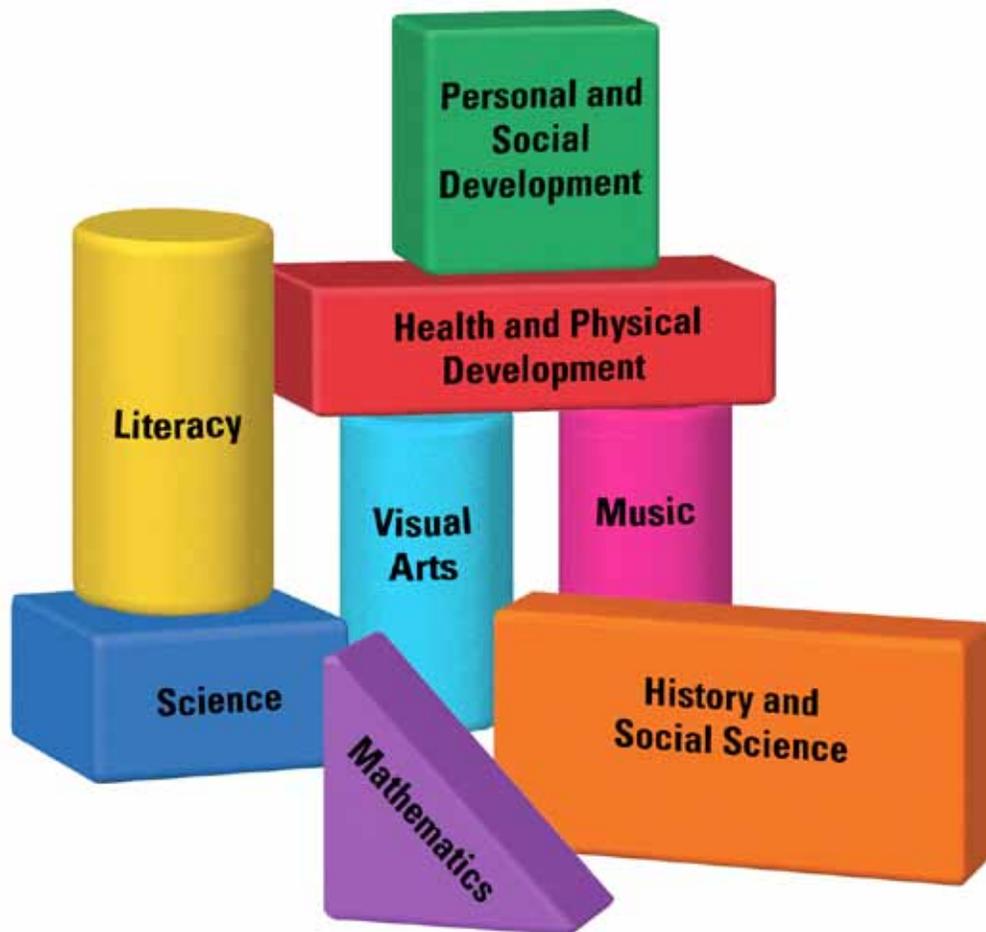


# Virginia's Quality Indicators For Responsive Teaching: Creating A High Quality Preschool Learning Environment

In Support of  
Virginia's Foundation Blocks For Early Learning



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Virginia Department of Education  
Office of Humanities and Early Childhood

# Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning

provide comprehensive standards for four-year-olds in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, history and social science, health and physical development, personal and social development, music, and the visual arts. A checklist that aligns with **Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning** can help teachers and parents focus on creating shared, active, and hands-on opportunities for young children to develop their full potential. The indicators included in this document are aligned with the skills, knowledge, and competencies that are essential to prepare children for kindergarten, and to build a strong foundation for children's ongoing success in school.

Elements of a quality preschool classroom include responsive teaching that engages children through enriched learning experiences. Meaningful and relevant activities boost children's natural curiosity about mathematics, science, history and social science. Early literacy and enriched language experiences provide essential skills for communication and learning. Responsive teacher-child interactions foster children's personal and social development and help them develop to their fullest potential. A high-quality classroom meets the needs of diverse learners through flexible and individualized support so that all can achieve.

The purpose of the following checklist is to help teachers and parents design environments, materials, and interactions that will promote optimal motivation and engagement in learning. Each section correlates with **Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning** and provides strategies for adults to use that will create the highest quality preschool experiences for each child.

## Literacy

- ❑ Activates engagement through book reading that is expressive, frequent, interactive, and which represents a variety of cultures and perspectives.
- ❑ Uses poems, chants, rhymes, and repetition books that feature both fact and fiction to enhance children's imagination and engagement.
- ❑ Promotes concept development through enriched language and activates meaningful conversation through "when, where, how, and why" questions.

- ❑ Extends understanding by encouraging children to describe feelings, explain ideas, compare events, and apply new vocabulary/knowledge to past and present experiences.
- ❑ Uses props (scarves, hats, puppets) to enhance characters and situations during book reading. Encourages children to use these props to recreate story-related dramatic play scenarios.
- ❑ Provides ample supplies at centers to encourage reading and writing in "real-life" scenarios through imaginative play, such as playing store, going to a restaurant, creating mail for the post office, and making grocery lists.
- ❑ Organizes book collections within easy reach by topic, theme, and author. Selections represent multiple abilities, cultures, ethnicities, and geographic locations.
- ❑ Labels items in both home language and English.
- ❑ Encourages writing with purpose, for example, tell stories, create poems, write letters, keep a journal, record events, and share experiences using a variety of materials and technology.
- ❑ Creates listening centers with prerecorded narration of high-interest books.
- ❑ Displays the alphabet at eye level.

