



**TEXAS RISING STAR WEBINAR SERIES:  
CURRICULUM AND EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES**

**RECORDED OCTOBER 29, 2015**

**NOTES**

The topics that will be addressed during these webinars include:

1. The General Overview: Curriculum and Early Learning Guidelines
2. What are the elements of a curriculum?
3. How to write and implement a lesson plan
4. Bringing together the TRS Guidelines for Curriculum into classroom planning

**Learning objectives**

*By the end of this webinar participants will be able to:*

- Define the term curriculum as outlined in the TRS Guidelines
- Compare and contrast scope and sequence
- Compare the ITELGs with the PreK Guidelines
- Select the appropriate ELG training based on the age group of children served

**Curriculum**

What is a curriculum as described in the TRS Guidelines?

A curriculum is a written document or plan. It is a blueprint for planning and implementing an early childhood program. It addresses all aspects of child development and of building partnerships with families. The curriculum outlines the goals for children's development and learning.

Research has shown that a key aspect of impactful instruction is that it follows a progressive approach or scope and sequence. With this progressive approach children are introduced to new skills and activities that mirrors the natural trajectory of children's development. A curriculum has planned intentional activities, experiences and interactions; these activities organized and arranged to intentionally to promote critical areas of development for children.

In order to achieve maximum development it requires intentionality. Decisions that must be made regarding what to teach, what order to teach, how to pace the learning and how to structure the activities for the right level of difficulty and how to assess and measure progress.

## Goals for Children’s Learning

When considering setting goals for children’s learning you must think about the skills children need to grow and develop.

When you have an understanding of the knowledge and skills that children need in order to grow and develop this impacts the curriculum and lesson plans (or activities) that are chosen to implement in an early childhood program.

In the State of Texas, there are two resources that are available to learn more about the growth and development of children birth to age 5. These are the Texas Early Learning Guidelines and the Texas PreKindergarten Guidelines.

## Scope and Sequence

The scope and sequence of curriculum assists the teacher to ensure that children meet specific development benchmarks or developmental outcomes.

The **scope** refers to the broad and integrated areas of development of children and the content areas of the curriculum. The development of children can be thought of as the domains of children’s learning which would include cognitive, social/emotional, language and physical domains.

The content areas of the curriculum can be described as the knowledge and skills in specific areas social, emotional, language and communication, literacy, math, science, social studies, creative arts and or technology. The scope helps to bring organization to the curriculum.

According to Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) “**Sequence** is described as the order in which content is to be taught and learned.” Developmental progression is similar in that it describes the skill, behaviors, and concepts that children will demonstrate as they progress towards a given goal within an age period.

Do the activities follow a given order to support children’s growth and development? This is more than isolated activities that are chosen from a book or list, but rather the activities will build skill levels over time. The curriculum is presented in a sequence that is suitable for the developmental levels and needs of children.

## Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers

In the first years of life, children need a curriculum that is focused on relationships, communicative competencies, and exploration of their physical world. The curriculum is embedded within their daily routines and experiences. High quality infant and toddler curriculum intentionally focuses on and building their home language; promotes security and social competence; and encourages understanding of essential concepts about the world.

## Developmental Approach for Curriculum and Lesson Plans: Preschool

There are five ideas supporting the developmental approach to curriculum and lesson plans with preschool children 1) developmental processes, 2) learning experiences, 3) new concepts, 4) practice opportunities, and 5) thoughtful planning. When choosing a curriculum it is important to keep in mind that children master new knowledge and skills through a series of developmental processes that evolve over time.

Effective teachers plan lessons and structure their classrooms with an awareness of the ultimate goals they want children to achieve, they also recognize that children at different developmental levels have different capabilities; therefore expectations need to be adjusted accordingly.

### ***Developmental processes***

Teachers should “meet children where they are” and provide information and activities at a level that children can readily understand and engage with. Teachers should have the outcome skills in mind, but will need to prepare children to meet these goals through scaffolding experiences and activities that are appropriate for individual children’s current developmental levels and capabilities.

### ***Learning Experiences***

Effective teachers know that each child is unique and can be appreciated as an individual with a unique style, temperament, set of interests, and aptitude for learning. Teachers should have high, positive expectations for all children, but this does not mean that all children should be expected to learn at the same rate or in the same way. Teachers should make use of available assessments and daily observations to determine where each child is in terms of mastering skills in the various domains.

