with language to interpret characters’ mood, actions, and dialogue. For example, in *Home in a Lunchbox* (Mo, 2024), after reading the initial dialogue, guide students to observe Jun’s facial expressions and creatively voice what might be said on the wordless pages, such as “I feel sad right now” or “Please try some of my food,” to strengthen comprehension and emotional connection to the story.

## Reading Domain

Students build early literacy skills, including print awareness, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, through engaging read-aloud experiences that connect spoken and written language, exposure to diverse genres, nurturing vocabulary, and fostering a love for reading.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.RI.PP.5

With prompting and support, identify the role of the author and illustrator in presenting ideas or information in a text.

- Highlight the role of the author and illustrator during a read aloud. Read aloud informational texts with photos or illustrations about subjects that are meaningful to students (e.g., science, books about families and cultures).
- Show students how to describe facts and details from an illustration and provide opportunities for students to interact with informational texts in all parts of the classroom (blocks, dramatic play, writing, listening, sensory areas).
- Connect the role of the author and illustrator (or photographer) of students' favorite informational books to students' writing activities (e.g., after reading *Colors Everywhere* (Hoban,1995) students discuss Tana Hoban's role of author and photographer/illustrator. Following the discussion, students take photographs of familiar school objects to create an informational class book called *Colors at School*).

PK.RL.MF.6

With prompting and support, identify the role of author and illustrator in telling the story.

- During read-alouds, invite students to connect the words that they hear from the story with how facial expressions and body language shape a story's mood and tone. For example, in *The Veggie Monster* (McClements, 2008), the boy refuses to eat vegetables. The illustrations show squiggly hands, puffed cheeks, and tears streaming down his face. Encourage students to mirror expressions, share experiences, and connect emotions to visuals and words. This builds empathy and deepens comprehension. Encourage students to engage in interactive questions to make connections to the story (e.g., "Look at his face-what do you think he's feeling?", "Why do you think he's reacting that way?", "Can you show me your face when you taste something yucky?", or "Act out how you'd feel if you had to eat something you didn't like!")
- Provide students opportunities to engage with shared reading, read-alouds, wordless books, and short, high-interest texts that include language, words, and topics with engaging rhythm or rhyme, high predictability and simple illustrations in order to develop the willingness and motivation to listen to stories (e.g., *Lubna and Pebble* (Meddour,2019), *When I'm With You* (Miller,2022), *In the Tall Tall Grass* (Fleming,1991), *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More!* (Beaumont, 2005).
- Help students connect the work of the author and illustrator to their own creations in the writing and art centers. For example, after reading *A Snowy Day* (Keats, 1964), say: "There are many blank books and papers at the writing table. Let's look at the winter books on display and study the illustrations—how can we draw and write about winter too?"
- Follow up a discussion about illustrations in favorite books by offering similar art materials at the art center. For example, after reading *Kitten's Full Moon* (Henkes,2006), make the connection between the work of the artist/ illustrator and the student's own artwork by offering black and white pastels with black markers to explore night drawings at the art center.

PK.RI.MF.6

With prompting and support, students describe how illustrations help them understand what the book is about.

- Choose age-appropriate informational texts with illustrations/photographs that represent different topics, varied cultures, and diversity.
- Read and reread informational books on topics of interest to students. Compare and contrast books and illustrations (e.g., "Both books *My Big Truck Book* (Priddy,2001) and *The Ultimate Book of Vehicles: From Around the World* (Baumann,2011) are books about cars and trucks. Mr. Priddy's book uses pictures or illustrations from photographs for his book. These

## Reading Domain

Students build early literacy skills, including print awareness, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, through engaging read-aloud experiences that connect spoken and written language, exposure to diverse genres, nurturing vocabulary, and fostering a love for reading.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

pictures are like the photographs we take. The author Baumann uses pictures or painted illustrations. These illustrations are like the paintings we made on the easel.”).

- Pair fiction and nonfiction books help students explore ideas through engaging stories, real-world facts, and vivid illustrations. For example, pair *The Last Bear* (Gold, 2021) with *Why Are the Ice Caps Melting?* (Rockwell, 2006). Use illustrations to support understanding by showing changes in nature and climate. These visual elements not only capture students’ attention but also help them connect emotionally and cognitively with the content. Engage students in discussions with questions and discussions such as: “While we listen to the story and look at the pictures, let’s think and talk together: What do you see in this picture? What do you think is happening? How would you tell someone about this picture if they couldn’t see it yet? How do the pictures and words help each other? How does this picture help you learn about the story?”

PK.RI.AA.7

Begins in Kindergarten.

PK.RL.CT.8

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures of two main characters from familiar stories.

- Provide opportunities for students to compare and contrast real objects and visuals with clear, simple characteristics (color, shape, or function) as they build their understanding and vocabulary. Through intentional read-alouds and discussions, bring students’ attention to understanding that characters within the same story or characters from different stories can be compared and contrasted (e.g. In the narrative stories *The Lion Inside* (Bright, 2015) and *The Koala Who Could* (Bright, 2017), characters face change and discover inner courage throughout the plot.).
- Use strategies that help students compare and contrast characters and experiences, such as Venn diagrams, T-charts, hula hoops, and dramatic play activities.

PK.RI.CT.8

With prompting and support, make a connection between pieces of essential information in similar informational texts.

- Connect texts, whenever possible, with actual objects and props to help students make connections between print, language, visuals, and objects.
- Pair texts such as *Who Has This Tail?* (Laura Hulbert, 2012) and *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (Steve Jenkins, 2003) to explore animal adaptations through curiosity and observation. In *Who Has This Tail?*, students examine vivid illustrations and predict which animal each tail belongs to, fostering inquiry and attention to detail. Then, *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* explains how different animals use their tails, providing factual context and deepening understanding. Together, these texts connect visual literacy with informational content, supporting thematic learning and early scientific thinking.

## Writing Domain

Students communicate ideas through drawing, dictating, and emergent writing. Hands-on activities connect writing to oral language and support fine-motor and cognitive development.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.W.AW.1

Use a combination of drawings, oral expression with teacher dictation, scribble writing, letter-strings, or sound spelling, to share a preference or opinion about a topic or other activities.

- Engage students in discussions that encourage expressing their likes/dislikes with a variety of topics and experiences (e.g., classroom votes, answer “would you rather...” questions by drawing a circle or writing names under their favorite selection, or chart favorite story book characters).
- While reading *Hey, Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998), encourage students to share their opinions on whether the boy should step on the ant or let it live. Similarly, after reading *The Perfect Pet* (Palatini, 2003), invite students to persuade one another about which animal would make the best pet. Use text that naturally or classroom experiences to spark connections and discussions, prompting students to express their thoughts both orally and in writing.

PK.W.IW.2

Use a combination of drawings, oral expression with dictation, scribble writing, letter-strings, sound spelling to supply information about a topic.

- Encourage students to share facts, ideas, or knowledge about a topic through drawing, labeling, dictating to a teacher, shared writing, or using science journals. For example, students might draw how they planted daffodil bulbs in the school garden in the fall and dictate sentences about the soil, the tools they used, and what the bulbs will become in the spring.
- Encourage students to engage in informative writing by using drawings, oral expressions, and early writing strategies to communicate ideas about caring for the environment and understanding basic concepts of climate change.

PK.W.NW.3

Use a combination of drawings, oral storytelling with adult dictation, scribble writing, letter strings, and sound spelling—to express ideas, tell stories, and describe real or imagined experiences.

- Provide opportunities for students to practice sequencing using pictures, flannel board story sets, dramatic play, or digital media to make connections with describing an event verbally and in their writing.
- Model and support students with relating prior experiences and learning to current topics (e.g., “Remember when we read about...? “Remember our field trip to the farm?”). Encourage students to include a “who” and a “what happened” when responding and then follow through with their drawing or dictating a story (e.g., “Who are you going to draw and what is happening?”).
- Encourage students to share experiences from the weekend, weekdays, or the current day during large or small group meetings. Invite them to share artwork, books, or other firsthand experiences. Model components of a narrative by retelling, drawing, or writing a brief sentence about their stories to connect oral storytelling with written communication (e.g., “Thank you, Autumn, for telling us about your friends and the things you did at the park. You just reminded me of when I rode my bike with training wheels as a little girl.”).

PK.W.WP.4

With prompting and support, students consistently engage in writing experiences through play, shared writing, interactive writing, and modeled writing, to understand that writing has meaning and purpose.

- Model drawing and writing with a variety of purposes to communicate ideas throughout the day. Provide opportunities for students to describe their drawings and writing, read their own writing, and dictate during classroom writing activities (e.g., teacher writes down what the student says to describe their picture at the art easel). Encourage students to make marks, scribbles, letter-like shapes and identify them as words. Use letter-like symbols to make lists, letters, stories, or to label pictures. Remind students that pictures tell stories and adding any form of print is a form of written communication.

## Writing Domain

Students communicate ideas through drawing, dictating, and emergent writing. Hands-on activities connect writing to oral language and support fine-motor and cognitive development.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Invite students to explore sound spelling, using the initials sound and other letters to represent the sounds they hear in words. For example, you might say, “As I slowly say the word fig, what sounds do you hear? When you tell me the sound, we will find the letter that matches I, connecting the sounds we speak to the letters we see.”
- Respond positively to all writing efforts at all levels (e.g., dictation, scribble-writing, letter strings, and phonetic spellings) and display students’ writing samples at students’ eye level.
- Examples of Shared Writing Activities:
  - Morning Message: The teacher writes a daily message on chart paper while students help choose words or letters to include.
  - Class Story Creation: Students contribute ideas for a group story while the teacher writes their words on a large chart or whiteboard.
  - Labeling a Drawing Together: After a group drawing activity, the teacher and students work together to label parts of the picture (e.g., “tree,” “sun,” “house”).
  - Interactive Writing: Students take turns writing letters or words with teacher support during a shared writing task.
  - Experience Charts: After a field trip or special event, the class discusses what happened and the teacher records their responses in sentence form.

PK.W.WR.5

With support, participate in shared research (e.g., project-based investigations or explorations of a topic) and shared writing projects.

- Expand, elaborate, and guide students’ ideas and interests to create projects or studies where students ask questions, brainstorm, problem solve, plan, learn new vocabulary, investigate a topic, and produce documentation (e.g., after an investigation where students and teachers researched the topic of a class pet by visiting a pet store, the library, and students’ sites online, the classroom documented their observations and experiences by producing Bubbles the Betta class book).
- Encourage students to document their knowledge, inquiry, interest, and learning (e.g., KWL chart, work samples, photos, charts, webs of investigation). Encourage students’ investigative writing (e.g., in an investigation of plants encourage and support students in recording their observations by adding word cards to the writing center, clip boards to document measurement of plant growth in the math center, and science journals in the discovery center).
- Provide opportunities for students to converse in small groups or pairs about a topic or book before/after writing. When modeling writing, include keywords from students’ home languages, vocabulary words, and pictures to support key concepts and ideas.

## Writing Domain

Students communicate ideas through drawing, dictating, and emergent writing. Hands-on activities connect writing to oral language and support fine-motor and cognitive development.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.W.SE.6

With support, recall information from experience, text, or familiar topics to answer questions.

PK.W.RW.7

With support, students express ideas through drawing, writing, and other creative forms of communication.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide opportunities to revisit and recall information from class discussions as prompts for students to write about (e.g., model the process of classroom bookmaking to share ideas and add class books to the classroom library).
- Encourage students to label their pictures, recall information from read-alouds, and use new vocabulary in their drawings. Integrate pictures with words and dictation to scaffold writing simple sentences. Through discussion and intentional support, guide students in connecting their ideas to written language.
- Provide a variety of writing tools (e.g., story-telling devices, pencils, crayons, chalk, markers, and keyboards) and surfaces (e.g., paper, writing easels, chart paper, or white boards) for students to use throughout the classroom.

## Speaking and Listening Domain: Comprehension and Collaboration

Students practice listening, taking turns, responding, and expressing ideas clearly. Language-rich interactions foster communication skills and support literacy growth.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.SL.PE.1

With support, participate in conversations and interactions with peers and adults during daily routines and play.

- A. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
- B. Continue to respond and contribute to ongoing discussions.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide opportunities throughout the day, create opportunities that value conversations, dialogue, questions, and reflections (e.g., during meals, center/choice time, outdoor play, transitions). The teacher has personal conversations with each student and encourages conversations between students that include multiple back-and-forth exchanges. The teacher asks questions, makes comments, and provides “wait-time.”
- Provide activities and props throughout the classroom (puppets, flannel boards, and costumes) that encourage interactions, conversations and support connections to concepts learned (e.g., in dramatic play, the “auto service shop” provides students the opportunity to ask and answer questions about pretend roles, use topic vocabulary, “write” service orders at various developmental levels, and creatively act-out roles).
- Teach students simple words in other languages, such as the words “hello” and “friend” through songs, rhymes, chants, fingerplays, or as large group greetings.