## Mathematics

- ❑ Promotes concept development through hands-on experiences such as board games, cards, counting cubes, and matching/sorting activities.
- ❑ Creates simple word problems that relate to experiences children understand.
- ❑ Provides puzzles and manipulatives that encourage comparisons of shapes and an understanding of numbers/counting/patterns.
- ❑ Includes utensils and objects at sand and water tables for measuring and comparing.
- ❑ Supports construction activities using floor and table top materials (blocks, building materials) that reinforce position, such as above, beside, below, under, over, top, and bottom.
- ❑ Prompts interest and curiosity about numbers through picture books.
- ❑ Boosts mathematics engagement at learning centers. Provides rulers/objects for measuring, items for sorting/counting, and "money" for purchases. Models the use of these objects to answer questions of interest.

## Science

- ❑ Provides a variety of picture books and materials (charts, posters, technology) to expose children to the natural world (seasons, growing cycles, plants, weather, habitats, animals, food systems).
- ❑ Includes writing materials, natural collections, magnifying glasses, magnets, and scales for weighing and sorting objects in science center/areas.
- ❑ Promotes table-top activities, such as sink and float experiments, prisms, magnifying glasses, seriation tasks (sorting objects by color), etc.
- ❑ Encourages natural curiosity about domesticated and wild animals through stories, videos, and quality curriculum.
- ❑ Asks questions and encourages inquiry and investigation about areas of interest.
- ❑ Supports active engagement in problem solving through building and ramp activities.
- ❑ Utilizes community resources, such as natural wildlife/conservation experts, librarians, farmers, etc., who can visit the classroom. When possible, takes field trips to local zoos, aquariums, museums, or libraries.
- ❑ Reads stories about inventors, scientists, explorers, and others who are involved in the field of science.
- ❑ Boosts learning opportunities through the use of age-appropriate technology applications.
- ❑ Encourages recycling and conserving energy within the classroom.

## History and Social Science

- ❑ Organizes books and materials by themes and categories (transportation, community helpers, farming, places around the world) to encourage exploration.
- ❑ Highlights books that expose children to others like themselves in the community, around the country, and in different parts of the world.
- ❑ Responds with sensitivity to children's questions about the world around them, while exploring similarities and differences.
- ❑ Creates activities, conversations, materials, and themes that are age-appropriate and build on children's personal experiences and knowledge.
- ❑ Develops themes that are inclusive of culture, language, and diversity.
- ❑ Provides dramatic play experiences and multicultural accessories to extend learning and enhance cooperation.

- ❑ Encourages growing personal responsibility and citizenship in the classroom and community.
- ❑ Uses curriculum that supports children's growing understanding of themselves in relationship to others.

## Health and Physical Development

- ❑ Encourages the selection of healthy foods.
- ❑ Balances quiet learning times with physical activity.
- ❑ Includes children as active participants in lessons and creative play.
- ❑ Ensures that recess and a variety of active games are available daily for all children.
- ❑ Supports development through music and movement that involves all children and promotes aerobic exercise.
- ❑ Creates positive experiences for children to develop fine-motor skills through use of age-appropriate materials and activities.
- ❑ Fosters optimal development by providing individual support for each child.
- ❑ Encourages group activities that focus on cooperation rather than competition.

## Personal and Social Development

- ❑ Provides warm interaction and shared "back and forth" conversation.
- ❑ Nurtures relationships between peers that are positive and caring.
- ❑ Uses classroom guidance that is proactive and respectful.
- ❑ Encourages self-regulation and supports children's developing independence.
- ❑ Shows high expectations for all children.
- ❑ Provides clear directions and uses prompts, cues, questions, and positive feedback to support success for each child.
- ❑ Reinforces and highlights social skill competence.
- ❑ Assures a safe and child-centered environment.
- ❑ Responds with sensitivity to children's questions, contributions, and physical needs.
- ❑ Makes routines consistent and age-appropriate.
- ❑ Gives responsibility and supports mastery of classroom "jobs."
- ❑ Creates eating times that are pleasant and calm.
- ❑ Reads social stories that promote respect, caring empathy, and problem solving.

## Music and Visual Arts

- ❑ Encourages each child's active engagement and personal expression through the visual arts and music.
- ❑ Makes available a wide assortment of crayons, clay, markers, tempera and finger paints, scissors, various papers, and assorted letter stamps, resources for collages, and other textured materials and tools.
- ❑ Displays children's current artwork, writing, and other projects at their eye-level.
- ❑ Reads stories and provides books about artists and musicians that represent a variety of cultures and styles.
- ❑ Utilizes many music styles and cultures through music, singing, and dance.
- ❑ Provides instruments and resources such as ribbons, scarves, shakers, and drums for children to create and express music, motion, song, and dance.
- ❑ Introduces a wide range of instruments and composers through books, recordings, videos, and other technology.
- ❑ Uses music (recorded and vocal) to enhance transitions, routines, and celebrations.
- ❑ Enriches academic learning through chants, rhymes, and songs.

## Resources:

### Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early\\_childhood/preschool\\_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf)

### Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early\\_childhood/preschool\\_initiative/preschool\\_rubric.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_rubric.pdf)



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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\\_quality\\_indicators.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_quality_indicators.pdf)

### Superintendent of Public Instruction

Patricia I. Wright

### Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Linda M. Wallinger

### Office of Humanities and Early Childhood

Christine Harris, Director

Cheryl Strobel, Associate Director for Early Childhood Education