### ***New Concepts***

Developmental research also tells us that children’s acquisition of concepts and skills is not always linear and evenly paced. Children need to be exposed to new concepts multiple times and across a variety of contexts in order to solidify their understanding. A teacher models, demonstrates, and “thinks aloud” so the children understand the thoughts behind what the teacher is doing.

### ***Practice Opportunities***

Then, children are provided opportunities to practice the skill or concept, with the teacher beside them to guide their practice, scaffolding or supporting the children’s learning so they are successful. The teacher provides many opportunities for practicing the concept, moving the concept from something the child can do slowly, to something that he/she can do quickly and easily.

### ***Thoughtful Planning***

Thoughtful planning is required for children to have the multiple opportunities needed for this transition from something being hard to something being very easy for a child to accomplish without assistance.

### ***Responsive Interaction Style***

The Caregiver- Child interactions in Category 2 are tightly connected to the TRS lesson plans, guidance on curriculum and responsive caregiving. The socio-cultural theory provides an excellent framework to guide teachers in their efforts to support young children’s learning. A hallmark of this theory is the importance it places on the child’s ability to learn at higher levels with specialized support, referred to as scaffolding, from more competent others (e.g., families, teachers) than occurs when children attempt to learn on their own.

When the responsive interactions occur, young children’s social and cognitive skills are placed on more positive trajectories. A considerable number of studies have examined teacher behavior and their interactions and relationships with children.

The way in which teachers interact with young children affects the children's social and emotional outcomes either negatively or positively depending on the quality of the interactions. Good teachers acknowledge and encourage children's efforts, model and demonstrate behaviors, create challenges and support children in extending their capabilities, and provide specific directions or instructions.

Children are eager and excited to learn, and encouraging this excitement generates positive results in learning new vocabulary, letter names and sounds, and number and science concepts. In fact, close teacher-child relationships in prekindergarten are related to greater phonemic awareness and better language, communication, and math skills, as well as more positive attitudes and perceptions, better social and thinking skills, and fewer problem behaviors.

### **Scaffolding children's learning requires:**

- Sensitivity to a child's level of understanding
- Responses contingent on a child's signals
- An ability to maintain and build on a child's focus
- Rich oral language input
- Avoiding excessive restrictions on behavior
- Providing choices and adapting to a child's changing needs

A responsive interactive style occurs by vigilantly observing and evaluating children's needs and happiness in their environment and by providing responsible and responsive care. A teacher establishes a warm and caring environment that helps the child feel comfortable and facilitates the learning process.

### **Relevance to Texas Rising Star**

The TRS measures related to curricula all emphasize the process of using and implementing curricula to support children's development. This focus-on curriculum as a living aspect of the classroom rather than as a structural consideration (i.e., is there a curriculum 'on the books')-is important and consistent with research. Also embedded within the TRS measures is the notion that curricular materials must be aligned to specific developmental areas.

There is an emphasis on curricular tools across all major developmental areas and on the distinction between key developmental areas for infants, toddlers, preschool and school-age children. The shifts in developmental areas of focus, from infants and toddlers to preschool, reflect the growing breadth, depth, and specificity of knowledge children are gaining across this period of time.

There are three key dimensions considered within TRS:

1. How central are the use of curricular materials to daily instruction (i.e., Lesson Plans and Curriculum)?
2. How well curricula are used to support all children's learning (i.e., Planning for Special Needs and Respecting Diversity)?
3. How well instructional strategies-used within curricular tools-are flexible to accommodate a range of learning styles (i.e., Instructional Formats and Approaches to Learning)?

## **The Purpose of the ITELGs**

The Purpose of the guidelines is:

- To move Texas forward in ensuring that all children have the high-quality early experiences needed for optimal brain development
- Assist caregivers in understanding early childhood development and in making the most of each day during the early years of growth.
- Improve the quality of care for young children inside and outside the home by supporting appropriate caregiver practices.
- Positively influence the design of professional development strategies, parent engagement, administrative planning, key class materials, and curricula

The first three years of life are the most important years. During this period, brain development occurs at a very rapid rate in response to each child's early experiences. The quality of these early learning experiences is shaped by two factors: the caregiver with whom the child spends his or her time and the child's environment.

