



Choosing a High-Quality Child Care Curriculum

Quality early learning environments are essential for preparing children as they enter elementary school. One of the steps in attaining a high-quality environment is to implement a curriculum that meets the needs of all children.

Early Childhood Care and Education settings vary in size, services, and educational philosophy, and the curriculum should be reflective of these aspects.

Any curriculum selected should:

- Have clear goals for children’s development in all developmental domains.
- Make evident how age-appropriate concepts and skills are taught.
- Include a framework that guides evaluation criteria.



When these elements are present and accompanied by warm, caring interactions and strong family engagement, children are better prepared not just for school but for life.

Standards-Based Assessments to Support Each Child

The Virginia Milestones of Child Development and Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning are critical in assisting teachers in designing environments that meet children's developmental needs. A second step in providing a quality program is to conduct on-going assessments of the children. Assessments that are aligned with the standards help teachers effectively implement activities and facilitate meaningful engagement that supports varying learning styles and needs by designing a plan to help each child grow to their full potential.

Choosing a Curriculum

There are many factors to consider when planning a curriculum. The physical environment should contribute to well-planned and implemented activities that help little learners meet developmental goals but incorporate unplanned learning experiences and promote positive relationships with peers and adults.

The following resource list from the Virginia Department of Social Services, in cooperation with the University of Virginia’s Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), can assist in choosing a curriculum that is aligned with Virginia’s Early Childhood Standards and promotes the accurate use of assessments linked to curriculum.

Please note: The Virginia Department of Social Services and/or the University of Virginia’s CASTL are not recommending the use of any specific curriculum.

| Comprehensive Infant/Toddler Curricula | Comprehensive Preschool Curricula |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Beautiful Beginnings: A Developmental Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers ◆ Frog Street Infant ◆ Frog Street Toddler ◆ HighScope Infant-Toddler Curriculum ◆ Innovations: The Comprehensive Infant and Toddler Curriculum ◆ The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos, 3rd Edition ◆ Active Learning for Infants, Ones, and Two's ◆ STREAMin3 Curriculum (CASTL) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 6th Edition ◆ Frog Street Pre-K ◆ HighScope Preschool Curriculum ◆ Scholastic Big Day for PreK ◆ Tools of the Mind ◆ STREAMin3 Curriculum (CASTL) |
| <p>For additional resources, please visit: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/consumer-report https://streamin3.org/ https://ersi.info/authors.html</p> | <p>For additional resources, please visit: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/consumer-report https://streamin3.org/</p> |

Social-Emotional Development and School Readiness

School readiness is more than knowing ABC's and 123's, and it begins much earlier than preschool years. When a caregiver responds to a young infant's cry with a soft voice and cuddle or responds to an older infant's nonverbal cues with a smile, descriptive language, and interactions that encourage back and forth "dialogue," the foundation of a secure relationship is formed. It is from these secure relationships, where children feel safe to explore their environment and make mistakes, that social development occurs. Children's ability to manage their own behavior and emotions are important to early school success. Children who lack impulse control or cannot manage emotions tend to exhibit disruptive behaviors that negatively impact academic success. Because social-emotional development requires the use of cognition, language (both verbal and nonverbal), and physical control, we have included a section in this resource list of research-based social development curricula. Please note that many of the comprehensive curricula also include social-emotional components.

This resource information can be found on the childcareva.com website. This information is provided to assist early childhood education and care providers select a curriculum, but is not recommending any specific curriculum.

| Social Development Curricula |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices ◆ Conscious Discipline Building Resilient Classrooms ◆ I Can Problem Solve ◆ PATHS Preschool/Kindergarten Classroom Modules ◆ Second Step Early Learning |
| <p>For additional resources, please visit: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/curriculum-report-se.pdf</p> |