

Early Childhood Curriculum Guide



Pacific Southwest District Early Childhood Curriculum Guide

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One of the critical pieces of the National Lutheran Schools Accreditation Process for our early childhood centers is the development, adoption and implementation of a written curriculum. This guide, based on state standards and several other resources, has been created in the hopes it will assist you, your preschool staff and governing board to identify a more formal approach to curriculum development and implementation throughout your center. As we begin, let us review several key principles that are the basis of every excellent early childhood program.

1. Children learn best when they have developed the social and emotional components that define the behaviors and attitudes that enable them to function productively and collaboratively in school and society. (California Preschool Learning Foundations, 2008)

2. Children are best prepared when early education focuses on the whole child, covering all domains – social, emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual. (National Research Council, 2008)

*3. The “how-to’s” of teaching young children include setting up environments, supporting children’s self-initiated play, selecting appropriate materials and planning and implementing teacher-guided learning activities. Two major considerations underlie the “how-to’s” of teaching. First, teachers can effectively foster early learning by thoughtfully considering the preschool learning foundations as they plan environments and activities. And second, during every step in the planning for young children’s learning, teachers tap into the **prominent role of play**. Teachers can best support young children both by encouraging the rich learning that occurs in children’s self-initiated play and introducing purposeful instructional activities that playfully engage preschoolers in learning. (California Preschool Learning Foundations, 2008)*

*4. **Purposeful play** promotes active involvement in learning and provides children with opportunities to practice language, math, science and other skills in context (natural settings). Additionally, **through play**, children develop social-interaction skills, extend and expand their understanding of the world, and acquire critical cognitive skills including problem-solving and decision-making. As children grow, they expand their ‘executive functions’ to include the ability to focus and ignore distractions, retain and use new information, plan and revise actions as needed, and inhibit impulsive behaviors. (Miller and Almon 2009)*

In keeping with these stated principles, the following outcomes are set forth as integral to the development of a curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child. While these outcomes are grouped in domains, early childhood educators understand the essential premise that children do not learn in isolation but through integration. Therefore, these domains are interrelated and should be considered components of the entire curriculum.

PSD-LCMS Early Childhood Cabinet
PSD-LCMS Early Childhood Education Accreditation Commission

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Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is the cornerstone of our Lutheran Early Childhood centers. Therefore, the **spiritual** domain is presented first, in keeping with the mission and ministry of our Lutheran early childhood centers to share the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ with young children and their families.

Through the Word and Spirit of God, people of all ages:

- May know God, especially His seeking and forgiving love in Christ;
- May respond in faith and grow up into Christian maturity;
- See themselves as the reconciled, redeemed children of God and individual members of Christ's body; the church;
- Live happily in peace with God, themselves, and their fellow human beings;
- Express their joy in worship of God and in loving service to others;
- Value all of God's creative work in His world and the church;
- Witness openly to Christ as the Savior of all people;
- Participate actively in God's mission to the church and the world;
- Live in Christian hope.

Additionally, the children will learn:

- The Bible is God's true Word.
- God loves and cares for His people.
- Jesus is their best friend.
- Prayer is talking to God.

Through their personal experiences, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the children will expand their understanding of the Triune God:

- GOD – Father, Creator, Giver of all good things, Loves all people, provides all we need to live
- JESUS – Savior, Redeemer, true Son of GOD, forgives all my sin, Giver of grace and mercy
- HOLY SPIRIT – Sanctifier and Motivator of our faith, empowers us to live as disciples, Counselor, Prays on our behalf

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Socio-Emotional Standards

1. Self-Awareness

- Identify body parts
- Identify a variety of feelings (happy, sad, angry, etc.)
- Use words to describe one's own feelings
- Begin to develop a positive self-image
- Begin to develop an awareness of one's own abilities

2. Interpersonal Awareness

- Begin to understand similarities and differences of people
- Begin to understand the feelings of others
- Begin to understand the role of teachers and caregivers

3. Self-Regulation

- Take care of personal needs
- Understand and follow social and classroom rules
- Accept responsibility for and consequences of one's own actions
- Follow directions and redirections from teachers and caregivers
- Accept changes in the environment (transitions, substitutes, etc.)
- Completes a task

4. Self-Expression

- Communicate preferences
- Make choices

5. Communication

- Ask for help when needed
- Uses verbal and nonverbal communication effectively
- Develop age-appropriate attention span
- Follow one and two-step directions.

