



**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and
Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubrics**



**Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care**

Appendix: Preschool Curriculum Review Rubrics



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubrics

What does a high-quality preschool curriculum include? EEC has developed four different rubrics to identify what a high-quality curriculum should include and how it should be designed.

- EEC’s Holistic Preschool Review Rubric is used to assess *overall* curriculum quality.
- EEC’s three Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubrics are used to evaluate the strong evidence-based practices for language and literacy, social-emotional development, and mathematics.

These curriculum review rubrics focus solely on the written curriculum, not how it is implemented, which allows educators and administrators to systematically reflect on how the strengths and limitations of written curricula may affect teaching and learning in their context.

This appendix includes all four of the curriculum review rubrics developed by EEC:

Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Language and Literacy

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Mathematics

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Social Emotional Development



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)

Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Contents

Introduction	1
Criteria, Indicators, and Evidence	1
Criterion 1: Developmentally Appropriate and Intellectually Challenging	2
Criterion 2: Learning Goals and Assessment	9
Criterion 3: Implementation Supports.....	13
Criterion 4: Inclusiveness and Individualization	15



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Introduction

This document shares the conceptual foundation and detailed review criteria for the EEC Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric. This document is designed to be used with the EEC Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric during the review process. EEC also has domain-specific preschool curriculum review criteria for Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Social Emotional Development.

The EEC Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review process can be used in two main ways: (1) as a scoring and rating tool to assess the quality of preschool curricula available to EEC programs and districts and (2) as a professional development and reflection tool to support early childhood educators and administrators in thoughtfully selecting curricula that fully support young children’s learning and development and reflect upon the evidence of a strong, quality preschool curriculum. Regardless of how a program uses a curriculum, it can be helpful for educators and leaders to analyze the strengths and gaps of written curricula to support better implementation. Programs may decide to purchase supplemental curricula, modify how they implement curricula, or engage in professional development based on the results of the curriculum review.

Criteria, Indicators, and Evidence

The Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric is organized into four criteria, which are the main categories of essential components for assessing curriculum materials. These criteria are as follows:

Criterion 1: Developmentally Appropriate and Intellectually Challenging

Criterion 2: Learning Goals and Assessment

Criterion 3: Implementation Supports

Criterion 4: Inclusiveness and Individualization

Each criterion includes several indicators that describe the expected evidence one would see in a high quality written curriculum for preschoolers. These indicators reflect the research and evidence base on high quality early childhood curriculum, including alignment with the findings of the National Academies’ [A New Vision for High Quality Preschool](#) report.



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Criterion 1: Developmentally Appropriate and Intellectually Challenging

What is developmentally appropriate practice and intellectually challenging learning?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines “developmentally appropriate practice” as “methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning.” * These are practices that are responsive to individual children’s cultures, interests, and needs; include each child as a valued member of a learning community; and do not harm or neglect any aspect of a child’s development. Appropriate practices focus on learning through integrated, coherent, responsive, and varied experiences.

A rigorous early childhood curriculum is a plan for the classroom that organizes children’s curiosity, desire to explore materials and ideas, and interest in learning new skills into coherent and integrated opportunities for learning. Children learn best when actively engaged in learning about ideas of interest at a level of difficulty within each child’s zone of proximal development. Every child has an opportunity to excel through equitable access to a well-scaffolded, play-based curriculum that invites and supports a diversity of language, culture, and individual differences. Play is an essential part of the learning process as children practice skills and integrate understandings. Topics of exploration can be used to connect learning across activities and experiences so that children build understanding and vocabulary, deepen knowledge, and expand skills over time. A variety of activities, including play, with many opportunities for child-directed engagement in activities of interest, ensures that children are actively engaged in learning.

*Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2020). *Developmentally appropriate practice* [Position statement].



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>1a. Engaging Topics Explored Through Various Materials</p> <p>The curriculum is organized around engaging topics of study of interest to the children that focus on thought-provoking content that can be explored through an integrated series of activities, children’s experiences, and a range of curriculum materials.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics that organize a unit of study connect with children’s interests and provide varied opportunities for learning, including guided play.¹ • Engaging curriculum topics meet the following expectations:² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Connect to children’s lives and interests and be interesting to teachers. – Are deep enough to promote further inquiry and questions, and concrete enough to ground a study in which children can explore the topic through hands-on investigations. – Support children’s curiosity of the world of school and home and beyond. – When topics are generated from or modified based on children’s interests, a clearly defined process for selecting topics and developing an integrated unit of study around a topic needs to be provided within the curriculum materials. – If the curriculum is specific to a particular content area (e.g., math, literacy), suggested extensions/connections to other curricula are provided to enable an integrated, play-based approach. • Although many curricula will be organized around interdisciplinary topics, domain-specific curricula can still meet this indicator through organization around broad concepts central to that learning domain. <hr/> <p>Examples of Engaging Topics Explored Through Various Materials you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light and shadow • Insects • Community professions • Water • Growing food and its preparation • Transportation • Sound