PK.SL.II.2

Ask and answer questions about a text or other information read aloud or presented orally. Responds appropriately to specific vocabulary and simple statements, questions, and stories.

- Read and reread favorite books and texts so that students become familiar enough with the story or text to be successful in identifying important information with some detail (e.g., after reading and rereading *If You Give a Pig a Party* (Numeroff,2005), uses a predictable, and repetitive structure that helps students recall and sequence, understand cause and effect relationships, and remember the many things that pig needs for the party.
- Ask open-ended questions and leading questions to extend language responses and to encourage more than one-word answers leading up to complete sentences. Ask a variety of questions that gradually increase in complexity: start with choice and yes/no questions, then move to who, what, and where questions, and finally introduce why and when questions to deepen thinking and language skills.

PK.SL.ES.3

Ask and answer questions to seek help, get information, or follow directions.

- Ask open-ended questions to help students learn to speak and listen to gain information.
- Model how to ask questions, listen carefully to students’ responses, and thoughtfully answer the questions students ask.
- Provide opportunities to follow directions of two or more steps that relate to familiar objects and experiences.

## Speaking and Listening Domain: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Students express thoughts, ideas, and experiences using words, gestures, drawings, and emerging oral language. Educators provide opportunities for students to share information, describe experiences, and respond to others in supportive, developmentally appropriate ways.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.SL.PI.4

With prompting and support, begin to describe familiar people, places, things, and events, with some detail.

- Provide opportunities for discussions that include details of familiar people, places, and things and events with individual students, and in small and large groups (e.g., after a visit from local firefighters, students discuss in detail the protective clothing they wear, why firefighters have an important job and how we can help them).
- Find ways to connect words to motions, (e.g., use themed poems, songs, chants, and fingerplays to encourage students to use new vocabulary, concepts, and adjectives).

PK.SL.UM.5

Use drawings or visual displays to add to descriptions to provide additional detail.

- Encourage students to tell or create stories through representations (e.g., drawings, paintings, constructions with blocks or other materials, clay models) and explain them to others.
- Provide oral language and communication activities, such as “Show and Tell,” to help students build communication skills, develop empathy, and practice active listening. These activities also support literacy and language growth by linking classroom learning to students’ home experiences and strengthening their sense of belonging within the school community.

PK.SL.AS.6

With support, speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

- Offer individual, small and large group opportunities throughout the day to express and share activities, ideas, feelings, or other information in a classroom climate that values discourse (e.g., discussions, project development investigations, brainstorming and predicting, book conversations, discussing and learning names for feelings, conflict resolution and show and tell).
- Extend a student’s language by adding descriptive words. Ask them about their work (e.g., art, block structures, or center activities, etc.). Restate and expand on what the student says. Model correct tone and volume while speaking.

# Mathematics

## Introduction

The preschool classroom environment should build on children’s natural and spontaneous use of math by providing many ongoing opportunities to learn math during play and routines. Activities that address all math domains in the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards must be available daily through classroom centers, small- and large-group interactions, peer-to-peer activities, and outdoor experiences, all designed to be developmentally appropriate and engaging.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Association for the Education of Young Students (NAEYC) emphasize that “high-quality, challenging, and accessible mathematics education for three-to-six-year-old students is a vital foundation for future mathematics learning.” In alignment with this goal, the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards for Mathematics support early mathematical development and align with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSL) from preschool through grade 12.

The preschool mathematics standards are organized using the same domains as the NJSL to ensure continuity across grade levels. Numbers and Counting introduce foundational number concepts and align with Counting and Cardinality; Numerical Operations support early understanding of operations and aligns with Operations and Algebraic Thinking; Measurement and Data Literacy focus on comparing, measuring, sorting, and organizing information and aligns with Measurement and Data; and Geometry develops spatial and shape awareness, aligning with Geometry.

## Mathematics Standards

### Standard: Numbers and Counting (NC)

Students begin to demonstrate an understanding of numbers and counting.

<b>Preschool Learning Outcomes</b> Students will:	<b>Preschool Teaching Practices</b> Effective preschool teachers:
PK.NC.1 Count to 20 by ones with minimal prompting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage and support attempts to learn to count numbers to 20 or higher.</li></ul>
PK.NC.2 Recognize and name written numbers up to 10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include and refer (by name) to written numbers in the classroom environment during daily routines and in the context of large and small group experiences.</li><li>• Intentionally refer to the symbol and number name when discussing numbers (quantities) of objects.</li></ul>
PK.NC.3 Know that written numbers are symbols for number quantities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide manipulatives and materials (e.g., print and digital material, sand molds, tactile numeral cards, puzzles, coins, counting books, hand-held devices such as tablets, interactive whiteboards) and activities (e.g., tracing numbers in sand, forming numbers with clay, recording data) that feature number names and number quantities.</li></ul>
PK.NC.4 Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities. Use the number name of the last object counted to answer the question “How many___?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a wide variety of writing materials for students to informally explore writing numbers along with meaningful contexts for students to write numbers on charts and graphs.</li><li>• Make materials and books that promote exploration of number quantities (e.g., collections of small objects, cash registers with money, number puzzles, counting books and games in print and digital formats, egg cartons, and plastic eggs) accessible to students.</li></ul>
PK.NC.4.a Accurately count quantities of objects up to 10, using one-to one-correspondence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrate purposeful counting experiences throughout the school day, indoors and outdoors (e.g., taking attendance, following the rule to stay three steps behind another person, climbing the ladder of the slide, and pulling the paper towel holder lever twice. Play board games that involve arranging and counting objects and identifying small quantities of objects with small groups of students).</li><li>• Foster one-to-one correspondence throughout the day (e.g., ask a student to put out just enough bowls and spoons for each stuffed animal seated at the table, ask a student to arrange just enough cars so that each garage space has one car in it).</li></ul>
PK.NC.4.b Accurately count as many as 5 objects in a scattered configuration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide daily opportunities for students to observe small groups of scattered objects (five or fewer) and ask how many there are, encouraging accurate counting.</li></ul>

## Standard: Numbers and Counting (NC)

Students begin to demonstrate an understanding of numbers and counting.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.NC.4.c

Count objects to 5 to produce a set. Recognizes that counting is relevant to situations in which a certain number must be placed.

- Encourage students to count objects up to five in purposeful classroom situations (e.g., setting the table, distributing materials).

PK.NC.4.d

Arrange and count different kinds of objects to demonstrate understanding of the consistency of quantities (i.e., “5” is constant, whether it is a group of 5 people, 5 blocks or 5 dots on a card).

- Intentionally compare quantities using different objects and emphasize that the number remains the same regardless of the items being counted.

PK.NC.5

Students subitize perceptually and conceptually.

- Provide opportunities to subitize in daily routines using tools (i.e., dice, scattered dots on plates, or quick look cards) and ask how many there are without counting.

PK.NC.5.a

Instantly recognize, without counting, small quantities of up to 3 or 4 objects (perceptually subitize).

- Provide opportunities to look at objects (4 or fewer) in daily routines and ask how many there are without counting.

PK.NC.5.b

Verbally labels all arrangements up to 5, when shown only briefly (conceptually subitize to 5).

- Quickly look at objects arranged in different ways (5 or fewer) and ask how many there are without counting.

PK.NC.6

Compare visually (with or without counting) two groups of up to 10 objects that are obviously equal or unequal and communicate, “more”, “less” or “same.”

- Encourage students to compare sets frequently through questions (e.g., “Are there more people riding in the bus or in the airplane?”) and graphing (e.g., favorite colors, pets).

## Standard: Numerical Operations (NO)

Students demonstrate an initial understanding of numerical operations.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.NO.1

Students understand that adding to (or taking away) one or more objects from a group will increase (or decrease) the number of objects in a group.

PK.NO.1.a

Joining, putting together, and adding to 5

PK.NO.1.b

Taking apart and taking from

PK.NO.2

Solve simple addition and subtraction word problems nonverbally and/or verbally with a number of objects up to 5.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Engage informally with students during center time to explore joining and taking apart small quantities of concrete objects.

- Provide opportunities for students to independently explore addition and subtraction (e.g., using small manipulatives with egg cartons, muffin tins, and story mats, interacting with students using computer software and handheld device applications).

- Model addition for students by using counting to combine numbers (e.g., “Maria has two blocks and Justin has three. There are five blocks altogether: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.”).

- Model subtraction for students by using counting to separate quantities of objects (e.g., “There are five cars on the carpet: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I am putting two cars in the basket. There are three cars left on the carpet.”).

- Develop addition and subtraction stories with small groups of students using story mats and flannel board scenes with small quantities of objects and pictures/drawings.

- Using fingers, chalk, wipe-off markers and/or whiteboard technology, tell and draw addition and subtraction stories with small groups of students.

- Provide writing materials and/or handheld devices with appropriate applications in classroom centers so that students have an opportunity to choose to view, solve and create addition and subtraction stories.

## Standard: Measurement and Data Literacy (MD)

Students begin to conceptualize measurable attributes of objects and classify objects, counting the number of objects in categories.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.MD.1

Students sort and classify items in their everyday environment by one attribute into two or more groups and, with assistance, make graphs by classifying and representing data in those categories. Uses the data compiled to compare category frequencies (e.g., most, and least popular case types).

PK.MD.2

Identifies, duplicates, and extends simple repeating patterns.

PK.MD.3

Demonstrates awareness that objects are compared by length, weight, or capacity, by noting gross differences, beginning to use vocabulary such as bigger, longer, heavier, or taller, or by placing objects side by side to compare length.

PK.MD.4

Compare (e.g., which container holds more) and order (e.g., shortest to longest) up to 4 or more objects according to measurable attributes.

PK.MD.5

Perceives the area of two-dimensional space and make intuitive comparisons.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide materials for students to sort, classify, order, and pattern (e.g., buttons, coins, beads, colored craft sticks, bowls, trays).

- Models use of manipulatives such as colored blocks, beads, linking cubes, or natural objects like leaves and stones.

- Begin with simple AB patterns (e.g., red, blue, red, blue) and gradually introduce more complex patterns like AAB (red, red, blue) or ABC (red, blue, green) as students become more confident.

- Help students notice patterns in the classroom or in daily routines.

- Provide standard and nonstandard measurement materials both indoors and outdoors (e.g., unit blocks, inch cubes, rulers, cups, buckets, balance scales, water, and sand tables).

- Invite students to compare and order objects according to measurable attributes (e.g., length, height, weight, area).

- Listen to and extend students' conversations about long and short, longer, and shorter, tall, and taller, etc.

- Invite students to compare and order objects according to measurable attributes (e.g., length, height, weight, area).

- Provide standard and nonstandard measurement materials both indoors and outdoors (e.g., unit blocks, inch cubes, rulers, cups, buckets, balance scales, water, and sand tables).

- Use digital photography to record students' measurement activities so that students revisit, think more about, and discuss their strategies with adults and classmates.

- Provide materials of different shapes to combine or cover to foster comparisons during explorations or design-making.

## Standard: Geometry (G)

Students develop spatial and geometric sense.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.G.1

Identify positions of objects and people in space, such as in/on/under, up/down, and inside/outside, beside/between, and in front/behind.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Use positional words (e.g., over, under, behind, in front of) to describe the relative position of items and people, and encourage the students to use them (e.g., “Michael is sitting next to Ana.” “I see that you used yellow paint under the blue stripe on your painting.” “Are you in front of or behind me?” “The car is on the right.”).
- Dramatize stories that make use of positional words (e.g., Rosie’s Walk by Pat Hutchins).
- Use every day experiences to foster understanding of spatial sense (e.g., talk about locations in the school, map the classroom by learning/interest center, invite students to use blocks to create simple scenes or locations [e.g., the park, the zoo] ask students to describe and/or draw how to get from the classroom block center to the easel).
- Provide materials that students can assemble, disassemble, and manipulate indoors and outdoors to build spatial and geometric skills. Examples include puzzles of varying complexity, objects to fill and empty, materials to fit together or take apart, items to shape or arrange, moving objects, and tunnels to crawl through.

PK.G.2

Identify and name various two dimensional and three-dimensional shapes (including objects in the environment) using appropriate geometry vocabulary (e.g., circle, square, triangle, rhombus, trapezoid, sphere, cylinder, cube, rectangular prism, vertex, angle).