6. Social Interactions

- Participate appropriately in group situations
- Share and take turns
- Resolve peer conflicts appropriately

7. Stages of Play

- Actively engage in playful activities, including games
- Initiate play and assume leadership roles
- Play with a common purpose

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English Language Arts Standards

Foundational Skills

1. Print Concepts – demonstrate understanding of basic print concepts
 - Follow print from left to right and top to bottom
 - Distinguish between a letter and a word
 - Begin to recognize letters
2. Phonological Awareness – Demonstrate a beginning understanding of spoken words, syllables and sounds
 - Recognize and produce rhyming words
3. Phonics and Word Recognition
 - Recognize own name and simple words in print
 - Associate sounds with letters

Literature

1. Key Ideas and Details
 - Express and recall key details from narrative pictures
 - Recall key ideas from a narrative text
 - Retell a favorite narrative text
 - Sequence events in pictures
 - Sequence events in a favorite narrative text
 - Answer questions regarding characters and events of a favorite text
2. Craft and Structure
 - Identify the meaning of words in text
 - Identify the components of a book (front cover, back cover, title page)
3. Range of Reading/Level of Text Complexity
 - Engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding
 - Develop a life-long love of reading

Informational Text

1. Key Ideas and Details
 - Recall key ideas from informational pictures
 - Recall ideas from an informational text
 - Answer questions regarding key details from informational text
2. Craft and Structure
 - Understand the meaning of words in informational text
 - Identify common forms of informational text (calendars, schedules, etc.)
3. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
 - Compare and contrast key details from informational text
4. Range of Reading/Level of Text Complexity
 - Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding

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Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Use appropriate grip for increased control in writing and drawing
- Draw pictures to represent writing
- Participate in shared writing
- Trace and copy letters and environmental print
- Write own name

Speaking and Listening

1. Comprehension and Collaboration

- Develop acceptable norms for discussion (taking turns, listening to others)
- Ask and answer appropriate questions to gather information, get help, etc.
- Use appropriate language for different situations (classroom, chapel, etc.)

2. Presentation of Ideas

- Speak in complete sentences using age-appropriate language
- Recall and recite simple poems, rhymes and songs

Language

1. Conventions of Standard English

- Understand and use age-appropriate grammar
- Understand and use question words (who, what, where, when, how, why)
- Use frequently occurring prepositions (in-out, up-down, over-under, etc.)

2. Vocabulary Acquisition

- Understand and use increasingly complex words to express meaning
- Understand and use accepted words for everyday activities

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Mathematics Standards

Counting and Number Sense

Count from 1 to 30

Understand the relationship between numbers and quantity

Represent a number of objects with a written numeral 0-10

Identify the number of objects in a group, using one-to-one correspondence

Operations and Algebraic Thinking

Represent addition and subtraction using objects and situations

Solve simple addition and subtraction real-life problems

Measurement and Data

Compare and classify objects by a specific attribute (length, capacity, etc.)

Sort and classify objects into a given category

Name the days of the week and the months of the year

Demonstrate concepts of time (morning, lunchtime, nighttime, etc.)

Geometry

Identify, describe and build common 2-dimensional objects (circle, square)

Describe the relative positions of objects (above, below, etc.)

Recognize, describe and create a repeating pattern

Science Standards

Physical Science

Describe objects in terms of the material they are made of (wood, metal, etc)

Identify common physical properties of objects (size, color, shape, etc.)

Explore heat, sound, light and movement

Sort and classify objects by their common physical properties

Life Science

Name common plants and animals

Identify plants and animals as living objects

Describe the stages of life (birth, growth, death)

Explore the structures of plants and animals

Earth Science

Identify and describe the four seasons

Identify and describe types of weather

Explore objects in the solar system

Investigation and Experimentation

Use the five senses to explore the environment and make observations

Communicate observations both orally and visually

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Social Studies Standards

Citizenship

- Identify traits of a good citizen (responsibility, honesty, cooperation)
- Identify models of good citizenship (Jesus, Martin Luther King, etc.)
- Connect being a good citizen in the classroom with being a good citizen in the community
- Identify and explain common jobs in their school and community

Geography

- Identify the relative locations of places (home, school, park, etc.)
- Compare and contrast maps and globes
- Create a map of the classroom or other familiar location

History

- Categorize time increments (minutes, hours, days, weeks, months)
- Demonstrate an understanding of past, present, future in relation to personal events (yesterday, last week, next week, upcoming birthday, etc.)
- Explain the meaning of holidays

Physical Education Standards

Safety

- Use materials appropriately
- Practice emergency drills

Fine Motor

- Use tools for their intended purpose
- Build and construct with a variety of materials
- Squeeze, pinch, button, zip, snap, stir
- Cut shapes, objects and lines
- Use appropriate grasp for writing, drawing and coloring
- Trace and write letters
- Use dominant hand most of the time.