¹ Guided play means that children take the lead and adults support and scaffold learning through intentionally preparing the learning environment; providing open-ended materials for children to explore; and using purposeful interactions, questioning, and other interactive strategies to embed and extend learning opportunities. See Hirsch-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R., Berk, L., & Singer, M. (2011). *A mandate for playful learning in preschool: Presenting the evidence*. Oxford University Press.

² These criteria were informed by the Teaching for Understanding framework: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/08/05/what-teaching-understanding>



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p><i>1b. Learning Experiences That Are Designed to Build Meaningful Knowledge and Skills</i></p> <p>Topics in the curriculum are explored through learning experiences of interest to the children that focus on thought-provoking content and are designed to build meaningful knowledge and skills in relevant developmental domains.</p>	<p><i>Description of the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An engaging topic, explored through learning experiences of interest to the children, provides the opportunity for children to build conceptual understandings and background knowledge, while also developing their vocabulary and language skills in context of their learning. • Learning experiences that focus on thought-provoking topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support sustained and deep knowledge building and conceptual understanding – Can integrate multiple content areas (e.g., math, literacy, social-emotional development)³ – Provide opportunities for the application of skills in new contexts <hr/> <p><i>Examples of Learning Experiences That Are Designed to Build Meaningful Knowledge and Skills you might see in the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing numbers and sizes • Identifying cause and effect • Time • Orders and sequences

³ http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/docs_research/10_TurningThePageReport.pdf; Lesaux, N. K., Harris, J. R. (2015). *Cultivating Knowledge, Building Language: Literacy instruction for English learners in elementary school*. Heinemann.



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>1c. Appropriate Texts and Materials</p> <p>The curriculum explores content with rich, high-quality, varied, diverse, and age-appropriate texts and materials.⁴</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Texts included in the curriculum:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– include playful language (e.g., rhyming) that helps children develop language and literacy skills predictive of future reading success (i.e., alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming of letters or digits and/or objects or colors, oral language (i.e., vocabulary), and print awareness).– expose children to rich language, ways of speaking, ways of storytelling, and concepts;– vary in complexity (regarding language, length, vocabulary, and concepts) to meet the diverse needs of emergent multilingual students and emergent readers;– represent various cultures, languages, perspectives, and identities (e.g., race, gender, ability) and feature positive, nonstereotypical depictions of a range of people and professions;– include a variety of genres and topics, such as fantasy and realistic fiction, informational texts, biography, poetry, etc.; and– include a variety of modalities of text, including print and digital resources, charts, environmental print, etc. <hr/> <p>Examples of Appropriate Texts and Materials you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stories including song and repetition• Stories of the daily lives of children in other countries• Books on animal facts• Books on common machines and vehicles• Illustrated poems

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.) *Pre-kindergarten foundational skills instruction: Whole and small group settings*. doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p><i>1d. Open-Ended, Hands-On Materials and Learning Experiences</i></p> <p>The curriculum provides guidance about selecting open-ended materials to support children’s playful learning.</p>	<p><i>Description of the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The curriculum provides guidance for supporting children’s physical development, including fine and gross motor skill development and how to use materials independently.• Materials are flexible, are open-ended,⁵ and support children to explore their ideas through multiple means of expression. <hr/> <p><i>Examples of Open-Ended, Hands-On Materials and Learning Experiences you might see in the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural materials• Recycled or loose-parts materials• Blocks• Manipulatives• Art materials• Open-ended writing and drawing materials such as a variety of writing implements and papers-• Open-ended technology, such as physical materials for coding (e.g., KIBO, BeeBots) and child-led apps such as ScratchJr)• Tools for engaging in mathematical/scientific exploration, such as hand lenses and measuring tools

⁵ Open-ended materials have more than one “right answer,” solution, or outcome. They allow students to work and learn with materials in different ways when there are no predetermined or correct outcomes. See Possibilities for Learning. (n.d.). *Open-endedness*: <https://possibilitiesforlearning.com/curriculum-differentiation/process-differentiation-options/open-endedness/#:~:text=Open%2DEndedness->