- Introduce vocabulary describing two- and three-dimensional shapes and constructions (e.g., circle, sphere, square, cube, triangle, rectangular prism, pyramid; side, point, angle) and use that vocabulary when interacting with students and materials in learning centers, small groups, and individual settings.
- Provide opportunities for students to talk about their two- and three-dimensional designs with other students and with adults.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore and describe the differences and similarities between attributes of two- and three-dimensional shapes (e.g., “It’s like a can.” “It has 3 sides and 3 points, so it’s a triangle.”) and constructions (e.g., faces of attribute blocks, balls, blocks of all shapes, boxes, beads).
- Provide opportunities for students to identify shapes in their environment.

PK.G.3

Manipulate, compare, and discuss the attributes of two-dimensional shapes.

- Provide cut paper shapes, tangrams, geoboards, straws, craft sticks, and pattern blocks for open-ended exploration.
- Encourage students to build shapes by connecting straws/sticks with connectors, noticing sides, corners, and angles.
- Guide students in matching identical shapes, then sorting by rules such as number of sides, presence of right angles, or curved vs. straight edges.
- Use pattern blocks or tangrams to make pictures, designs, or larger shapes, prompting discussion about which smaller pieces make up the whole.
- Invite students to take apart a composite figure and describe which shapes it contains.

## Standard: Geometry (G)

Students develop spatial and geometric sense.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.G.4

Manipulate, compare, and discuss the attributes of three-dimensional shapes. Identifies most three-dimensional shapes, naming several of their attributes using appropriate vocabulary (e.g., face, side, angle, vertex, base).

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Give students opportunities to compose and decompose three-dimensional shapes using materials such as unit blocks, hollow blocks, 3D manipulatives, boxes, balls, or Styrofoam shapes.
- Offer a variety of 3D shapes—cubes, cones, cylinders, pyramids, rectangular prisms—in blocks, boxes, cans, and other everyday objects.
- Encourage students to handle, rotate, and stack the shapes to notice similarities and differences.
- Ask students to describe how two blocks are alike or different, or which shapes are easier to build with and why.
- Have students build together and then explain their choices, strengthening both spatial reasoning and communication.

# Science

## Introduction

Science education is a way for all preschool students to embrace the joy of discovery, imagination, and inventiveness. Science learning happens through observation, predictions, inquiry, and experimentation. When educators encourage students' exploration and use of the scientific process, they promote the development of thinking and problem-solving skills. The standards provide clear descriptions of what the students are expected to learn by the end of preschool. This will prepare the students as they enter kindergarten to meet the expectations of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which are included as the indicators. For additional information about the Next Generation Science Standards please go to [www.nextgenscience.org](http://www.nextgenscience.org).

Asking questions and interpreting problems; developing and incorporating models; conducting inquiries on an investigation; analyzing and interpreting data; applying mathematics skills; formulating explanations and creating solutions; processing, evaluating, and collaborating information is an integral part of the scientific process and scientific learning. Young students need opportunities to explore, but also time to develop higher order thinking skills associated with these practices. Educators must design open-ended learning experiences that encourage questioning and support children in asking their own questions about their learning.

To further support understanding, educators must develop leveled questions using (e.g., Bloom's Taxonomy and/or Costa's Levels of Thinking) to support all students.

Science provides opportunities to develop and nurture home-school connections by inviting families to observe and participate in classroom science activities. Educators must purposefully introduce science materials, activities, and opportunities for exploration that can be extended into the home and family environment and must encourage and support community partnerships and resources to provide all students with context for their science learning.

Rich science experiences build foundational understanding of inquiry skills, matter and energy, living things, Earth systems, and the Engineering Design Process. The standards are detailed and follow current preschool learnings outcomes first, followed by intentional teaching practices to support effective instruction.

## Science Standards

### Standard: Physical Science (PS)

Students develop an understanding of matter and its interactions.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.PS.1.1

Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information that compares, sorts, and classifies natural and human-made objects based on their observable physical characteristics.

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Offer collections of natural objects (e.g., rocks, leaves, shells, pinecones) and human-made objects (e.g., fabric scraps, plastic lids, metal spoons, cardboard).
- Encourage students to touch, lift, bend, squeeze, shake, and observe objects to discover properties such as texture, weight, flexibility, and sound.
- Use water, light tables, or sand trays to explore absorbency, sinking/floating, and surface changes.
- Encourage students to compare, sort, and classify based on their properties (i.e., absorbency, texture, sound, weight, flexibility, and rigidity).
- Demonstrate how to examine and describe objects using descriptive vocabulary (e.g., smooth/rough, heavy/light, flexible/rigid). Use “thinking aloud” to show how scientists compare and classify materials.
- Support students in grouping objects based on single or multiple observable properties and encourage them to explain their reasoning.
- Provide opportunities for students to share their observations verbally, through drawings, or with simple charts, emphasizing clarity and accuracy in describing similarities and differences.
- Use open-ended and scaffolded questions (e.g., “Which object is heavier? Why do you think these objects are similar?”) to promote higher-order thinking and reasoning.
- Allow students to propose their own sorting criteria or classification questions, encouraging curiosity and ownership of learning.

PK.PS.1.2

Draw pictures to show how objects can be built from smaller parts.

- Provide varied building materials and drawing tools e.g., (blocks, loose parts, recycled materials, paper, markers) and intentionally invite students to build an object and then draw what they built, highlighting how smaller parts come together.
- Model and scaffold representation by drawing simple pictures that show parts of an object (e.g., blocks in a tower) and using language such as part, piece, whole, and together to support students' understanding.
- Encourage reflection and communication by asking students to explain their drawings (e.g., “What parts did you use?” “How did the pieces fit together?”) and valuing drawings to share ideas, not as an art product.

PK.PS.1.3

Carry out investigation to gather evidence to explain that physical objects and materials can change.

- Provide hands-on investigation experiences where students actively explore changes by building and breaking structures, mixing materials, dissolving substances in water, and observing water freezing and melting.

## Standard: Physical Science (PS)

Students develop an understanding of matter and its interactions.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Ask intentional, open-ended questions that guide students to observe, predict, and describe changes (e.g., “What happened when we mixed these?” “How did the ice change over time?”).
- Support documentation and communication of findings by encouraging students to draw, describe, or sequence what they observed before and after a change, emphasizing that changes happen through actions or environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, mixing).

## Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions

Students explore how objects move and interact.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.PS.2.1

Analyze and interpret data (use observations) of what makes something move the way it does and how some movements can be controlled.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide hands-on investigations with everyday materials. Set up opportunities for students to explore pushing and pulling objects (e.g., balls, cars, ramps, boxes) and observe how objects move in diverse ways such as rolling, sliding, spinning, or stopping.
- Facilitate observation and discussion using open-ended questions. Prompt students to notice and describe what they see (e.g., “What happened when you pushed harder?” “How did the ramp change the way it moved?”) to help students analyze how movement changes based on force and direction.
- Support simple data collection through drawings, sorting, or movement charts. Encourage students to represent their observations by drawing what happened, sorting objects by how they moved, or using simple picture charts to compare movements (e.g., fast/slow, straight/curved, push/pull).

## Conservation of Energy and Energy Transfer

Students explore how energy exists in different forms and how it can be transferred or transformed.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.PS.3.1

Make observations to determine the relationship between the size and shape of shadows, the objects used to create them, and how far away a light source is.

PK.PS.3.2

Use shared observations of making different sounds to describe how to make sounds louder or softer.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Create hands-on shadow exploration experiences by providing light sources (e.g., flashlights, lamps, sunlight) and a variety of objects of varied sizes and shapes, allowing students to explore how shadows change when objects are moved closer to or farther from the light.
  - Guide observation and comparison through intentional questioning. Teachers encourage students to notice and talk about relationships by asking questions such as, “What happens to the shadow when the object is closer?” or “How does the shape of the shadow compare to the object?”
  - Support documentation of observations using multiple modalities by encouraging students to draw or trace shadows, compare sizes, and use photos or simple charts to represent how shadow size and shape change based on the object’s shape and distance from the light source.
- 
- Invite students to explore making sounds using voices, instruments, and everyday objects (e.g., drums, shakers, tapping surfaces) to observe differences in loudness and softness.
  - Model and encourage the use of descriptive words such as *louder*, *softer*, *quiet*, and *noisy* by asking questions like, “What did you do to make the sound louder?” or “How can we make it softer?”
  - Help students express observations of sound by sorting objects or events by volume (loud/soft), using visual or physical cues (e.g., big/small motions), and documenting shared observations through drawings, charts, or other representations.
-

## Standard: Life Science (LS)

Students develop an understanding of Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.LS.1.1

Give examples from the classroom, neighborhood, or environment to make a claim that plants need sunlight and water to live and grow.

PK.LS.1.2

Compare, using descriptions and drawings, the external body parts of animals (including humans) and plants and explain functions of some of the observable body parts.

PK.LS.1.3

Compare how different animals use five senses to gather information about the world around them.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Involve students in planting, watering, and placing plants in different light conditions, supporting regular observation of plant growth and changes.
  - Encourage students to talk about plants they see in the classroom, outdoors, or in the neighborhood and ask questions such as, “What helps this plant grow?” or “What happens if a plant doesn’t get water or sunlight?”
  - Help students use drawings, photos, charts, or shared conversations to connect observations to the idea that plants need sunlight and water to live and grow.
- 
- Offer real or model animals, plants, and pictures for students to examine, encouraging them to notice and touch external body parts such as legs, leaves, flowers, arms, and tails.
  - Ask open-ended questions to help students describe similarities and differences (e.g., “How are the legs of this horse different from yours?” “What do leaves do for a plant?”), supporting connections between structure and function.
  - Encourage students to draw the body parts of plants, animals, and humans, and label or explain the function of some parts, such as legs for movement or leaves for collecting sunlight.
- 
- Offer opportunities for students to touch, see, hear, smell, and taste (when safe) different objects and natural materials, linking these experiences to how animals might use their senses.
  - Ask questions that encourage students to notice and describe how senses are used (e.g., “How do elephants use their trunks to eat and drink?” or “How does a dog use its nose to find something?”).
  - Support students in drawing, charting, or acting out how humans and different animals use their senses to explore and understand the world.
-

## Growth and Development of Organisms

Students observe and investigate how living organisms grow, change, and develop over time.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.LS.2.1

Communicate using information gathered by students to explain that living things change over time.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide opportunities for students to observe plants, animals, or classroom pets regularly, noticing changes such as growth, new leaves, or movement patterns.
- Support students in recording what they notice through drawings, photos, or verbal descriptions and guide discussions about how living things grow and change.
- Create opportunities for students to communicate their observations to peers, teachers, or families using simple explanations, drawings, or charts to describe changes in living things.

## Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience

Students explore how living and non-living components of an ecosystem interact.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.LS.3.1

Give examples from the classroom, neighborhood, or environment to describe how the place where plants and animals live provide living things with the basic things that they need to live and grow.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Organize classroom, outdoor, or neighborhood explorations where students observe plants, animals, and their environments, noticing key elements such as sunlight, water, shelter, and soil.
- Ask questions and guide conversations to help students describe how different environments provide food, water, shelter, and space for plants and animals to grow.
- Encourage students to illustrate or chart observations, such as drawing plants in sunlight or animals in shelters, and explain how the environment meets their needs.

# Social Studies, Family, and Life Skills

## Introduction

Social studies education provides students with the opportunity to explore how people interact across time and place through four core lenses:

- Civics – rules, roles, and responsibilities in a community.
- Geography – where we are and how we are affected by the environment.
- Economics – people’s decisions to make, use, and/or purchase goods and services.
- History – how the past affects our present.

Through play and guided experiences, students begin to form and express opinions, solve problems, negotiate roles, recognize diversity and inequity, and understand how their actions affect others.

Social Studies instruction uses inquiry-based learning to build on students’ natural curiosity. Educators encourage students to ask questions, explore, collaborate, and solve problems through project-based experiences that allow them to investigate topics, examine information, and draw conclusions. The social studies classroom models a democratic community where students participate in decision-making and rulemaking as valued members. Culturally responsive and inclusive practices support social-emotional development and help students understand themselves in relation to their peers, their community, and the broader world.

## Social Studies, Family, and Life Skills Standards

### Standard: Identity and Culture (IC)

Students explore who they are and learn about their families, cultures, and traditions while recognizing and respecting similarities and differences, among others. Through these experiences, they begin to understand that individual uniqueness contributes to strong, inclusive communities.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.IC.1

Identify characteristics of oneself, one's family, and others.