Caregivers must do everything in their power to ensure that this critical phase of human development is full of healthy, rich, and stimulating experiences because strong and powerful brains are created during these years. The brains of these young children are highly active. In fact, by age three, human brains have accomplished 80 percent of their growth!

The ITELG was not developed for any of the following purposes:

- Developmental checklist - This resource is not intended to be used as a checklist of developmental milestones. All children develop at their own rate.
- Assessment tool - Early child care providers should use a developmental assessment tool and complete anecdotal observation. However, these guidelines are not designed to be used for that purpose. They are not comprehensive and they do not provide the appropriate information for an assessment.
- Curriculum - The guidelines are a wonderful resource for appropriate caregiver/child interactions. While there are many activity suggestions included, it is not intended to take the place of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. A developmentally appropriate curriculum includes a scope and sequence that provides teachers with a progression or sequence of how a skill should be taught so that a child develops a thorough understanding.
- Exclusive - Child development, like any field of research, is always expanding. As new research is conducted and we gain new understanding of brain development, social- emotional and physical development, best practices should be re-evaluated.
- Permanent and unchanging - The Guidelines were created based on the current research and best practices and may require updating in the future.

## **Organization of the ITELGs**

The ITELG breaks down the milestones into targeted age groups: 0-8 months, 8-18 months, 18-36 months, and 36-48 months. These are intended to provide a baseline for typical development and widely held developmental milestones. They are not intended to be used to diagnose a delay. All children develop at a pace of their own.

Each domain has components. Within the component there are indicators, child behaviors, and caregiver strategies.

The developmental domain is a broad area of development, such as physical health and motor development. Each domain has multiple components and a set of indicators for each component. Each component contains a list of child behaviors that are organized by different age groups. The caregiver strategies correspond to the child behaviors.

## **Development Domains of ITELGs**

The ITELG addressed four domains of infant and toddler development which are also the measures in TRS Lesson Plans and Curriculum. Each domain is divided into essential components. This is also where you can begin to think about the goals for children's learning and the activities or learning experiences to support those goals.

### ***Social and Emotional Development***

This domain includes the most important tasks of infancy: establishing basic trust and emotional security. With a consistent, loving relationship with a caregiver, infants learn that their world is safe and interesting, that someone will be attentive to their needs and comfort them when they are scared or fussy. Another important component is self-awareness. When children have a clear and positive sense of identity and are able to recognize and talk about their feelings, they are better able to form healthy relationships with others and resist negative peer pressure. Self-regulation and Relationships with Others also falls into the Social and Emotional domain. Self-regulation is the ability to modulate one's own behaviors and expression of emotions, for example when a child calms themselves or waits their turn.

### ***Physical Health and Motor Development***

Physical development pertains to children's physical growth, while motor development refers to movements of large muscles (gross motor) and small muscles (fine motor.) This domain includes health and well-being, such as nutrition needs, exercise, and care routines.

### ***Cognitive Development***

Cognitive development is often thought of as growth in children's thinking, reasoning, and understanding. Positive early experiences that support cognitive development contribute to lifelong traits, such as curiosity, persistence, and independence. Exploration and Discovery includes how young children explore their environment and demonstrate the building blocks of inquiry and curiosity through playing with cause and effect relationships and understanding patterns. A child's use of imagination and creativity in approaching problems and tasks indicates development in Problem Solving. The third component, Memory, relates to how infants and toddlers store and use information. Young children anticipate routines, remember familiar people, and use their memory to inform their daily lives. Imitation and Make Believe includes indicators related to young children's use of their imagination and play to imitate actions and experiment with different roles and ideas. Caregivers model and engage with young children in this play to support development of vocabulary, imagination, and social interaction skills.

## ***Language and Communication Development***

The development of language and communication skills begins long before children say their first word. Listening and Understanding includes indicators related to what words mean, how to make different forms out of a root word, and how to put words together in sentences. It also includes listening and responding to the communication of others. Communication and Speaking includes indicators related to how young children use sounds, gestures and words to get their needs met. It focuses on how children learn language and begin to use it. Emergent Literacy relates to the knowledge and skills associated with books and writing. Although infant and toddlers shouldn't be expected to read, the skills that lead to later success begin in the earliest years.