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>1e. Organized Learning Experiences</p> <p>Learning experiences are organized in a manner that encourages an appropriate learning level and provides support that is well-timed to help children in seeing connections across experiences while building deep understanding of topics and concepts.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning experiences are organized and sequenced so that:^{6,7} <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is an entry point for each child that matches the child’s interests, cultural practices, and understandings. – Flexibility and reasonable pacing expectations are provided to guide adjustments to sequencing and time spent on topics based on children’s interests and needs. – There is a focus on development of routines at the beginning of the year, with guidance on any explicit teaching necessary to create predictable structures and routines in the classroom. – Learning experiences require increasingly higher order thinking through the gradual introduction of more challenging concepts, vocabulary, and/or skills over the course of several different learning experiences within a unit of study and across the year. <hr/> <p>Examples of Organized Learning Experiences you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of indoor or outdoor plants • Drawing pictures of recent field trips or hands-on learning experiences • Ordering or categorizing manipulatives • Checking off tasks on a chart <hr/> <p><i>SPECIAL NOTE: when looking for evidence for Indicator 1e, focus on the design of the learning experiences rather than the topic itself. See Indicator 1a for the topic of learning experiences in the curriculum.</i></p> <hr/>

⁶ Systematic Instruction and the Project Approach: <http://projectapproach.org/special-topics/systematic-instruction/>

⁷ The Spiral Curriculum: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538282>



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>1f. Structured Routines</p> <p>Daily routines position play-based learning as an integral part of the curriculum, offered through a range of group sizes that are flexible and responsive to individual children’s and the classroom community’s interests and abilities.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily/weekly routines suggested in the curriculum include a balance of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Teacher-directed and child-initiated activities– Individual, small-group, and whole-group activities– Whole-group gatherings that are responsive to children’s level of engagement (e.g., not too long in duration)– Small-group activities that do not include more than five children, with guidance provided on creating the grouping and the role of the educator in managing the activity⁸– Time for integration of curriculum across activities using a variety of culturally diverse and inclusive materials– Indoor and outdoor learning activities, including gross motor learning activities– Quiet and active activity time– Opportunities for child-directed, hands-on exploration and learning through manipulation of materials and use of all senses– Suggestions for outdoor learning or field trips as relevant to the topics of study– Thoughtful transitions that embed learning and minimize wait times for children– Opportunities for educators to engage in conversation with children, either one on one or in small groups• Structured routines within the curriculum are predictable but also allow for flexibility to respond to the needs and interests of children and/or external situations (e.g., weather, holidays). <hr/> <p>Examples of Structured Routines you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated materials and activities for children to use upon arrival and prior to departure• Songs and/or dances used during transitions or waiting in line• Daily circle activities such as documenting the day’s weather• Stable student groupings during center rotations

⁸ Wasik, Barbara. (2008). When Fewer Is More: Small Groups in Early Childhood Classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. 35. 515-521. 10.1007/s10643-008-0245-4.



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Criterion 2: Learning Goals and Assessment

What does it mean for a curriculum to be evidence-based and standards aligned, and to use assessment tools?

Strong curricula identify clear learning goals for each activity and utilize evidence-based practices to support children with a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds in achieving these learning goals. Culturally sensitive assessment approaches (both informal and formal) are used regularly to identify when children achieve set learning goals and to adjust curriculum activities when more support is needed. Alignment with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences*—which provides guidance for planning, aligning, and implementing curriculum that addresses the prekindergarten and kindergarten learning standards outlined in the Curriculum Frameworks of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)—is expected of all curricula. It is as expected that curriculum will encourage learning opportunities that are aligned to the child developmental goals and assessment approaches for each standard.

*[Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences](#). (2019).



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>2a. Clear Learning Goals</p> <p>The curriculum provides clear and meaningful learning goals and articulates the learning experiences and activities that support them (within the developmental domains included in the curriculum).</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual activities include specific learning goals, with an overview of all activities across the curriculum that meet each goal. • Learning goals include all domains of development identified in Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences,⁹ with recognition of a variety of perspectives on typical development (i.e., that each child’s developmental trajectory is unique) in each domain.¹⁰ Learning experiences may address goals across multiple domains. These domains are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social and Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning – English Language Arts and Language Development¹¹ – Mathematics – Science, Technology, and Engineering – History and Social Science – Comprehensive Health – The Arts <p>Examples of Clear Learning Goals you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can count from 1 to 20 verbally and using manipulatives. • Children can identify their city, state, and country of residence. • Children understand and use kind and respectful language with peers and adults. • Children can differentiate between common instruments (e.g., violin, guitar, drums).