- Engage in one-on-one, small-group, or whole group conversations about similarities and differences of students (e.g., eyes, hair, skin tone, abilities, interests, food preferences, gender).
- Encourage students to appreciate individual differences by providing diverse materials, literature, and activities (e.g., mirrors, graphs, height charts; multicultural paints, papers, crayons, puzzles, block families, dolls, and music).
- Support positive conversations about similarities and differences in family structures, routines, and abilities.
- Use literature that features diverse characters and family types (e.g., single-parent, multigenerational, and adoptive).
- Encourage students to share personal stories during circle time.
- Invite families to contribute photographs to create a classroom display that reflects students' home lives and identities.
- Provide mirrors, skin-tone crayons, and drawing materials to support students in creating self-portraits and exploring personal identity.

PK.IC.2

Share objects, stories, songs, clothes, traditions, etc. that represent individuality as well as culture.

- Support, recognize, and engage in positive conversations about similarities and differences comparing family structures, routines, abilities, and traditions through discussions, literature, and activities (e.g., place diverse articles of clothing in the housekeeping center, multicultural tools in the art center).
- Incorporate and talk about books, materials, and activities that support diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, culture, age, abilities, gender, family structure, socioeconomic status, and non-stereotypical roles (e.g., music, literature, dramatic play props, puzzles, displays).
- Use language to identify family members, roles, traditions, and artifacts.
- Incorporate books, materials, photos, artifacts, and props from diverse families that reflect family roles and traditions.
- Encourage students to use materials and supplies in a non-stereotypical manner.
- Ensure that materials, displays, and learning centers reflect the diversity of students, families, and the broader community.
- Invite families and other community members to share experiences that engage students in their cultures and traditions.

PK.IC.3

Identify spaces/places (physical features) in the home, school, and/or community.

- Provide materials, literature, and activities that explore diverse types of homes (e.g., apartment buildings, motels, single-family houses, multi-family houses).

## Standard: Identity and Culture (IC)

Students explore who they are and learn about their families, cultures, and traditions while recognizing and respecting similarities and differences, among others. Through these experiences, they begin to understand that individual uniqueness contributes to strong, inclusive communities.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Involve students in first-hand experiences in their community (e.g., field trips in the school or neighborhood) and involve students in mapping the physical features to discuss and include students in mapping their physical features.
- Involve students in discussions about the homes they live in and the diverse types of homes in the community (e.g., neighborhood walks).
- Provide materials to support literature, activities, and materials for play based on students' experiences with their community (e.g., visit the supermarket, then create a classroom store; visit the school office, then create a classroom office).
- Use photo books or digital slideshows of local landmarks and community spaces.
- Encourage students to draw maps of their homes or neighborhoods.
- Take students on community walks or virtual tours (e.g., Google Earth) to explore local environments.
- Provide photos of local buildings and landmarks to inspire construction and represent community spaces.
- Display simple maps of the classroom, school, and neighborhood to support spatial awareness and geographic understanding.
- Add props representing community locations, such as grocery stores, parks, and libraries, to support role-play and understanding of community functions.

PK.IC.4

Identify and discuss the roles and responsibilities of members of the classroom community.

- Invite visitors with community service roles into the class (e.g., business owner, nurse, doctor, postmaster, firefighter, police officer, veterinarian, teacher, secretary).
- Create a classroom job chart and rotate responsibilities weekly.
- Use puppets or role-play to model helpful behaviors and problem-solving.
- Hold community meetings to discuss classroom rules and feelings.
- Create a classroom culture of respect that supports students in understanding and following established classroom and school rules.
- Use a visual chart to assign and rotate classroom jobs (e.g., line leader, snack helper) to promote responsibility and participation.
- Provide a designated space for students to practice conflict resolution and emotional regulation.

PK.IC.5

- Invite families and other community members to share experiences that engage students in their cultures and traditions.

## Standard: Identity and Culture (IC)

Students explore who they are and learn about their families, cultures, and traditions while recognizing and respecting similarities and differences, among others. Through these experiences, they begin to understand that individual uniqueness contributes to strong, inclusive communities.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

Identify, discuss, and role-play the duties of a range of community workers.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide dramatic play opportunities (e.g., doctor’s office, post office) to help students explore community roles and responsibilities.
- Read books and show short videos to introduce students to community helpers and their roles.
- Rotate themes and provide props (e.g., stethoscopes, mailbags, chef hats) to support exploration of community roles.
- Display photos and descriptions of local workers to reinforce understanding of community roles.
- Provide uniforms and tools for various professions to allow students to engage in role-play and explore careers.

## Standard: Community Participation (CP)

Students learn to follow routines, take responsibility, and cooperate with others as members of a group. Through shared activities, they develop self-regulation, independence, and social skills needed for classroom and community life.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.CP.1

Follow classroom routines, rules, and expectations.

- Establish positive classroom rules and provide visual supports to help students understand the rules and recognize the consequences of their choices.
- Model routines with visual schedules and consistent transitions.
- Use positive strategies to reinforce students' adherence to classroom rules.
- Reinforce daily routines through songs, chants, and movement activities.
- Use pictures to represent daily routines (e.g., arrival, circle time, learning centers, snack) to support student understanding and independence.
- Display simple classroom rules with visuals (e.g., gentle hands, listening ears) to reinforce expectations.
- Organize clearly labeled areas for each part of the day (e.g., cubbies for arrival, mats for circle time) to support structure and transitions.

PK.CP.2

Initiate simple classroom tasks and jobs independently.

- Encourage students to take care of other living things and the environment to assist in the development of empathy and a sense of community.
- Assign and rotate classroom responsibilities (e.g., line leader, plant helper, snack distributor) to foster responsibility and participation.
- Encourage students to develop independence by cleaning up, organizing materials, and managing personal belongings.
- Use checklists or picture cues to help students' complete tasks independently.
- Display student photos next to assigned classroom responsibilities to reinforce ownership and accountability.
- Place cleaning supplies, books, and toys within student reach to promote responsibility and self-sufficiency.
- Provide labeled bins for organizing toys, art supplies, and personal items to support independence and care for the environment.

PK.CP.3

Work cooperatively with others to achieve an outcome.

- Model appropriate behaviors during different social settings (e.g., conversation during snack time, demonstrating manners, and taking turns during a structured game).
- Plan activities and routines that encourage cooperation and collaboration (e.g., classroom murals, pair-painting, buddy system).

## Standard: Community Participation (CP)

Students learn to follow routines, take responsibility, and cooperate with others as members of a group. Through shared activities, they develop self-regulation, independence, and social skills needed for classroom and community life.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Facilitate group projects (e.g., block building, collaborative art) and use cooperative games to encourage turn-taking and teamwork.
- Use cooperative games that require turn-taking and teamwork.
- Model and role-play strategies for resolving disagreements and provide a designated *Peace Table* for students to discuss conflicts with adult support.
- Arrange seating at *team tables* and provide learning centers with shared materials (e.g., large puzzles, building sets) to promote interaction and collaboration.

PK.CP.4

Discuss similarities and differences among peers and cultures.

- Read diverse literature that highlights diverse cultures, abilities, and family structures.
- Facilitate guided discussions about what makes each student unique.
- Celebrate multicultural events and invite families to share traditions.
- Encourage students to use materials and supplies in a non-stereotypical manner.
- Ensure that materials, displays, and learning environments represent the diversity of students, families, and the broader community.
- Explore the cultures represented in the classroom and community and incorporate this knowledge into daily curriculum, literature, activities, and play materials.
- Use students' understanding of differences to teach social justice through age-appropriate literature, familiar examples, anti-bias lessons, and problem-solving.
- Recognize that young students are naturally aware of fairness and differences and create learning experiences that validate these observations, encourage discussion, and foster respect for diverse perspectives.
- Use students' natural awareness of fairness to introduce age-appropriate discussions about bias, discrimination, and respect for differences.
- Implement strategies that reflect students' cultural backgrounds and experiences to support learning and engagement.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection to understand their own identities, recognize implicit biases, and strengthen their ability to build meaningful connections across cultural groups. This awareness enables teachers to model empathy and create a classroom where all students feel understood and valued.
- Design lessons and activities that highlight respect, kindness, compassion, and responsibility, and help students recognize similarities and differences among peers from diverse backgrounds.

## Standard: Community Participation (CP)

Students learn to follow routines, take responsibility, and cooperate with others as members of a group. Through shared activities, they develop self-regulation, independence, and social skills needed for classroom and community life.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide culturally representative clothing, foods, and household items to support exploration of identity and culture.
- Display students' self-portraits and family photos with captions about traditions or languages spoken to honor students' backgrounds and experiences.

## Standard: Geography and Environment (GE)

Students explore their surroundings to understand how places, weather, and environments affect daily life. These experiences build spatial awareness and help students recognize how the natural world influences how people live and interact.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.GE.1

Respond to and use positional/directional words (e.g., in, under, between, down, up, behind, etc.).

- Use movement games like “Simon Says” or obstacle courses to practice positional words.
- Read books that emphasize spatial concepts.
- Incorporate guided play with blocks, dolls, or toy animals to model directional language.
- Provide ramps, tunnels, and bridges in the block center to support students’ exploration of spatial relationships such as “over,” “under,” and “through.”
- Label classroom areas with terms such as “inside,” “next to,” and “above” to reinforce positional vocabulary.
- Create boards (e.g., “Where Is It?”) with photos of objects in various positions to encourage students to observe, describe, and discuss spatial relationships.

PK.GE.2

Use words related to time (e.g., now, after, morning, tomorrow).

- Involve students in keeping track of daily school schedules (e.g., “our day” schedules, first and then charts).
- Involve students in recalling parts of the story as a time reference (beginning, middle, end, graphic organizer, or timeline graphic organizer).
- Read books that explore time.
- Use a visual daily schedule and refer to it throughout the day.
- Use picture clocks to represent daily activities (e.g., snack time, nap time) to support students’ understanding of time and sequence.
- Provide cards for students to arrange daily routines or story events, reinforcing order, prediction, and temporal reasoning.

PK.GE.3

Sequence a simple set of activities or events.

- Use story sequencing activities with picture cards (e.g., first, next, last).
- Encourage students to retell daily routines or classroom events in order.
- Create step-by-step art or cooking projects to reinforce sequencing.
- Provide puzzles, cards, and storyboards to support students in ordering events.
- Display classroom activity photos in sequence (e.g., planting seeds → watering → sprouting) to reinforce temporal understanding.
- Use visual guides for multi-step tasks (e.g., handwashing, cleaning up) to support step-by-step learning and independence.

## Standard: Geography and Environment (GE)

Students explore their surroundings to understand how places, weather, and environments affect daily life. These experiences build spatial awareness and help students recognize how the natural world influences how people live and interact.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.GE.4

Observe and describe how the environment and weather impact a person's life

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Conduct daily weather observations and discuss how it affects clothing, activities, and mood.
- Explore seasonal changes through nature walks, art, and science experiments.
- Provide thermometers, rain gauges, and weather symbols to support observation and discussion of weather patterns.
- Rotate clothing and accessories (e.g., raincoats, boots, sunglasses) to reflect seasonal changes and reinforce understanding of weather-appropriate attire.
- Display seasonal natural items (e.g., leaves, snowflakes, flowers) and facilitate discussions to connect students' observations with the environment.

## Standard: Decision-Making and Economics (DE)

Students explore their surroundings to understand how places, weather, and environments affect daily life. These experiences build spatial awareness and help students recognize how the natural world influences how people live and interact.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.DE.1

Make decisions based on available options

- Offer choice-based activities (e.g., choosing between two books, art materials, or learning centers).
- Use language of decision-making: “What will happen if?” “Why did you choose that?”
- Encourage reflection on choices during circle time or journaling.
- Provide visual boards displaying available activities or materials to support student decision-making.
- Allow students to vote on group decisions (e.g., snack options, story time books) to practice democratic participation.
- Incorporate games or role-play scenarios that require students to make choices and consider outcomes, fostering problem-solving and decision-making skills.

PK.DE.2

Appropriately demonstrate the use and purpose of money through role play.

- Organize dramatic play centers like grocery stores, restaurants, or banks with play money.
- Discuss basic economic concepts like buying, selling, saving, and trading.
- Provide props such as cash registers, wallets, coins, price tags, and books about money to support early understanding of currency and transactions.
- Rotate themed learning centers (e.g., bakery, toy shop, farmer’s market) to encourage role-play and exploration of economic concepts.
- Offer pretend coins and bills for counting, matching, and categorizing to reinforce numeracy and early money skills.

# World Languages and Cultures

## Introduction

Our diverse society requires that students develop an understanding of cultures and languages beyond their own. Students from all backgrounds, especially those who speak a language other than English, should feel valued and represented in the classroom community. The World Languages and Cultures Standards define what preschool students must learn and what teachers must teach to foster awareness and appreciation of different languages, laying the foundation for respectful and inclusive interactions in school and in the broader community.