## **Responsive Caregiving**

Responsive caregiving is a style of interaction in which caregivers take the time to pay attention to what a child is signaling, and then provide a response that meets the child's needs in a loving way. Children communicate their needs to caregivers through verbal and non-verbal signals.

Paying attention to these signals, correctly interpreting them, and responding to them quickly and warmly indicates to the child that the caregiver can be trusted. One benefit of selecting activities with a purpose helps engage children so that caregivers can interactive responsively.

## **Why is Responsive Caregiving so important?**

*Responsive Caregiving.....*

- Promotes secure attachment with caregivers. Children will come to believe that adults are trustworthy and will meet my needs.
- Promotes emotional and behavioral regulation, this builds a solid foundation upon which later relationships and learning are based.
- Responsive support for learning means helping children achieve the next step in their skills, and giving just the right amount of help - not too much and not too little.
- Responsive caregiving promotes emotional and behavioral regulation. Being attentive to young children's communicative signals and using responsive behaviors provides an interactional framework within which you can best support their early learning through lesson plans and activities and later developmental achievements.

## **ITELGs & Training Modules**

The modules cover important information in each of the four developmental domains featured in the Guidelines. These modules were developed to assist trainers as they provide trainings to child care providers on the Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines. Each module features a Facilitator Guide, Participant Guide, and a PowerPoint Presentation for trainers to use in their training.

## **The Purpose of the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines**

The Texas PreK Guidelines are for preschool aged children. The learning experiences of the preschool years provide a foundation that guides children academically, socially, and emotionally. Children's learning and intellectual growth are affected by the specific experiences (e.g., instruction, guidance) they have in a preschool classroom.

Research confirms the value of early education for young children. Prekindergarten programs that support effective teaching practices and opportunities for child discovery through play have been shown to lead to significant growth in children's intellectual and social development, both of which are critical to their future academic success. Quality programs provide challenging but achievable curriculum which actively engage children in thinking, reasoning, and communicating with others. With teacher direction and guidance, children respond to the challenge and acquire important skills and concepts.

The purpose of this document is to help educators make informed decisions about curriculum content for prekindergarten children. The guidelines are based on current knowledge of theory and scientific research about how children develop and learn; they reflect the growing consensus among early childhood professional organizations that a greater emphasis be placed on young children's conceptual learning, acquisition of basic skills, and participation in meaningful, relevant learning experiences. The guidelines delineate the behaviors and skills that children are to exhibit and achieve, as well as instructional strategies for the teachers.

### **TPKG Organization**

In this guide, you will find 10 domains, which include: social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy, reading and writing, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development and technology.

Each domain includes skills areas.

Some of the domains include information for what children around 48 months of age might be doing so you have an idea of what a child can do at the beginning of the year and the end of prek year outcomes. There are examples of child behaviors and instructional strategies that explain what teachers do.

In 2008, when the Texas PreK guidelines were developed there was not any research to support the skills areas in the following domains: science, social studies, fine arts, and technology.

The Prek Domains provide an overview of the domain along with key concepts and skills the child will learn. The Prek skills includes: By around 48 months of age, outcomes for the end of the prek year, examples of child behaviors and examples of instructional strategies.

The Texas Prek guidelines & training can be accessed by visiting the following website

<http://tea.texas.gov/pkg.aspx>

### **Texas PreK Training**

This online training was collaboration between the Texas Education Agency and the Children's Learning Institute. The introduction features a welcome from the former Commissioner of Education, Robert Scott



and two video commentaries from Susan Landry, a nationally recognized expert in early childhood education.

The case studies feature seven video examples of classroom instruction where multiple outcomes from the Pre-K Guidelines are integrated. This section also includes activity suggestions.

From the Guidelines features five of the domains outlined in the guidelines. Each domain includes video examples of the specific outcomes filmed in Texas pre-kindergarten classrooms, and instructional strategies teachers can use to help children achieve outcomes. This section also includes activity suggestions.

The resources feature a rich collection of professional development resources and games, books, and other activities and for you to use in your classroom. It also includes a list of the entire classroom books featured in the video examples.

Your **next webinar** is “**What are the elements of a curriculum?**” it will be available **November 23, 2015**.

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