⁹ See the [Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/guidelines-for-preschool-learning-experiences) (2019): <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/guidelines-for-preschool-learning-experiences>.

¹⁰ A variety of classical child development theories and philosophies underlie the creation and implementation of many preschool curriculums.

¹¹ MA DESE. (n.d.) *Pre-kindergarten foundational skills instruction: Whole and small group settings*. doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>2b. Use of Evidence-Based Practices¹²</p> <p>Evidence-based practices aligned with identified learning goals are included (within the developmental domains included in the curriculum).</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum utilizes evidence-based practices, aligned to specific learning goals, which are provided in curriculum topics and activities daily and integrated across the curriculum. • Where appropriate, guidance is provided about sequencing of activities to support sequential learning and development of understandings (see the appendix for the essential practices). <hr/> <p>Examples of Use of Evidence-Based Practices you might see in the written curriculum (see the Appendix for more examples):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompts for teachers to use in one-on-one conversations about a student’s experiences or work (e.g., drawings) • Use of multiple vocabulary terms of varying complexity across lessons or units • Opportunities for students to observe and share observations prior to group or independent activities (e.g., centers)

¹² Please note that this indicator addresses the extent to which a curriculum generally integrates evidence-based practices for *all* learning domains. EEC’s domain-specific preschool curriculum review criteria for Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Social Emotional Development can further describe the extent to which a curriculum includes evidence-based practices specific to these three learning domains.



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>2c. Aligned Assessment</p> <p>The curriculum offers tools or approaches to evaluate the extent to which learning goals have been met, by the group and by individual children. Learning experience plans include an emphasis on educator observing and documenting children’s understanding and thinking.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum explicitly provides guidance and support for assessing individual and group learning by describing when and how to observe and document children’s learning (for example, by suggesting specific assessment tools or approaches to evaluate children’s learning process). • The curriculum allows for curriculum planning and instruction based on assessment information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Using assessment information regularly to make teaching practices responsive to children’s learning and development needs. • Assessment guidance and support in curriculum addresses scoring, interpretation, and the potential for bias. • There is support for screening, formative, and summative assessment tools. • Assessment tools aligned to curriculum and learning standards are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – easy to administer, – able to provide targeted information about children’s learning and development (e.g., information specific to a child’s language development in a comprehensive assessment), – valid and reliable, – culturally and linguistically inclusive and sensitive, – ongoing, – systematic, – cumulative, and – embedded within daily play activities. <p>Examples of Aligned Assessment you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running records • Timed matching activities • Student work portfolios • Observation rubrics • Mastery “look-fors”



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Criterion 3: Implementation Supports

What does it mean for a curriculum to be usable for educators and to be effectively implemented in a classroom?

For a curriculum to be of value to educators and school leaders, it needs to be easy to use, be accessible, and provide integrated supports. Guidance should be provided to classroom teachers on how to implement the curriculum. In addition, supports should be provided to school leaders to mentor teachers in using the curriculum effectively.

Indicators	Evidence
<p>3a. Usability for Educators</p> <p>The curriculum is accessible for educators and supports implementation.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The curriculum’s language is easily understandable (e.g., clearly written, specific, not overly academic or technical) and culturally inclusive.• The layout of the curriculum materials is user-friendly so that educators can easily access and locate the information needed to plan appropriate learning experiences.• Supplemental resources, such as small-group protocols, learning experience plan examples, texts, and extension activity guides, are readily available.• Materials include guidance and resources designed specifically to build teachers’ subject matter knowledge and understanding of relevant principles of child development.• Materials include guidance on how to talk with children (including children who are emergent multilingual learners) during learning experiences and when supporting children’s productive engagement in self-directed learning through play, music, and visuals. <p>Examples of Usability for Educators you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggested prompts or questions to elicit children’s feedback• Vocabulary prompts and definitions• Sample scripts



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p><i>3b. Implementation Supports for School Leaders and Other Instructional Support Staff</i></p> <p>Guidance and supports are provided for school leaders and other instructional support staff to coach and mentor educators in using the curriculum.</p>	<p><i>Description of the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The curriculum includes tools to reflect with educators on high-quality, linguistically, and culturally responsive implementation.• Additional professional development and training support in using the curriculum is available. <hr/> <p><i>Examples of Usability for School Leaders and Other Instructional Support Staff you might see in the written curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation guides• Reflective conversation prompts• Training or coaching materials• Video modules



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Criterion 4: Inclusiveness and Individualization

What does it mean for a curriculum to be inclusive and individualized?