Gross Motor

- Ability to balance
- Demonstrate the ability to run, jump, hop, skip, and climb
- Move forward, backwards and side-to-side
- Throw and catch
- Pour from containers

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Physical Education Standards (con't)

Physical Activities

- Understand directionality (under, over, behind, next to)
- Distinguish between right and left
- Begin to understand and respect personal space
- Participate in individual and group physical activities

Health

- Identify healthy foods
- Understand and explain the need for rest and exercise
- Develop endurance in physical activities

Fine Arts Standards

Visual Art

- Name common art materials
- Name primary and secondary colors
- Use two-dimensional shapes to create works of art
- Represent objects, people and events in works of art
- Identify objects in own works of art
- Express him/herself through art

Music

- Identify and describe elements of music (tempo, rhythm, etc.)
- Use movements to demonstrate an awareness of tempo and rhythm
- Use singing to demonstrate an awareness of tempo, rhythm, pitch
- Sing age-appropriate songs from memory
- Demonstrate appropriate performer and audience skills

Drama

- Identify and differentiate between real and imaginary characters
- Perform imitative moves (freeze, statues, etc.)
- Engage in pretend play with others
- Act out assigned roles
- Create and act out new roles

Resources:

- Preschool Learning Foundations, California Department of Education
- Transitional Kindergarten Curriculum Guide, Kingdom Early Education
- Early Education Guide, Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- LCMS Board of Parish Education

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Incorporating the Standards into Everyday Activities in an Early Childhood Setting

Quality early childhood programs strive for integration of curriculum, an overlap of all developmental areas and allow ample time for children to *play*. Children's play is focused, purposeful, and full of learning. As children play, they master motor development, learn and use language, develop social skills, think creatively and grow in cognitive knowledge. This (un)curriculum is all about supporting child-led play and trusting children as capable and engaged learners.

In the domains that follow, you will find daily opportunities that will encourage growth and mastery of the curricular outcomes. In reviewing this list, you will discover that many of these activities are already a part of your daily schedules and normal programming. A section for English Language Learners is included to assist educators in the process of language acquisition.

SPIRITUAL - Jesus Time, Worship, Chapel, meaningful conversations

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL - Circle Time, Center Time, meaningful conversations, finger plays, using words to convey meaning in a variety

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Foundational Skills

Print Concepts - quality children's literature and informational text, environmental print, dictation, classroom library

Phonological Awareness - sound discrimination, rhyming, word awareness, phonemic awareness

Phonics and Word Recognition - letter identification, environmental print, name recognition

Literature

Comprehension - story time, recall, sequencing, prediction, meaningful conversations, following directions

Literacy Interest - classroom library, individual and group story time, take-home library

Informational Text

Print Concepts - informational text, calendar, environmental print, dictation, graphs

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Writing

Text Types - writing center, environmental print, dictation, letter formation, inventive spelling, shared writing

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration - story time, meaningful conversations, dictation, dramatic play, songs

Presentation of Ideas – story time, meaningful conversations, dictation, shared ideas, dramatic play

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Listening

Understanding - meaningful conversations, environmental print in dual languages, learning centers

Beginning Words - environmental print, word wall, modeling, direct instruction

Requests and Directions - direct instruction, meaningful conversations, modeling

Concepts - direct instruction, modeling, meaningful conversations

Speaking

Verbal and Non-verbal Strategies - gestures, meaningful conversations, listening skills, story time

Communication of Needs – gestures and modeling

Communication with Others - modeling, meaningful conversations, use of questions, listening opportunities

Social Conventions - modeling, meaningful conversations, story time

Reading

Read-aloud Activities - story time, responds to questions, counts with others

Interest in Books - opportunities to explore with books, classroom library

Story Structure - sequencing with pictures

Print Conventions - correct handling of books, left to right progression

Print carries Meaning - environmental print in dual languages, name recognition

Alphabetic Knowledge – letter awareness, letter recognition

Phonological Awareness – rhyming, initial sounds, sound differences in home language and English

Writing

Communication - environmental print

Writing Strategies - writing center, letter formation, shared writing

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MATHEMATICS

Counting and Number Sense - counting, calendar, one-to-one correspondence, awareness of numbers in everyday life [addresses, phone numbers]

Operations and Algebraic Thinking - classifying and sorting, patterns, problem solving, one-to-one correspondence, vocabulary and concept development

Measurement and Data - comparisons, order, estimation

Geometry - shapes, positions, blocks, patterning

SCIENCE

Physical Science - learning centers, field trips, science read-alouds

Life Science - learning centers, field trips, science read-alouds

Earth Science - learning centers, field trips, science read-alouds

Investigation and Experimentation - hypotheses, predicting, experimenting with materials

Note – Field trips do not necessarily have to be off-site. There are many ‘field trip’ experiences that can be brought on-site.

HISTORY – SOCIAL SCIENCE

Citizenship - family, classroom, community, nation, occupations

Geography - geography, geographical features

History – time frames (minutes, hours, days, etc.), historical heritage, relationship of past events to present day

PHYSICAL

Safety – proper use of equipment

Fine Motor – fine motor activities including cutting, drawing, etc.

Gross Motor – large muscle activities including running, jumping, etc.

Physical Activities - developmentally-appropriate exercise activities

Health – healthy foods, hygiene, importance of rest

FINE ARTS

Visual Arts - art-rich environment, distinctions and characteristics of art and art materials, self-expression

Music – basic elements of music, music appreciation, movement

Drama – theatrical experiences, dramatic play and opportunities