Preschool students explore languages and cultures to build awareness, respect, and appreciation for diversity. Educators recognize that students interpret the world through their own language and cultural experiences, including languages spoken at home and in the community. Effective instruction integrates multiculturalism and languages other than English into daily routines, songs, literature, and classroom materials. Families and community members who speak other languages serve as valuable partners, helping students understand and respect linguistic diversity.

There are two World Languages and Cultures Standards for preschool. Each standard includes corresponding teaching practices, which guide the development of preschool competencies in intercultural awareness and language learning. These standards ensure that students begin to explore other languages and cultures in meaningful, developmentally appropriate ways, fostering inclusive interactions in the classroom and beyond.

## World Languages and Cultures Standards

### Standard: Cultures (CU)

Students develop and demonstrate intercultural awareness about materials, practices, and varied perspectives of the cultures studied.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.CU.1

Build an awareness of one's own cultural practices and basic beliefs while acknowledging there are other cultures being practiced.

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Develop and facilitate interculturally responsive experiences that demonstrate consideration of diverse student backgrounds and incorporate individual student interests.
- Strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence and enhance his/her preschool experience.

PK.CU.2

Identify some practices of cultures and basic cultural beliefs, especially those related to the students in the classroom and the community.

- Express interest in the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the people within the school community by learning about students' cultural beliefs, customs, and values (e.g., use children's home experiences and family interactions to guide and enrich learning, informal conversations with the parents etc.).
- Facilitate an understanding of cultural practices to offer varied cultural perspectives (e.g., studying family structures, values, celebrations, and play). Determine and incorporate different points of view in their instructions.
- Use cultural references like asking students to talk about what they see in their neighborhoods.

PK.CU.3

Identify some resources of cultures, especially those related to the students in the classroom and the community (e.g., clothing, food, musical instruments, literature).

- Use various resources of culture to explore perspectives of culture (e.g., clothing, food, musical instruments, artifacts, photographs, and images).
- Provide age-appropriate books, poems, stories, songs, and folklore in languages other than English—especially students' home languages—to support cultural awareness and language development. Invite families and community members to share their cultures (e.g., serve traditional meals to the class, read traditional books, poems, stories, songs, tales, folklore).

PK.CU.4

Demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

- Recognize that students' prior knowledge, culture, and home language(s) are as important and necessary to learning as new information.
- Foster a classroom in which all interactions are highly respectful and where the dignity, culture and home language(s) of each student is maintained and honored.

## Standard: Global Languages (GL)

Students attempt to communicate in more than one language and acquire information and diverse perspectives to function in a variety of situations.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.GL.1

Acknowledge that a language other than their own is being spoken or used (e.g., in a story, rhyme, or song).

- Begin to expose students to language for topics that extend beyond the self, such as simple geography and weather.
- Provide conversations, stories, and media featuring diverse languages and characters from various backgrounds, using multiple formats such as teachers, peers, visitors, songs, videos, technology, books, and cultural materials.

PK.GL.2

Say simple greetings, words, and phrases in a language other than their own.

- Provide opportunities for students to hear simple greetings, words, or phrases in a language other than their own (including sign language) in appropriate contexts (e.g., during dramatic play, in stories, when greeting visitors).
- Expose students to words or phrases in a language other than their own, particularly language related to the following topics: family, friends, home, school, community, wellness, leisure activities, basic needs, and animals.
- Give simple commands or instructions in a language other than English.

PK.GL.3

Comprehend previously learned simple vocabulary in a language other than their own.

- Label classroom materials in multiple languages, particularly students' home languages, to support language recognition and cultural awareness.
- Use visual aids available in the classroom (e.g., props, pictures, and photos of daily routines) to enhance comprehension of world languages.
- Read and display students' books in different languages and/or that feature characters from diverse backgrounds.

PK.GL.4

Communicate effectively with adults and/or classmates who speak other languages by using gestures, pointing, or facial expressions to augment oral language.

- Encourage students to use simple words or phrases in other languages previously introduced.

PK.GL.5

Recognize similarities and differences between the target language and their own language.

- Identify languages spoken by classmates, parents, or visitors and explain that people use different languages.
- Provide rhymes and songs for students in different languages.
- Plan opportunities to extend students' language throughout the day and across all content areas.

# Computer Science, Innovation, and Society

## Introduction

Digital technology has become an integral part of daily life, and early childhood classrooms increasingly reflect this trend. Educators are responsible for selecting, implementing, and monitoring technology to support curriculum goals while ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to develop digital skills. Even young students explore the world through early computer science and design thinking, and technology must be intentionally integrated as a developmentally appropriate tool alongside traditional hands-on material. It must enhance exploration and language development but must never replace real-world, experiential learning.

Preschool classrooms must limit screen time to less than one hour per day in full-day programs and 30 minutes or less in half-day programs and screen time must not be used as a reward for meeting curricular goals. Educators must carefully select technology to maintain these limits while promoting meaningful learning experiences.

Intentional technology use also fosters digital citizenship, helping students interact safely, ethically, and responsibly while understanding concepts such as identity, rights, and communication. Developmentally appropriate tools include cameras, tape recorders, tablets, electronic storybooks, math and science games, story-making programs, digital communication tools, and assistive technology. These tools expand learning opportunities for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and children from diverse backgrounds, empowering all students to communicate, participate, and engage fully in classroom activities.

Before introducing technology, educators must consider its purpose, alignment with program goals, and whether it enhances understanding or supports skill development. Teachers should intentionally integrate devices alongside hands-on, real-world experiences, and provide low-tech supports—such as visual cues or environmental modifications—to ensure accessibility for all learners.

Educators must also address the digital divide by promoting active, creative engagement with technology and supporting language development in both home languages and English. Reflective questions can guide decisions about technology use:

- What is the goal of using this device or tool?
- Does it align with the program’s mission and values?
- Does it enhance exploration or understanding?
- Will it help the student grasp a concept with which they might otherwise struggle?

By thoughtfully selecting and integrating technology, teachers ensure it complements developmentally appropriate practices and strengthens learning for all preschool students.

## Computer Science, Innovation, and Society Standards

### Standard: Computer Systems (CS)

Understands the basic operations and vocabulary of technology.

#### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.CS1

Identifies and names parts of a computing device (e.g., screen, mouse, keyboard) during guided exploration.

PK.CS2

Understands and uses physical technology terms such as computer, laptop, tablet, digital camera, monitor, keyboard, printer, and mouse.

PK.CS 3

Use technology tools (e.g., touchscreen, mouse, keyboard) to explore, create, and solve simple problems, identifying basic hardware and software components.

PK.CS 4

Uses age-appropriate software or applications (apps) to complete a simple task (e.g., drawing, matching, or sorting).

#### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Model and verbalize gestures and actions while using technology.
- Introduce new devices during large-group activities, model proper care and use, and provide visual supports to reinforce correct handling before placing technology in learning centers.
- Provide experiences where students observe and hear correct terminology and proper handling of various technological tools.
- Provide experiences where students apply proper terminology and handling of technological tools and offer repeated opportunities throughout the day to reinforce these skills and terms.
- Model proper use of technology during large and small group activities, verbalizing steps and terminology while providing opportunities for students to practice and reinforce skills in small groups.
- Create lessons using technology tools that align with student interests and curriculum goals, supporting engagement and skill development (e.g., using a mouse and keyboard to create a story).
- Provide opportunities to use touchscreen software. Each opportunity must support content learning, reinforce objectives, and enhance concept understanding through meaningful, engaging experiences.
- Utilize software to meet the needs of students.
- Provide opportunities for students to work in small groups using software that supports content/skill goals/objectives.
- Provide opportunities for students to use applications that reinforce skills, concepts and/or content through interactive platforms including teacher-made programs.

## Standard: Interaction of Technology and Humans (ITH)

Begin to use technology/electronic devices to communicate ideas.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.ITH.1

Use electronic devices to type a string of letters.

- Create opportunities for students to design keyboards with art materials, placing letters to reflect a realistic keyboard.
- Use visuals to model letter placement and support students in forming words.
- Provide opportunities for students to use computers, tablets, laptops, or other devices to reinforce letter recognition, writing, and inventive spelling.

PK.ITH.2

Use electronic devices to type one's own name.

- Provide opportunities for students to use computers, tablets, laptops, or other devices to type their names.
- Provide visual models of students' names to support letter recognition.
- Provide students with opportunities to type the letters in their name (i.e., Add tablets to learning centers for students to "sign in," typing the letters of their name to indicate their presence in a learning center).
- Provide students with opportunities to type their names on a Smartboard to indicate their presence in school (attendance).
- Provide materials with letters for students to arrange and then transfer to digital devices, reinforcing connections between print and technology.

PK.ITH.3

Use electronic devices or cameras to document students' own work, creations, or play.

- Maintain digital portfolios of student work to share with families.
- Encourage and assist students in documenting their own work, creations, or play, including recording verbal stories, creative dance movements, or musical creations.
- Use cameras to maintain digital portfolios of student work to share with families.
- Provide opportunities for students to select work to document and share with families or include in work samples, fostering ownership and reflection (e.g., photographing their work for sharing).
- Use digital tools to strengthen communication with families, such as creating instructional videos, sharing student work, or contacting families through email, apps, or other platforms.
- Provide opportunities for students to use cameras or tablets to photograph items in the environment that match designated colors, shapes, letters, or numbers, supporting observation, classification, and early literacy/math skills.

PK.ITH.4

Use electronic devices to create or co-create stories or digital books with pictures, letters, or words.

- Encourage students to create stories using a multistep process (i.e., draw stories, use voice recording to dictate their story, and finally publish their story through print or e-share).
- Design activities that promote student-adult interactions to create digital books or stories based on students' authentic writing or dictated text.

## Standard: Interaction of Technology and Humans (ITH)

Begin to use technology/electronic devices to communicate ideas.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Select activities that encourage cooperative learning, such as grouping students around computers, providing multiple headsets for shared electronic books, or choosing logic and problem-solving tasks that require collaboration.

## Standard: Nature of Technology (NT)

Use technology and interactive programs as tools to access information, investigate, and problem-solve, ensuring they enhance rather than replace hands-on learning experiences.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

PK.NT1

With support, begin to use technology to obtain information on a topic.

- Research software and/or websites in advance by reading reviews, as you would with any other classroom materials.
- Model early research skills by looking for information on a topic that interests the students.
- Engage students in inquiry-based projects that use technology to explore, gather, and analyze information, supporting curiosity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.
- Use computers to conduct Internet searches for subjects of interest. Let students participate in the process of producing search terms and allow them to view the results in a way that allows them to understand (e.g., as a set of images rather than as text).
- Provide opportunities for students to work in small groups to research topics using technology, document learning through drawings, and share findings with others. Teachers take dictation to support emergent writing and may use animation tools to extend student-created work.
- Use virtual field trips to expand students' access to places, experiences, and content beyond the classroom.
- Invite families to participate virtually to share knowledge, experiences, or expertise related to classroom topics.

PK.NT2

With support, begin to use electronic devices cooperatively with peers.

- Introduce new interactive programs to small groups over several days, providing guided practice before making them available for students to use during choice activities.
- Stock learning centers with technology aligned to content goals (e.g., electronic keyboards in music centers; digital cameras or voice recorders in writing or technology centers; calculators in the math center). Teachers model appropriate and functional use of devices during small group instruction before making them available for free play. A limited number of student-configured tablets may be placed in learning centers for guided exploration of developmentally appropriate apps and games, with clear expectations for appropriate use, time limits, and equitable access.
- Provide opportunities for students to work together during large and/or small group activities on tasks such as taking photos of items in the environment that match a designated color, shape, letter, or number (e.g., a scavenger hunt), using standard cameras or tablets/smartphones.
- Provide opportunities for students to take turns using a designated application within learning centers (e.g., baking apps in the dramatic play center, letter tracing in the writing center, insect matching in the science center, or building games in the block center).

PK.NT3

Use technological tools in centers to support play.

- Select developmentally appropriate technology based on each student's age, developmental needs, interests, and abilities.

## Standard: Nature of Technology (NT)

Use technology and interactive programs as tools to access information, investigate, and problem-solve, ensuring they enhance rather than replace hands-on learning experiences.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide screen-free technology-based learning experiences (e.g., listening to eBooks or music, engaging in coding and robotics activities, asking questions through digital voice assistants, and building or using simple machines).
- Tools to use in learning centers:
  - Art: Scissors, slant boards, light/glow boards, and knob paintbrushes
  - Dramatic Play: Calculators, cash registers, microphones, non-wired headphones, non-working phones, and computer keyboards
  - Blocks: Building materials, musical instruments, cardboard boxes, hammers, blocks, and vehicles
  - Science: Magnifying glasses, microscopes, balances, flashlights, binoculars, and a light table
  - Table/Small Toy: Building toys, magnetic tiles, tongs, scales, balances, knob puzzles, and grabber toys in the Table/Small Toy area.
  - Book: Audio recordings of books (multiple languages), sound books, and sensory books
  - Sensory: Water wheels, pumps, measuring cups/spoons
  - Writing: Magnetic drawing boards (i.e., Etch a Sketch), letter tracing sensory pads, wiggle pens, LCD writing tablets, wireless keyboard, tabletop easel, or slant boards

PK.NT4

Explore cause and effect functions through the use of basic non-digital tools and machines.