This section of the rubric examines whether the curriculum is responsive to all children and families, including children with special needs; multilingual learners; children of all racial and cultural backgrounds, living situations, and gender identities; and both able-bodied and disabled individuals. Attention is also given to how the curriculum fosters diversity as a learning concept for children and values multiple ways through which children can demonstrate understanding.



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>4a. Inclusion and Representation</p> <p>The curriculum materials reflect a diverse range of children and families, with materials, curriculum, and teaching recommendations that are actively anti-bias and inclusive of a diversity of lived experiences.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials represent and value diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and identities, including depictions of a variety of racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds; gender identities; types of families and living situations; and both able-bodied and individuals with special needs. • The curriculum provides guidance to teachers in creating a classroom environment that reflects the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children. • Supports for the following are integrated into the curriculum rather than included as an add-on or extension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-bias education (see the appendix). – Multilingual learners, by approaching multilingualism as an asset and providing tailored supports for language development in both the home language and English. – Children with special needs, by taking a Universal Design for Learning approach (see CAST Universal Design for Learning Framework¹³). • The curriculum materials (books, images, play materials, etc.) and recommended teacher–child interactions provide children with positive depictions and experiences of diverse groups of people and explicitly address and counter stereotypes and discrimination. <hr/> <p>Examples of Inclusion and Representation you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset-based language • Books featuring children as main characters that reflect the diversity of the student body • Multiple correct or acceptable practices, answers, or outcomes

¹³ [CAST: About Universal Design for Learning](#)



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>4b. Partnerships With Families</p> <p>The curriculum includes materials and suggestions to support partnerships and reciprocal communication with families.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The curriculum includes suggestions and strategies for fostering partnerships with families and opportunities for families to contribute to the curriculum content are encouraged.• The curriculum recognizes the varying strengths, cultures, and needs of individual families and their resources.• The curriculum offers a variety of opportunities for communicating with families (i.e., electronic, written, oral, in person) to help strengthen the partnership between home and school, including materials in families’ home languages when feasible.• Materials are included that can be shared with families to support their understanding of the curriculum and engage in extending learning at home if appropriate and desired. Culturally relevant materials are provided in multiple languages as appropriate to the context. <hr/> <p>Examples of Partnerships with Families you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inviting families to share expertise about their funds of knowledge (e.g., knowledge stemming from one’s culture, professional role, or linguistic background)• Inviting families to participate in some parts of planning for upcoming learning experiences• Sharing information with families about their children’s learning progress over time



Department of Early Education and Care—Conceptual Foundation for the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Rubric

Indicators	Evidence
<p>4c. Multiple Ways of Learning and Knowing</p> <p>The curriculum is designed with a range of learners, abilities, cultures, and languages in mind and integrates multiple means of accessing learning experiences.</p>	<p>Description of the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning experiences are designed to have multiple means of access (e.g., through different media and materials) and multiple ways of demonstrating understanding.¹⁴• Visual scaffolds, charts, and other materials that depict a variety of identities, cultures, languages, and family constellations are included to support a range of learners.• Suggestions for differentiating for a range of learners, cultural experiences, and languages are embedded across the curriculum.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Specific differentiation for multilingual learners and children with special needs is integrated into the curriculum materials rather than presented as an add-on or separate adaptation. <hr/> <p>Examples of Multiple Ways of Learning and Knowing you might see in the written curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pictorial and written schedules• Pictorial scaffolds for stories or routines• Area signs for classroom centers• Alternate or simplified prompt language• Signs or other visual cues

¹⁴ Based on the Universal Design for Learning framework (see [CAST: About Universal Design for Learning](#)).



Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Language and Literacy



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Language and Literacy

Introduction

The Language and Literacy Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric is not designed to be a standalone tool; rather, this rubric is designed to be used in tandem with the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric. This rubric presents criteria focused on language and literacy preschool curriculum only and is not designed to include all evidence-based or best practices used in preschool settings.

Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) created the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to assess the overall quality of preschool curricula. The review criteria in the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric reflect the attributes of high-quality early childhood curricula identified in research and best practice. EEC uses the Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to share information about curriculum quality with the field and provide professional learning opportunities to help early childhood educators and administrators thoughtfully select curricula that fully support young children’s learning and development. The Holistic Preschool Curriculum Review process focuses solely on the *written* curriculum, not how it is enacted, which allows educators and administrators to systematically reflect on how the strengths and limitations of written curricula may affect teaching and learning in their context. There is no specific minimum score a curriculum must receive for a program or district to use it. Rather, based on the results of the review, programs and districts may consider whether a curriculum is a good fit for their community, whether their educators may need additional professional development or support around curriculum implementation, or whether they may wish to supplement or adapt the curriculum to better meet their needs.

Language and Literacy Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with AIR, EEC created the Language and Literacy Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to conduct secondary, in-depth reviews of curricula that have already been reviewed using the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and scored at least “Adequately Met” at the domain level. The purpose of this secondary review is to use more rigorous and detailed review criteria to determine whether an educator implementing the curriculum with fidelity is likely to have a positive impact on children’s language and literacy development. This secondary review can also determine the alignment of a curricula with the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Language and Literacy. This Language and Literacy Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric can be used with any preschool curriculum; however, the dosages in the rubric may be more appropriate for curricula designed primarily for four-year-olds. In addition, one of the indicators (explicit instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness) may not be applicable for curricula designed solely for three-year-olds. When using this rubric to review curricula designed primarily



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Language and Literacy

for three-year-olds, the final ratings may be based on an adjusted dosage for certain indicators. The process for conducting the Language and Literacy Preschool Curriculum Review is the same as the process for the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review.

Curriculum Review Rubric Organization and Scoring

The Language and Literacy Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric has 40 unique indicators, which are categorized by six criteria:

1. **Alignment with Standards:** This criterion has six indicators on the extent to which the curriculum includes learning activities that address the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Language and Literacy.
2. **Curriculum Design:** This criterion has eight indicators that focus on specific curricular design elements that are important for the quality of language and literacy instruction.
3. **Language Integration and Environment:** This criterion includes five indicators on evidence-based practices for how language and literacy should be integrated in a curriculum.
4. **Explicit Instruction in Literacy Dimensions:** This criterion has six indicators on evidence-based practices for explicit instruction of language and literacy.
5. **Comprehension, Storytelling, and Conversation:** This criterion has eleven indicators on evidence-based practices to support language development through storytelling and conversation.
6. **Supports for Multilingual Learners:** This criterion has four indicators on evidence-based practices that are particularly beneficial for multilingual learners (as well as native English speakers) through a Universal Design for Learning approach.

Individual reviewers will each identify, review, and assess the depth and breadth of evidence in the curriculum for each of the indicators, taking notes on where they see evidence across the curriculum. Then, the reviewers will come together to come to consensus on whether the evidence for the curriculum is not present, limited, sufficient, or strong. Finally, the reviewers will produce a report that summarizes the strengths and limitations of the curriculum for language and literacy instruction and supports, including overall ratings of not present, limited, sufficient, or strong for each criterion.



**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review
Rubric for Language and Literacy**

Criterion 1: Alignment with Standards

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities
Alignment with Reading Standards for Literature	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Reading Standards for Literature within the English Language Arts (ELA) Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Reading Standards for Literature in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)).	See the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences and the Massachusetts PreK Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy .
Alignment with Reading Standards for Informational Text	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Reading Standards for Literature within the ELA Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Reading Standards for Literature in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from DESE).	
Alignment with Reading Standards for Foundational Skills	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Reading Standards for Foundational Skills within the ELA Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Reading Standards for Foundational Skills in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from DESE).	
Alignment with Writing Standards	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Writing Standards within the ELA Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Writing Standards in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from DESE).	
Alignment with Speaking and Listening Standards	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Speaking and Listening Standards within the ELA Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Speaking and Listening Standards in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from DESE).	
Alignment with Language Standards	Activities and materials clearly define specific, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Language Standards within the ELA Preschool standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences (which are also the Language Standards in the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework from DESE).	



