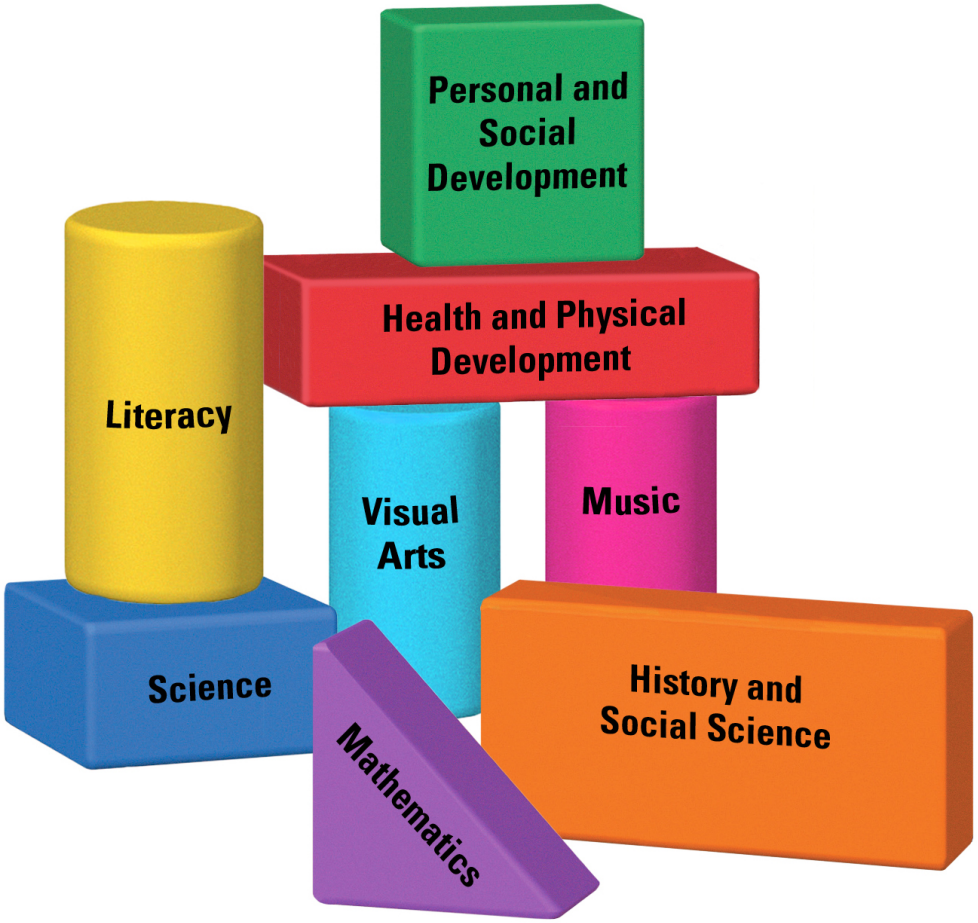
Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool

In Support of
Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning



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Virginia Department of Education
Office of Humanities and Early Childhood

"According to major reports by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, children who attend well-planned high-quality early childhood programs in which curriculum aims are specified and integrated across the domains tend to learn more and are better prepared to master the complex demands of formal schooling. While no single curriculum has been found to be superior, the reports' recommendations call for addressing cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development as mutually supportive areas that require active attention in the preschool years."

From ***Fulfilling the Promise of Preschool*** (2009), National Association of State Boards of Education

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Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool can be found in PDF file format on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_rubric.pdf

INTRODUCTION

This rubric has been developed for programs in Virginia that provide preschool services to children who are four-years-old. While it is intended for the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Title I Preschools, and Early Childhood Special Education, private and parochial providers may also use this rubric. The purpose of the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric is to help early childhood educators identify and choose curricula that are based on scientific research and that align with ***Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning***. The ***Foundation Blocks*** are intended to help early childhood educators develop a comprehensive curriculum and effective classroom activities. A program's curriculum may include one or more commercial curricula, locally-developed curriculum, and other instructional materials. Therefore, this rubric is meant to complement the ***Foundation Blocks*** by helping early childhood educators review their existing curricula and products they are considering using to determine whether they will fulfill the standards and learning expectations set forth in the ***Foundation Blocks***.

As a first step in reviewing curricula, staff should determine if the following basic criteria apply:

- The age group for which the curriculum is appropriate and intended is stated.
- The curriculum goals are clear – both the knowledge to be attained and the skills to be learned.
- The curriculum is comprehensive and addresses all developmental domains (cognitive, physical, personal, and social).
- The curriculum has a detailed scope and sequence of instruction.
- The curriculum content is learned through focused intentional teaching, investigation, and play.
- The curriculum includes adaptations for children with special needs or disabilities, children of varying abilities, and English language learners.
- There is proof of the research upon which the curriculum is based.

Staff members who use the ***Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric*** should be knowledgeable about young children's development and about curriculum and instructional design. In addition, a publisher's claim that a product meets federal requirements or ***Foundation Blocks*** requirements is not sufficient proof that the product will align with the Virginia Department of Education's preschool standards. Staff members should work through the entire rubric and conduct a thorough analysis of whether their curricula have sufficient breadth and depth to encompass all the standards and skills outlined in the ***Foundation Blocks***.

PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC AND PLANNING TOOL

If you are reviewing more than one curriculum, you may want to use one rubric form for all notations and create a summary, or you may want to use a separate rubric form for each curriculum and compare the notations across them when done. This form has been designed to accommodate either method.

Name of Publisher and Curriculum or Name of Locally-Developed Curriculum	Focus Age(s) of Children
1.	
2.	
3.	

I. Theoretical Foundation

- Curriculum models are typically based on specific developmental or learning theories. Knowing the theoretical orientation of a curriculum model allows you to determine if the instructional methods and content are aligned with your program's philosophy on how children develop and learn. There are three broad approaches that form the foundation of most curriculum models. These can be categorized as follows:
    - ***Direct instruction or didactic curriculum:*** Based on behavioral and social learning theories in which children learn by observing and imitating others.
    - ***Constructivist or interactive curriculum:*** Based on constructivist theories in which children learn by interacting with people and objects within their natural environment and environments created for them.
    - ***Socialization or open curriculum:*** Based on a maturationist theory in which children learn when they are developmentally ready with the support of nurturing adults and stimulating experiences.
- While a curriculum may not strictly follow one theoretical approach or may combine aspects of one or more approaches, the following questions are designed to help you determine the general theoretical foundation of the curriculum you are reviewing. Place checkmarks in the boxes that most closely describe the curriculum being reviewed. If needed, use the "Comments" box to describe some features of the curriculum that exemplify the approach or approaches it uses.

Curriculum Name_____ **Curriculum Number** _____

Make additional copies of this page if analysis involves more than one curriculum.

I. Theoretical Foundation

	DIRECT INSTRUCTION	CONSTRUCTIVIST	SOCIALIZATION	COMMENTS
What is the nature of the activities?	Activities have an academic focus and are often prescribed. They are geared towards supporting children's acquisition of specific skills and content knowledge. Large group instruction is predominant. _____	Activities are designed to enhance children's problem-solving abilities and extend their interests through hands-on participation. Small group and individual instruction is predominant. _____	Activities reflect teachers' views of children's interests and needs, and focus on supporting their personal and social development as a foundation for cognitive development. _____	_____
What is the role of the teacher?	Teachers direct children's learning in accordance with the planned instruction. They may have a script to follow or structured activities to implement. _____	Teachers facilitate children's learning by designing activities, introducing specific materials, and interacting with children in activities and play situations to expand their knowledge and skills. _____	Teachers establish a nurturing and stimulating environment, design activities and manage interactions to foster children's personal and social development. _____	_____
What is the role of the child?	Children participate in lessons and activities designed by the teacher. _____	Children choose and initiate activities based on their interests from what is suggested and provided for them by the teacher. Children are encouraged to be active and engaged. _____	Children direct their own play by choosing from available activities and materials. _____	_____
How is play incorporated?	Play often consists of structured games to practice newly learned skills. _____	Play is seen as an opportunity for children to learn new concepts, practice skills and solve problems. Goal-directed play, including dramatic play, is encouraged. _____	Unstructured play and exploration are the main activities. Children are encouraged to interact with each other to enhance social and interpersonal skills. _____	_____
What types of materials are required or suggested?	Specific materials are required for instruction. These may include workbooks, readers or literature, and learning games. _____	Authentic materials are typically used, plus suitable commercial materials, toys, books, and other age-appropriate materials. _____	Age-appropriate toys, books, games, and other materials are suggested to be available and easily accessible to children. _____	_____

II. Curriculum Content and Mode of Instruction: Identify and briefly describe how the curriculum addresses the following Standards from the **Foundation Blocks** You should have a copy of the **Foundation Blocks** on hand to reference while performing this review. The **Foundation Blocks** are available on the Internet at: ***http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf***

LITERACY FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Oral Language				
Vocabulary				
Phonological Awareness				
Letter Knowledge and Early Word Recognition				
Print and Book Awareness				
Writing				

MATHEMATICS FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Number and Number Sense				
Computation				
Measurement				
Geometry				
Data Collection and Statistics				
Patterns and Relationships				

SCIENCE FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Life Processes				
Force, Motion, and Energy				
Matter/Physical Properties				
Matter/Physical and Chemical Reactions				
Life Processes				
Interrelationships in Earth/Space Systems				
Earth Patterns, Cycles, and Change				
Resources				

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
History/Similarities and Differences				
History/Change Over Time				
Geography/Location				
Geography/Descriptive Words				
Economics/World of Work				
Economics/Making Choices and Earning Money				
Civics/Citizenship				

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Skilled Movement				
Movement Principles and Concepts				
Personal Fitness				
Responsible Behaviors				
Physically Active Lifestyle				
Nutrition				
Information Access and Use				
Community Health and Safety				

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Self-Concept				
Self-Regulation				
Approaches to Learning				
Interaction with Others				
Social Problem Solving				

MUSIC FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Music Theory and Literacy				
Performance				
Musical History and Cultural Context				
Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique				
Aesthetics				

VISUAL ARTS FOUNDATION BLOCKS	Note which curriculum addresses the standard			Type of instruction or activities for meeting the expected skills
	1	2	3	
Visual Communication and Production				
Art History and Cultural Context				
Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique				
Aesthetics				

Sections III, IV, V, and VI should be duplicated to reflect the various curricula being analyzed. Please check which curriculum is being addressed

III. Child-Specific Criteria: In addition to knowing the theoretical foundation and content of the curriculum, it is important to consider whether these features meet the developmental and learning needs of the particular children you serve. The following questions are designed to help you review the curriculum in relation to your child population.