- Create experiences that encourage students to explore cause and effect:
  - Use ramps with various objects (balls, shapes, cars).
  - Create catapults and use them with pompoms or small, soft materials.
  - Make pulleys with small buckets and rope to move objects.
  - Use outdoor slides to roll balls to compare the rate of speed.
  - Use outdoor equipment to compare the weight of different objects (i.e., “What will hit the ground first? Let’s make predictions.”). Each student selects two objects to drop from the outdoor equipment, makes a prediction, and uses higher-level thinking to explain reasoning for their prediction (e.g., “The block will hit first because it’s heavier than the cup.”).
  - Riding tricycles/ride-on toys (e.g., Pedaling, pushing feet on the ground makes the tricycle move).

## Standard: Ethics and Culture (EC)

Students demonstrate competence and confidence in digital computer skills.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

PK.EC.1

Demonstrate the ability to use technology and media in safe, responsible, and effective ways.

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Model digital safety skills.
- Model safe technology use.
- Demonstrate logging in with help, closing apps properly, and asking for permission before clicking links.
- Verbalize thinking and decision-making while using technology (e.g., “I’m checking if this game is safe for us to play”) to model safe, intentional use.
- Provide students with opportunities to use technology devices independently during “play,” “free,” or “work” time portions of the day.
- Provide students opportunities to use technology devices during structured portions of the day, such as large and small group times, to support content-based objectives/goals.

PK.EC.2

With support, develop decision-making skills to engage with the digital world in ways that promote an understanding of what is appropriate and what is deemed harmful when using technology.

- Research and select developmentally appropriate tools, apps, and games that enhance learning, avoid ads or unsafe links, and use student-friendly browsers with strong safety filters.
- Introduce and reinforce terms such as safe digital citizenship, and permission during technology activities through play, role-play, or puppets.
- Model safe use by sitting with students during technology activities, verbalize thinking, and ask guiding questions (e.g., “Is this helping us learn? How do we know it’s safe?”).
- Collaborate with students to create clear rules for device use, including internet browsers and applications (e.g., an adult must be present for online use; notify an adult about prompts; ask before selecting a new game).
- Provide structured choices between safe and unsafe options, asking students to identify and explain safe choices; use picture cards or other visuals to reinforce understanding.
- Share strategies with families to supervise technology use at home and reinforce vocabulary and rules, such as “ask an adult first.”

PK.EC.3

With support, demonstrates appropriate use of simple commands and information necessary to complete a task using age appropriate technology tools..

- Introduce coding concepts by engaging students in hands-on, active learning games that teach sequencing and directional thinking (e.g., arranging arrows to create a path for peers to follow).
- Use instructional games that follow a simple sequence (i.e., a student gives directions such as “four hops, two big steps, etc.” to the group on how to get to the X on the floor).
- Offer developmentally appropriate tools such as robots, color-coding light boards, snap circuits, or marble runs to practice command sequences.

## Standard: Ethics and Culture (EC)

Students demonstrate competence and confidence in digital computer skills.

### Preschool Learning Outcomes

Students will:

### Preschool Teaching Practices

Effective preschool teachers:

- Provide opportunities for children to use technology tools with adult support to explore information, such as asking about the weather.  
Support children in checking the information by making real-world observations.
- Help children understand that technology tools are created by people and are used to help us learn.

# Appendix

## Learning Environment

### Introduction

A supportive preschool learning environment promotes the development of students' critical thinking skills, fosters awareness of diversity and multiculturalism, and supports enthusiasm and engagement as cornerstones of effective learning approaches. The environment nurtures students' capacity to engage deeply in individual and group activities and projects. Such an environment is created by educators through interactions with indoor and outdoor environments that offer opportunities for students to set goals and persist in following through with their plans while acquiring new knowledge and skills through purposeful play. Carefully planned instruction, materials, furnishings, and daily routines operate in concert with a broad range of interpersonal relationships—among adults and students, among adults, and among students—to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment. In this setting, each student's optimal development across every domain (e.g., language, social, physical, cognitive, and social-emotional) will be supported, sustained, and enhanced.

While the adults in the preschool environment provide the conditions and materials that influence how students play and scaffold learning, allowing for more sophisticated levels of interaction and expression, it is the student who determines the roles and rules shaping the play. The learning environment accommodates planned and unplanned, as well as structured and unstructured experiences. Unstructured play consumes a substantial portion of the day. Structured activities include daily routines that provide young students with needed stability and familiarity (e.g., circle time, small-group time, and lunch), as well as learning activities that integrate preschool content and achieve specific goals planned by adults. For both structured and unstructured activities, the learning environments are welcoming, safe, healthy, clean, warm, and stimulating.

### Physical Environment

The indoor and outdoor environments offer students a myriad of opportunities to practice and learn new skills in all developmental areas. A preschool classroom (indoor and outdoor) is clean and free of clutter and safety hazards. The materials that students access are interesting, age-appropriate, and encourage hands-on learning. Materials are stored in labeled, student-friendly containers (in English and the individual students' home language). These containers are easily accessible, allowing students to use materials and equipment freely and independently. All furniture and equipment, both indoors and outdoors, are convenient for easy care and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.

In looking at optimal environments for young students, three main components can be established for indoor and outdoor learning environments:

- **Safety:** The physical environment is clean, organized, and has student-sized equipment with smooth surfaces and corners. Adults must station themselves both indoors and outdoors, maintaining clear sight lines of all students for safety and supervision.
- **Culture:** The classroom environment reflects the identities and experiences of its students and staff. Photos of students and their families are displayed to create a sense of belonging, and labels are posted in students' home languages alongside English to support language development. Soft, home-like furnishings promote comfort and familiarity. In addition, materials such as dramatic play clothing and food items, books, dolls, and toys represent the diversity of the classroom community and portray a variety of races, ethnicities, and family structures. Programs are intentional about partnering with families to source or create these materials to ensure authenticity and cultural accuracy, rather than relying solely on purchased items. This collaboration strengthens family engagement and validates the cultural heritage of each child.
- **Room arrangement:** Areas of the classroom are clearly defined and organized. Active areas, such as Blocks and Dramatic Play, are away from quiet areas, such as Writing and Library. Materials are carefully selected by educators and displayed to encourage autonomy and learning. Most familiar items are intended to encourage students to explore, while teachers extend learning by replacing or adding specific materials that reflect individual cultures, languages, needs, abilities, and developing interests.

## Indoor Environment

In setting up the preschool classroom, learning centers are organized by educators for students to engage in specific types of exploration and activities. The environment is safe, healthy, respectful, engaging, and appropriately stimulating and challenging for each student. A classroom aligned with Developmentally Appropriate Practice will not only reflect the overall classroom culture, but it will also reflect the students as individual learners, showing respect for their families and cultures. A preschool classroom has a warm and welcoming, homelike feel, building a sense of community and security. This is accomplished by educators to make classrooms student-centered, creating a sense of softness in color, furnishings, lighting, and materials that provide young students with access to varied opportunities.

The philosophy of learning through play is essential for developing high-quality indoor classroom environments. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Students (NAEYC), “Play is an essential element of a student’s life. It helps students achieve mastery in certain skills, and they learn to have control over their environment. The environment and play are essential elements that support each other.” (National Association for the Education of Young Students: Implementing the Early Childhood Curriculum, 2015). The indoor classroom environment embodies this philosophy, as it fosters a young student’s natural curiosity to explore and discover the world around them. Students’ play is their work. When young students are supported by educators with environments that value and respect their natural curiosity, it gives them a place and a time for learning that cannot be achieved through completing a worksheet. For example, in playing restaurant, students write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and make out checks (National Association for the Education of Young Students: Implementing the Early Childhood Curriculum, 2015).

The classroom environment is often referred to as the third teacher. The environment is designed to support and “Communicate values to students and what we hope they will experience during the time they spend with us each day” (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, April 2020). It is a welcoming, inclusive space that is responsive to students’ differing abilities and cultural and linguistic characteristics. It is a safe, clean, organized, and well-managed setting. A purposeful arrangement built on knowledge, research, and best practices is necessary. The physical arrangement of the classroom includes clear traffic patterns that do not interfere with students’ play or encourage any undesirable behaviors, such as running. Additionally, the environment reflects the diverse interests of students and their varying developmental needs and abilities across all developmental areas.

Classroom arrangement and its appearance influence student and adult behavior. The environment is flexible in accommodating individual and small/large group play with structured and unstructured experiences. Learning centers, such as blocks and dramatic play, provide opportunities for active learning; however, there are also spaces for daily routines such as eating and resting. Classrooms include provisions for natural light and the separation of noisy/quiet areas (National Association for the Education of Young Students, Implementing the Early Childhood Curriculum, 2015).

Materials are plentiful and support the primary focus of the area while catering to the varied stages of development and diverse abilities of preschoolers. Literacy materials such as paper, Post-it notes, index cards, and writing instruments are available, so preschoolers may create signs, recipes, and drawings as appropriate. Furniture is provided for the organization and storage of materials, and an appropriate amount of space is necessary in areas to accommodate specific numbers of students.

Independently choosing and engaging in learning centers allows students opportunities to explore and expand their interests. Interacting with books, materials, and technology helps students investigate topics that are meaningful to them while developing skills such as brainstorming, making predictions, and solving problems. The following is an example of materials that should be provided for each learning center (not an exhaustive list).

- **Blocks:** Supports construction, spatial reasoning, and collaborative play with an emphasis on early math and engineering. Suggested materials include unit blocks, large hollow blocks, blocks of varied textures and materials, and accessories such as vehicles, signs, and figures. Incorporating gender-neutral materials, including blocks in a range of colors (e.g., pink), helps avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. Using gender-neutral language—for example, “police officer” instead of “policeman”—further promotes inclusivity (Reza, 2022).
- **Dramatic Play:** Promotes extended pretend-play scenarios created by students. Suggested materials include child-sized kitchen furniture and equipment (pots, pans, dishes, silverware) and culturally diverse items such as clothing, empty food packages, dolls, and play food. A neutral yet inviting color palette helps prevent the reinforcement of hidden color biases (Reza, 2022).

- **Library/Listening/Writing:** Fosters early literacy and writing development. Suggested materials include books across genres and languages that reflect the classroom community, student-made books, prerecorded stories with headphones, and writing materials such as several types of paper, hole punchers, stickers, envelopes, markers, pencils, and crayons.
- **Art:** Encourages creative expression through a wide range of materials and tools. Students practice fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination by cutting, molding clay, or painting at an easel. Suggested materials include an easel, paint, brushes, crayons, glue, scissors, paper, and collage items such as fabric, ribbon, yarn, buttons, and crayons/markers representing diverse skin tones, allowing students to depict themselves accurately (Reza, 2022).
- **Manipulatives/Games:** Supports problem-solving, early literacy and math concepts, and fine motor development while promoting sharing and turn-taking. Suggested materials include puzzles, games, beads and string, bristle blocks, Legos, Unifix cubes, and counters. Materials should vary in difficulty to meet individual developmental needs.
- **Science/Discovery:** Encourages exploration of natural materials and simple scientific tools. Suggested materials include prisms, magnifying glasses, magnets, pattern blocks, pegboards, sand, and water tables, measuring tools, an aquarium, and a scale (National Association for the Education of Young Students, 2015).
- **Quiet/Cozy:** Provides a calm, enclosed space where students can regulate their emotions and take a break from stimulation. Suggested materials include a soft mat, visuals depicting different emotions, and items that support a range of sensory needs.
- **Music:** Offers opportunities for singing, listening, instrument play, and movement. Suggested materials include rhythm sticks, egg shakers, scarves, bells, drums, castanets, and instruments representing various cultures. These materials promote interaction and enhance cultural diversity within the music area.
- **Technology:** Provides interactive tools that support current themes and student interests. Suggested materials include a tablet, desktop computer with a mouse, and developmentally appropriate learning software, a camera, and a calculator.

## Outdoor Environment

Students who have daily access to play and explore the outdoors experience increased physical and mental health benefits as well as cognitive development growth. (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2019). For example, natural environments allow students the opportunity to move freely, play vigorously, and engage in intentional movements. Unstructured outdoor free play is designed to be, “So important to optimal student development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every student.” Playing outside fosters resilience, decision making, language, communication, resourcefulness, purpose, responsibility, and connection to nature.