Criterion 2: Curriculum Design

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Guidance for teacher actions	Activities and materials include concrete directions for teachers on how to present and extend children’s learning.	All activities include explicit enough directions that a newer teacher can share the activity with fidelity.	Most activities reflect the indicators in this domain.
Variety of settings for language use	Activities include a mix of teacher mediated one-on-one, small group, and whole group opportunities where children can practice using language and apply previous learning in new contexts, including with peers; in addition, activities include a mix of structured and open-ended experiences related to language and literacy.	There should be a variety of these activities across the curriculum, without one type of activity being significantly more common than others.	All children have multiple instances of each type of activity each week, with daily activities to practice language with the teacher and with peers.
Learning goals that draw on evidence-based practices	Activities include and are designed to help children reach learning goals that explicitly address the extent to which children can demonstrate skills that are supported by indicators in Domain 4 and aligned with standards addressed in Domain 1.	There are clear learning goals for all activities in the curriculum that align with the indicators (which represent evidence-based practices) in Domain 4.	Daily experiences to address the learning goals in Domain 4.
Assessment	Formative assessments help teachers understand children’s progress towards learning goals and how to differentiate instruction, especially using the evidence-based practices in Domain 4.	Formative assessments align with most or all learning goals in the curriculum.	Formative assessment opportunities are presented at least once a week on average.
Scope and sequence	Activities and assessments are presented in a scope and sequence that aligns with the typical stages of language development in children and phonemic awareness (e.g., rhyme recognition before rhyme production) and includes multiple opportunities for practice following explicit instruction.	All activities and assessments with explicit language and literacy components follow an expected scope and sequence in alignment with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences .	Most or all activities follow an expected scope and sequence.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review
Rubric for Language and Literacy

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Differentiation	Activities and materials include suggestions on how to scaffold learning for children of different ages and skill levels (including multilingual learners and children with disabilities), with options for multiple ways to differentiate (e.g., via environment, materials, instructional practices, or content) and multiple ways to access and demonstrate learning, where possible.	All activities focused specifically on language and literacy include suggestions for scaffolding and multi-modal instruction, including providing additional support or greater challenge (including strategies from the Universal Design for Learning framework); if the curriculum is designed for a wide range of preschoolers (i.e., ages 3 – 5), the curriculum also includes differentiation suggestions for younger and older preschoolers as well as preschoolers of different skill levels. Materials should include multiple entry points for learning and multiple ways for children across ages and skill levels to demonstrate their learning.	The majority of activities include suggestions for differentiation, where applicable, with a variety of differentiation options where possible.
Multiple ways of learning and knowing	Activities and materials give children multiple ways to engage in learning and demonstrate their understanding.	Giving children choices of whether to respond verbally or with hand gestures, observe or lead activities, or create or revise; using a mix of audio, visual, and physical cues or information; etc.	The majority of activities include multiple ways to engage and demonstrate their understanding, where applicable.
Appropriate texts and materials	Texts included in the curriculum (for both direct instruction and free exploration) expose children to a wide variety of fictional and non-fictional texts that vary in complexity, genre, and modality.	There should be a variety of texts used consistently across the curriculum.	All children should have opportunities to explore a variety of texts daily, with frequent free choice.



Criterion 3: Language Integration and Environment

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Integration of language and literacy activities	Language and literacy (particularly vocabulary and comprehension) is integrated into other content areas (e.g., science, math) and play.	Nearly all activities (i.e., across content areas and play) should have some integration of language and literacy through suggestions of teacher questions and explanations, vocabulary, and child-friendly definitions, etc.	All children engage in activities that integrate language and literacy multiple times a day.
Integrated dimensions of literacy	Multiple dimensions of language and literacy are integrated into both structured and open-ended activities (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension during storytime).	All language and literacy focused activities should integrate multiple dimensions of language and literacy; many other activities also include multiple dimensions of language and literacy.	All children engage in activities with multiple dimensions of language and literacy daily (or multiple times per day).
Play with language	Activities and materials that allow children to explore, practice, and express different elements of language through play, building their enthusiasm for language rather than being only teacher-directed.	Songs, rhyming games, narrating images or picture books, structured and unstructured dramatic play, making signs/ labels/ notes, etc. Note: there should be a wide range of different activities that meet this indicator rather than a few types of activities frequently repeated.	Most activities and materials allow for play-based and exploratory language use and learning.
Interactive language	Activities and materials are interactive, promoting children’s frequent use of expressive and receptive language with peers and educators, included extended discourse.	Opportunities for extended discourse and back and forth conversations (e.g., Strive for 5); call and response activities, scaffolded and open-ended prompts for children to react, talk, or brainstorm, etc.	All children engage in activities designed to address expressive and receptive language daily.
Multiple ways of communicating	A wide range of activities and materials that show and value multiple ways of communicating, including oral, written, and drawn or and signed communication as well as augmentative and alternative communication (for all children, but especially for multilingual learners and children with disabilities).	Fiction and non-fiction stories, informational text, poems, songs, chants, and fingerplays with in different languages, drawing stories or feelings, labeling objects in the room, creating signs, etc.	All children engage in activities options for multiple ways of communicating multiple days each week.