Curriculum: _____1 _____2 _____3

Child-Specific Criteria	YES	NO	Not Applicable	Comments
Is the curriculum geared toward the age group of children you serve?				
Does the curriculum address specific developmental domains (cognitive, physical, personal and social), and is the approach integrated across all domains?				
Do the content and materials relate to the cultural backgrounds of your children?				
Does the curriculum provide guidance on individualizing instruction for children who are considered to be at-risk for learning delays?				
Does the curriculum provide specific adaptations for activities and the environment for children with identified disabilities?				
If you serve English language learners, does the curriculum provide guidance on adaptations that can be made to meet their learning needs?				
Does the curriculum include home extension activities that support families' involvement in their children's learning? If so, are the necessary materials available in most households?				

IV. Instructional Design Features: In addition to reviewing a curriculum's appropriateness for the children you serve and whether the content addresses the **Foundation Blocks**, it is useful to note whether it provides guidance concerning implementation. The following questions are designed to help you review selected instructional design features.

Curriculum: _____1 _____2 _____3

Instructional Design Features	YES	NO	Not Applicable	Comments
Is there a required or suggested structure and schedule for instruction and activities?				
Are sample lesson plans or a detailed instructional guide included?				
Are suggestions included for transitioning children between activities and managing various groupings?				
Are certain materials required for instruction? If so, are they included or must they be obtained or purchased?				
Are authentic materials used for instruction? If so, are suggestions given for the type of authentic materials to be used?				
Are suggestions for the physical set up and layout of the classroom environment included?				
Do staff members need to have certain academic credentials or field experience to implement this curriculum? If so, do your current staff members have these credentials and experience?				
Do staff members need training to implement this curriculum? If so, does your school, agency, or the publisher provide related training? Is there a cost associated with this training?				
Are the developmental domains integrated? If using several curricula to cover all content areas, are the developmental domains integrated across curricula?				

V. Assessment: Assessments can be used to identify children's strengths and needs, document their growth and changes in development, and help teachers plan and modify their instruction to meet children's individual needs. They can also be used for accountability purposes. The following questions concern both embedded and external assessment considerations.

Curriculum: _____1 _____2 _____3

Assessment	YES	NO	Not Applicable	Comments
Is guidance given on using assessments to document children's learning?				
Are specific assessments required within or to accompany the curriculum?				
Are standardized assessments encouraged, e.g., norm-referenced?				
Are authentic assessments encouraged, e.g., work sampling, recording observations of behaviors?				
Are required or suggested assessments aligned with the content and skills targeted in the curriculum?				
If your program is required to use certain assessments, does the curriculum address the types of knowledge and skills measured by these assessments*?				

**Virginia Preschool Initiative programs are required to use the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS-PreK).*

VI. Research Base: Federal and state funded programs should use curricula that are research-based. Information related to the research upon which a curriculum is based may be found in: (1) an introduction or "about this series" section; (2) a bibliography or reference section, which is often in the teacher's manual; or (3) the publisher's marketing material, which often includes professional endorsements, or documentation that can be obtained from the publisher that includes citations of studies. The following questions are designed to help you determine whether and to what extent the curriculum is based on documented research and evidence-based practices.

Curriculum: _____1 _____2 _____3

Research Base:	**YES**	**NO**	**Comments**
Is any information provided concerning the research upon which the curriculum is based? If information is provided, list where and what it is:			
Does the reference section or list of citations include studies completed within the last five years? (This is in addition to older studies, which are customary and desirable.)			
If all references or citations concern studies more than five years old, is there evidence that the curriculum has been updated recently?			
Have studies been conducted on the effectiveness of this particular curriculum? If so, what information is provided concerning these studies?			

PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM PLANNING

If you have identified areas that the curricula do not address, discuss and plan how you will adapt the curricula to include these areas. Be specific in listing the "gap," "weakness," or "need." For example, "Science/Matter – not enough related vocabulary or hands-on activities."

Please duplicate copies of this page if more than one curriculum is being analyzed.

Curriculum: _____1 _____2 _____3

Gap, Weakness, or Need	Steps to Address	Timeline/Deadline	Person Responsible

NOTES

Resources:

Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf

Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_quality_indicators.pdf

The Virginia Department of Education does not mandate or prescribe a particular curriculum model or lesson plans. The information contained herein is provided only as a resource that educators may find helpful and use at their discretion.

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