Daily access to the outdoors offers students a wide variety of integrated experiences. Natural spaces provide an equalizer for cognitive, social, and ethnic differences in all learners. Playing in nature includes many benefits for students, such as improved mood, better attention/focus, responsibility, and resourcefulness. Outdoor unstructured learning experiences support developing preschoolers measured risk-taking skills while being supported and guided by an adult. To support a safe outdoor environment, a significant amount of direct adult supervision is necessary to ensure the safety of students engaging in gross motor activities.

An optimal outdoor learning environment consists of multiple surfaces such as grass, sand, and blacktop. A barrier, such as a fence, must be present to enclose the space (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2019). Preschoolers must have unstructured opportunities to play, run, ride trikes, and explore an assortment of other wheeled toys. The play structure must be developmentally appropriate and encourage climbing and sliding. Where appropriate, a nature-based space must be included in the outdoor environment. Educators are responsible for creating space for students to investigate nature by looking for insects, sticks, and pinecones, examining rocks, digging a hole in the dirt, or writing with a stick in the sand. Outdoor gardens teach students how to care for living things and to enjoy the beauty of flowers and other plants.

## Outdoor Environment Materials and Areas

The outdoor space has well defined areas which encourage exploration of the natural environment and a variety of materials which provide a wide range of experiences, accessible to all students and their unique developmental stages.

- **Grass Space:** Provides an open natural area where students can move freely, explore, and engage safely in the outdoor environment. *Suggested materials include natural grass surfaces that offer ample space for movement and exploration.*

- **Wheeled Toys:** Supports large motor development as students balance, coordinate, and steer. Pushing and pulling wagons strengthens the core, shoulder, and back muscles. *Suggested materials include tricycles, wagons, wheelbarrows, and cones.*
- **Sandbox with Cover:** Encourages digging, building, investigating, and problem-solving. Students use containers and natural materials to create structures and engage in imaginative play. *Suggested materials include buckets, shovels, molds, natural elements, and access to water.*
- **Climbing and Sliding Structures:** Promote balance, coordination, and upper body strength as students climb, slide, and navigate varied surfaces. *Suggested materials include secured climbing equipment appropriate for preschoolers, as well as log stumps, rocks, boulders, sawhorses, straw bales, and cardboard boxes.*
- **Looping Pathways:** Provide routes for walking, biking, and observing environmental changes such as puddles, ice, and seasonal shifts. *Suggested materials include pavement, dirt paths, and chalk lined pathways.*
- **Swings:** Engage students in rhythmic, repetitive movement that supports whole body awareness, coordination, core strength, fine motor development, and balance. *Suggested materials include developmentally appropriate anchored swings that support consistent, repetitive motion.*
- **Shade and Sunny Areas:** Allow students to experience different weather conditions and understand how temperature and sunlight affect their bodies. *Suggested materials include trees, awnings, and umbrellas.*
- **Multisensory Garden:** Encourages students to care for living things, observe growth, and explore natural artifacts. *Suggested materials include soil, grass, trees, seeds, shovels, trowels, garden gloves, buckets, and water.*
- **Construction/Woodworking:** Provides opportunities to measure, build, create, compare sizes and shapes, develop spatial awareness, and strengthen both large and small muscles. *Suggested materials include woodworking tools and accessories, wood pieces, a worktable, and crates.*

## Structures and Routines

A positive preschool experience is essential to a student’s development. This growth is supported daily through a well-designed physical environment that promotes structure, predictability, clear routines, and effective transitions (National Association for the Education of Young Students, 2016). A strong framework of expectations and activities helps young learners feel safe by providing familiarity and consistency. Because preschool classrooms are typically organized using a center-based approach, classroom organization, daily schedules, and transitions become key components that support these structures.

Classrooms with consistent schedules and routines help students understand expectations and remain engaged, attentive, and active participants in learning. A flexible classroom structure also allows students to make choices and participate in activities that match their interests. Predictable schedules offer stability and security, while embedded transitions contribute to a well-organized learning environment. Routines remain responsive to individual needs so that students feel empowered to act independently and confidently.

Structuring the preschool day lays the foundation for learning and development. Clear routines promote self-sufficiency and provide students with a sense of security as they learn self-discipline. Thoughtfully planned routines help build a cohesive classroom community, and consistency is essential for effective classroom management. When routines are predictable, students understand the sequence of the day, know what is expected of them, and feel reassured about what will happen next. This predictability supports independence, flexibility, and a reduction in challenging behaviors. A daily schedule should be followed consistently and include a balance of active and quieter periods.

Classroom structures are monitored regularly to ensure they continue to meet students’ developmental needs. Adjustments may be necessary throughout the year as students grow or as classroom dynamics shift. Preschool programs are not “one size fits all,” and structures should evolve to support the needs of the current group of learners.

Routines foster security, self-discipline, and independence. Well planned routines create a consistent classroom community where expectations are clear and students feel safe. Predictable routines help children develop self-control and personal responsibility. When implemented consistently, routines support positive behaviors and contribute to emotional, cognitive, and social development.

Routines begin on the first day of school and continue throughout the year. Visual schedules help students understand what they are doing, what they have done, and what comes next, supporting their ability to plan and organize their day. Routines must also be flexible to meet individual needs. Younger students may require shorter whole group activities, dual language learners may demonstrate skills in their home language and English, and students with disabilities may need modifications or accommodations. Routines promote independence by offering structured opportunities for practice, supported through intentional modeling, and consistent prompting from educators.

Routines are strengthened through repetition and experience. They should include ample time for play, exploration, and following personal interests. Daily routines also create opportunities for conversation and self-expression, supporting language and developmental needs while aligning with the chosen preschool curriculum.

**Examples of routine-based supports include:**

- Alternating passive and active activities to maintain engagement during large group times (e.g., singing a Hello Song).
- Introducing new skills, reinforcing established ones, and providing opportunities for students to share what they know.
- Offering individualized instruction for students who need additional support.
- Setting the tone for rest time by dimming lights and playing quiet music.
- Referring to nap time as “quiet time” to help students associate it with resting calmly.
- Allowing students to follow their interests and explore freely.
- Facilitating interest-driven conversations and interactions in well-developed learning centers.
- Supporting students in independently preparing for mealtimes (e.g., setting tables).
- Providing opportunities for interaction with students from other classrooms.

## Transitions

A key element in fostering a predictable classroom environment is the intentional use of transitions. Transition activities—such as calming strategies and self-regulation techniques—help prevent negative behaviors by clarifying expectations and supporting students’ ability to manage themselves. Smooth, well-planned transitions guide students from one activity to the next and contribute to a sense of order throughout the school day. However, too many transitions can disrupt predictability, so thoughtful planning helps keep their number manageable and purposeful. The classroom environment should support transitions that are structured, flexible, and engaging.

Effective transition strategies reinforce self-regulation by helping students understand what is expected. Depending on the needs of the class, transitions may be individualized or completed as a group. Unplanned or disorganized transitions often lead to disruption, so they should be intentional and guided by realistic time frames—not too short and not too long. Teachers prepare students by using signals such as songs, chants, rhymes, sounds, pictures, or other multisensory cues. When unexpected events arise, these moments become opportunities to teach students how to wait appropriately and adapt with confidence.

## Intentional Teaching & Building a Classroom Community

Intentional preschool classroom environments are structured around teachers with well-developed knowledge of the students in the classroom. An intentional community encourages students to express their individuality and respect to all learners. To support all learners effectively, educators must promote and maintain the classroom as a caring and warm community by creating a positive learning environment. To achieve this, preschool students need to feel safe and comfortable within their classroom.

Intentional teaching values students as individuals with their own characteristics, paths, nuances, and prior experience. Intentional teachers have a thorough knowledge of how students typically develop and learn. They gather data about the interests, strengths, and abilities of the students through ongoing observation, documentation, and authentic assessment and use this information to plan interactions, scaffolds, questions, activities, and routines. Intentional teachers have and use a wide range of instructional strategies. They make intentional decisions about when to use a given strategy to support the diverse ways students learn and the specific content and skills they are learning. They know that students construct knowledge through active investigation, representation, and reflection; they recognize that meaningful learning is integrated; they understand that communication is central

to learning. At the heart of intentional teaching is effective adult-student interactions. Intentional teaching does not happen by chance; it is planned, thoughtful, and purposeful.

## **Adult/Student Interactions**

Students learn within the context of relationships. Ideally, students and adults develop strong, positive relationships. It is when these relationships have been established that students are able to thrive and flourish. While developing positive relationships with students, educators need to keep in mind developmentally appropriate expectations and the abilities and interests of each student. By creating and establishing positive teacher-student, and student-student relationships in the classroom, the community will begin to establish classroom friendships and trusting relationships. This will help transform the classroom from a place students have to be into a place they want to be.

## **Peer to Peer Interactions**

Students benefit from being a member of a group as well as having one-to-one interactions with peers. For students to develop social competencies, they need a variety of experiences that will allow them to interpret social situations. It is also important for educators to examine their preconceived notions of the intentions driving social behaviors, as students learn within the context of social interactions. Students benefit when educators are intentional about encouraging peer interactions. Educators model appropriate responses and use their knowledge of each student to be initiative-taking and prepared for possible social dilemmas. Each student has unique characteristics, and these differences guide how teachers plan experiences for large groups, small groups, and one-to-one interactions. For instance, a student's temperament may suggest that they need time to warm up to a group. Acknowledging this unique characteristic of a student will help the teacher think of ways to support the student as they enter play situations with their peers.

## **Respectful and Inclusive Classroom**

A respectful early childhood classroom is reflective of the various needs, interests, and cultural community of the students, staff, and families. All abilities and languages are valued, supported, and maintained through appropriate materials, equipment, and responsive interactions. Inclusion is a value that says that all students belong, regardless of their abilities, gender, race, or ethnic background. Preschool inclusion is more than just physical placement; it is an intentional practice that fosters interaction, participation, and a sense of belonging for all students. High-quality inclusion is built through structured, integrated activities that go beyond proximity, with daily classroom practices that actively engage every student. When including all students in early childhood settings, some planning will be needed to make sure it is successful for everyone. Students' needs and interests are reflected throughout the planned curriculum, daily routine, and formal and informal interactions. Most of all, a respectful early childhood classroom is a student-centered environment that challenges young students consistently, through appropriate activities and interactions that support the development of executive functioning. When students feel respected and valued, they become comfortable and feel pride in and for the classroom. An inclusive learning environment supports the development of social identities that value all groups equally, without favoring one over another.

## **Accommodations and Modifications**

The teacher, program staff, and family must work together to modify the classroom accordingly to meet the individual needs of all students, including students who are linguistically diverse and/or with IEP's or 504 plans. It is imperative for the teacher to understand the abilities that the students in the classroom may have. A developmentally appropriate approach is achieved in a variety of ways; most importantly, it must be based on individual needs, interests, and development. While every adaptation needed cannot always be predicted, the teacher must work alongside the family and relevant staff to plan for as many of the necessary adaptations as possible. This type of individualized planning will help to ensure classroom and developmental successes. Below are strategies to ensure accommodations and modifications and intentional and meaningful:

- Provide instructional modifications, both planned and developed in real time (e.g., proximity of adults during large group experiences, photos as opposed to animation to support the daily schedule, and picture boards that illustrate the sequence of an activity or routine event). These adaptations or modifications must be based on developmentally appropriate practices.

- Implement various methods to check for student understanding (e.g., ask students to show a thumbs up/down when answering questions and ask students to describe the process of their work).
- Identify any potential times during the school day when adaptations might make an activity more successful (e.g., proximity of an adult to a student during large group times, providing students with wait times so that they feel the success of answering a question, and provide opportunities where students build attending skills and provide positive descriptive feedback when they are able to achieve goals).
- Collaborate with colleagues, families and other related staff members when developing modifications.
- Plan how to incorporate individual goals and objectives into ongoing activities.

## Classroom Management

Effective preschool educators are purposeful in building a classroom community, use positive approaches to classroom management and encourage students' ability to self-regulate and solve problems. When a classroom is effectively managed, the teacher avoids the need for punitive consequences and establishes a classroom of self-regulated problem solvers.

Self-regulation and social skills develop gradually within environments that are predictable, structured, age-appropriate, responsive, and nurturing. Educators play a critical role by proactively teaching acceptable behaviors and creating experiences that foster self-regulation. Just like emergent literacy and math skills, social-emotional and self-regulation skills require time, intentional instruction, and consistent support.

It is essential that young students have warm, positive, and nurturing relationships with educators that encourage positive self-concepts. Evidence-based support for building self-regulation and classroom community include techniques such as providing positive descriptive feedback and encouragement, intentionally teaching friendship and community skills like taking turns, sharing, and learning about emotions, conflict resolution and problem solving. When strategies that support these areas of a young student's development are implemented in a safe, predictable, and age-appropriate environment, students develop healthy social-emotional foundations.

## The Developmental Screening Measure

Developmental screening tools are brief, standardized instruments administered individually to identify students who may be at risk for developmental delays in areas such as language, cognition, or motor skills. These screenings serve as an initial step rather than a comprehensive evaluation and should not be used as the sole basis for major decisions regarding placement, enrollment, or instructional planning. Their primary purpose is to flag potential concerns that warrant further diagnostic assessment—not to measure ongoing progress or mastery of skills. Programs should ensure that screening tools are research-based, reliable, valid, and equitable; administered with fidelity by classroom teachers or as per the directions in the screening tool chosen; and used only for their intended purpose of identifying potential developmental concerns. Screening practices are culturally and linguistically responsive, reflecting each child's background, home language, and experiences. Families must be actively engaged through clear, respectful communication about the purpose, process, and results of screenings. When screening results indicate possible developmental delays or disabilities, programs must follow up with a comprehensive evaluation and referral for additional services or supports, as appropriate. In short, screening tools provide a quick check for potential concerns, not a definitive measure of a child's abilities.

## The Documentation and Assessment Process

### Introduction

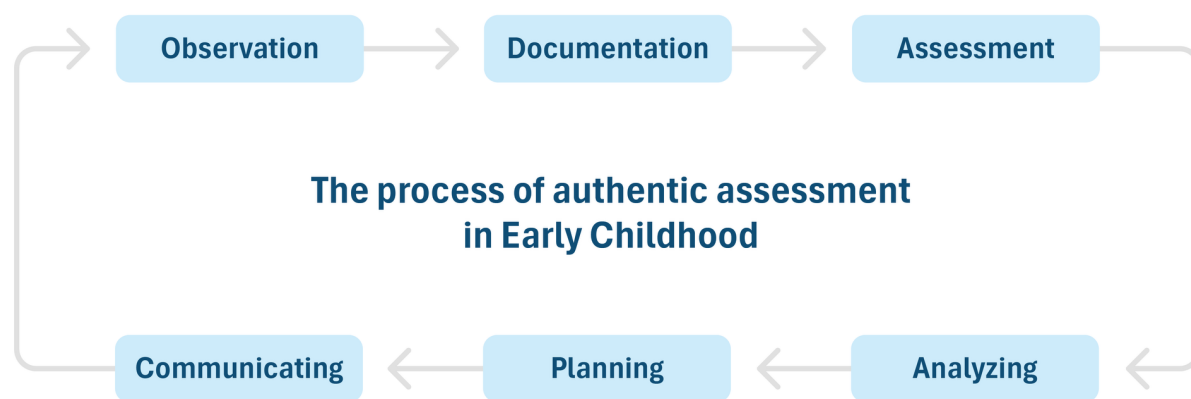
The process of authentic documentation and assessment of young students is an ongoing cycle which includes observation, identification, collection, description, interpretation, and then application, based on evidence of early learning to make intentional and individualized instructional decisions. Educators use this process of observation, documentation, and assessment, along with family input, to create individual goals and continue to assess the progress of students towards meeting these goals.

Careful documentation and assessment increase the teacher’s understanding of student development, assist in understanding the needs of the students in a specific class, and enhance the teacher’s ability to reflect on the instructional program. It is essential that teachers approach this process with an equity mindset, recognizing and addressing their own implicit biases in the interpretation and application of assessment data. Educators should remain mindful of how their cultural background, expectations, and prior experiences may influence how

they perceive and document students’ behavior, communication, and progress. Such reflections also assist teachers in articulating assessment purposes with appropriate community members and communicating assessment results with parents. It also affords the opportunity to individualize and meet the goals of students with needs requiring differentiated instruction.

Refer to the visual below which demonstrates the ongoing process of authentic documentation and assessment in early childhood:

Below are best practices in each area outlined to successfully complete this process in the most effective and developmentally appropriate manner.



**Observation: The first step in establishing a system and gathering authentic data.**

The observation of young students is crucial to appropriate documentation and assessment. However, observation is a skill that must be developed and perfected by educators over time. In the process of observing students, the educator should make use of the following techniques: pictures, anecdotes, videotaping, journals, and recording of students’ conversations.

Observation takes place naturally in the classroom and all settings in which learning takes place and should always be implemented in a developmentally appropriate manner. While spontaneous unplanned observations provide educators with important assessment information about students and should be utilized, educators should also plan for systematic data collection which is related to instruction. As part of the daily classroom routine, observation is the most authentic form of gathering data for assessment. Observing what students do every day is the best place to start when creating a real-life profile for each student. The educator observes patterns in behavior reflecting motivation to learn, explore, or investigate a particular thing. These patterns are evidence that a student consistently exhibits these behaviors. Appropriate things to observe include problem-solving strategies, patterns of social interaction, preferences for large-group, small-group, or solitary play in the classroom / playground.

Observation should take place regularly and with a specific purpose; observe students at different times of the day, in different settings throughout the school / center, always observing new possibilities (e.g., if a student is having trouble, could the environment or circumstances be changed to assist the student?). It is most appropriate to observe the usual demeanor of the student, not unusual behavior, or bad days and to observe and document things the students say and do.

Finally, prior to observation, determine the developmental area or areas to be assessed (e.g., spoken language, art, early literacy, symbolic play, motor skills, math concepts, creativity, peer relationships, etc.) and focus on that specific area during the observation

## **Documentation: A system for recording information objectively and with purpose.**

Documentation, a preliminary stage in the assessment process, focuses on identifying, collecting, and describing the evidence of learning in an objective, nonjudgmental manner.

Teachers of young students take the time to identify a student’s learning goals, collect records of language, mathematical thinking, and work samples, and then carefully describe and review the evidence. Documentation of students’ learning should be linked to a set of clearly defined learning goals. Documentation should support evidence of intentionally providing opportunities for students to make progress toward meeting learning standards to determine school readiness. Furthermore, the documentation process should consist of materials that are racially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, especially when using such materials to assess English Language Learners and students with diverse needs.

Educators should develop a systematic and intentional process of collecting meaningful samples of a student’s work that demonstrate growth and development across multiple domains. When choosing the most appropriate documentation, identify those that best demonstrate development: student related display, artwork, writing, photos, dictated stories, book choices, graphs. Regularly create a collection of samples with students’ and family input. Develop a reliable storage system for the samples of students’ work (e.g., digital portfolio, portfolio assessment systems); use collaborative opportunities to document with colleagues to gain additional perspectives on each student’s development (e.g., Professional Learning Communities). Finally, connect the students’ work to the learning goals and make sure the samples show all the levels of the students’ development.

The curriculum developer plays a critical role in ensuring that assessment collection aligns with program goals, state standards, and developmental benchmarks. They provide information on which types of artifacts best represent learning objectives, recommend strategies for integrating portfolio assessment into daily instruction, and support teachers in maintaining consistency and fidelity throughout the process. When determining the number of portfolio items, districts often ask how many artifacts should be collected per content area. While there is no universal standard, school administrators, in consultation with curriculum developers, must establish expectations based on program goals and state guidelines. Determinations should be informed by research-based practices, which often suggest collecting multiple samples over time to show growth rather than adhering to a fixed number. The focus should remain on quality and developmental representation rather than quantity.

## **Assessment Data to Support Students with Disabilities**

Assessment data for students with disabilities must be valid, reliable, and reflective of each student’s individual needs. Formal assessments conducted by a district Child Study Team (CST) serve as the established baseline, while classroom and individualized assessment data collected in the least restrictive environment build upon the student’s strengths and inform instructional planning. The same assessment methods used for all students apply to students with differing needs, ensuring equity and consistency in measuring growth and progress.

Related service providers—such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists—play a critical role in supporting students during the development of portfolios and other individualized documentation. Each provider contributes based on the student’s needs and the requirements outlined in the IEP. Consistent communication among educators, related service providers, and families ensures that assessment data and portfolios reflect the whole student, capturing their current developmental stage and supporting targeted instructional decisions

## **Ensuring an equitable process of assessment**

The primary purpose of assessing young children is to help educators understand each student as an individual, a learner, and a member of the classroom community. Assessment informs educators of students’ strengths, areas for growth, and developmental needs, enabling the planning of appropriate activities for both individuals and groups. This process guides instruction aligned to the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and supports the goals of students and their families. Programs should select assessment tools that align with the district’s curriculum and address all learning domains outlined in the standards. It is important to recognize the limitations of assessments and avoid relying on a single data point for making critical decisions about students.

The assessment process should focus intentionally on learning goals across content areas, include multiple forms of evidence collected over time, and support educators and families in creating individualized strategies for student growth. It identifies students who may require additional support or intervention and tracks progress along a continuum of development. Family input is essential, as parents provide insights into their child’s development, interests, behaviors, and learning styles. By sharing observations, cultural perspectives, and milestones observed at home, families help educators develop a more complete understanding of each student. Engaging parents as partners strengthens the home–school connection and ensures that assessment reflects learning across multiple environments.

Assessment information must connect to the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and contribute to understanding each student’s growth. This information helps families recognize their child’s strengths and challenges and provides guidance for extending learning opportunities at home.

Formative assessment occurs naturally within daily routines rather than through structured tests or drills. Educators observe and document learning during play, exploration, and classroom activities. Examples include observing students during centers, collecting authentic work samples, photographing or video-recording developmental milestones, and taking anecdotal notes during routines such as snack time, outdoor play, or group discussions. These observations allow teachers to adjust instruction in real time, scaffold learning, and plan future activities that meet individual needs. By embedding assessment within daily interactions, programs ensure students remain engaged and comfortable while teachers gather meaningful, actionable data.

### **Valid and Reliable Assessment**

Individual- and group-administered norm-referenced achievement tests are inappropriate for assessing preschool-aged children and should not be used with this population. These assessments are designed to measure discrete skills rather than overall development. At the preschool level, isolated tasks—such as identifying letters, numbers, or objects—do not provide a comprehensive picture of a child’s developmental progress. In addition, achievement tests assess learning outside of meaningful, real-world contexts and do not reflect how young children learn through everyday experiences. As a result, these assessments offer limited value for understanding children’s learning processes or for informing instructional planning and teaching practice.

### **Analyzing and aggregating your data intentionally**

Once observations and documentation are entered into a reliable assessment system, sufficient data should be available for aggregation and analysis. Staff intentionally compile data from multiple sources and analyze it to inform instructional decisions and support individual student growth. Data should be aggregated across multiple criteria, such as student, class, location, demographics, areas of development or learning, and specific skills. Online assessment systems typically support these functions. Data should also be examined in multiple ways to identify trends and determine areas requiring additional focus or support.

Using a Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach, staff can collaboratively analyze data to identify patterns of student learning, areas of strength, and areas in need of improvement. Teachers and school leaders should use these findings to guide instructional planning, professional preparation, and ongoing training needs. Data analysis should also serve as the foundation for continuous program improvement, including monitoring progress toward program goals. Effective analysis incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance instruction and deepen understanding of individual student learning and thinking.

### **Using your aggregated assessment data to inform decision making**

Once student assessment data have been analyzed, educators have a foundation for curriculum planning and for establishing goals at the student, family, and program levels. Assessment data, including aggregated and analyzed results, should be used by staff to plan and implement responsive practices that address the needs of the students and families served. This includes setting classroom and individual student goals, informing program-level planning and decision-making, guiding policy development, identifying professional learning needs, and establishing focus areas for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Assessment findings should be used to plan whole-group, small-group, and individualized instruction to improve and enrich student learning. Data supports instructional differentiation by identifying students who require additional support as well as those who would benefit from enrichment due to demonstrated mastery of skills.

Transition documentation from preschool to the elementary setting should include data derived from authentic assessments that reflect a child’s developmental level. Achievement tests are not developmentally appropriate measures for documenting student learning during this transition.

Assessment data should also be used to plan meaningful support for families, including workshops, meetings, and connections to community resources that promote student development and address individual and family needs.

### **Collaborating Through Shared Plans and Input**

A comprehensive and transparent communication process actively involves all stakeholders. Families should be engaged as partners in the accurate assessment of young children. Information gathered through the assessment process should be used to support families’ understanding of their child’s strengths and areas of need. Educators are strongly encouraged to collaborate with families by sharing strategies to extend learning opportunities at home and by offering ongoing communication through both informal interactions and formal meetings.

Communication should also occur among staff members who support the same students and families to ensure continuity of services and support. Assessment data should be shared, as appropriate and in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), among agencies serving the same students or families, particularly during transitions between programs or schools.

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