Criterion 4: Explicit Instruction in Literacy Dimensions

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Integrated phonics, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary	Activities that embed phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary into stories, read-alouds, music, and imaginative activities.	Directions and guidance for teachers on introducing activities, asking questions, and drawing attention to language and print across most or all teacher-led activities.	All children engage in activities with integrated phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary for brief periods multiple times a day, most days each week.
Explicit instruction in phonics	<p>Small group and individual activities with explicit teacher-led phonics instruction (i.e., beyond whole group instruction) including alphabet recognition, letter-sound correspondence, and phonemic awareness (including manipulation for older preschoolers).</p> <p>Note: Letter-sound correspondence should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a non-sequential order starting with vowels and familiar letters from children’s names - opportunities to practice letter naming and sounds <p>Note: for preschool children, phonics primarily focuses on recognizing and matching letters and sounds, including how they are used in common short words (e.g., “bat” vs. “cat”). Preschool children are not expected to use blended phonics to begin sounding out and reading words.</p>	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, small group read-alouds, letter and sound recognition, etc.	All children engage with explicit instruction of letter-sound correspondence most days of each week. All children engage in small-group and individual phonics instruction activities at least once a week; children may participate in large-group phonics instruction more frequently (e.g., as part of storytime).
Explicit instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness	Activities that teach explicit awareness of the sound structure of language, including the word, syllable, and phoneme levels (e.g., brainstorming rhyming words, identifying words that begin with the same sounds).	Directions and guidance for teachers on introducing activities, asking questions, and drawing attention to the sounds of language across most or all teacher-led activities.	All children engage in phonemic awareness and rhyming most days per week.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Language and Literacy

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Structured vocabulary instruction	Activities that prompt children to discuss and act out word meanings; recognize, repeat, and brainstorm synonyms and antonyms; introduce and review vocabulary by category and/or taxonomy (with developmentally appropriate and child-friendly definitions and categories); and sort vocabulary by category (e.g., birds vs. fish).	Matching activities, group brainstorming, activities focused on recognizing and naming attributes (e.g., animals with and without tails), word play and games, acting out words, repeating words, and child-friendly definitions of words, etc.	All children engage in structured vocabulary instruction at least once per week and informal vocabulary instruction daily.
Emergent writing	Activities (both structured and unstructured) help children to demonstrate and develop emergent writing skills, including authentic writing experiences and activities designed to connect letter sounds and forms with writing.	Name writing, drawing, signing art, arranging letters, copying letters, inventive spelling, dictation, open-ended writing practice, adding to charts and graphs, modeling writing words and phrases, group writing, etc.	All children engage in activities that help develop emergent writing skills at least a few days a week.
Physical dexterity and motor skills	Teacher-directed or free-play activities that help children develop the physical skills and strength needed for writing.	Art with pencils/ pens/ paintbrushes, using tweezers and tongs to pick up objects, hammering objects into frames, pulling yarn, as well as supports for emergent writing etc.	All children engage in these activities at least a few times a week, with more frequent free choice.



Criterion 5: Comprehension, Storytelling, and Conversation

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Oral storytelling activities that allow groups of children to co-create stories	Activities that allow children to a) share their lived experiences or imaginations (i.e., not only recall from books, songs, etc.) and b) expand and build upon each other’s contributions to create shared stories or narratives.	Circle time, drawing pictures or retelling events after an activity or field trip, dramatic play, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Interactive read-alouds	Activities with whole- and small-group read-alouds (including repeated / multiple readings) that use interactive strategies by the teacher from texts across a variety of genres (including informational text), characters, and settings.	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, that integrates interactive prompts for engaging children to reflect on and participate in the book reading (e.g., acting out words or actions, choral reading, rhyming, making predictions) etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Dialogic reading approaches	Specific questions, prompts, and instructional strategies focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary development that follow a dialogic reading sequence , such as the CROWD strategy (i.e., asking Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-, and Distancing questions) and/or PEER strategy (i.e., Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, and Repeat).	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, small group read-alouds, independent book exploration, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Vocabulary and comprehension	Activities focused on reading comprehension with integrated vocabulary development, including suggestions for prompts or questions that draw attention to and define new and familiar vocabulary using child-friendly language and opportunities for children to practice using new vocabulary.	Most or all activities should include new and familiar vocabulary, such as naming animals and plants in nature-focused activities (e.g., seagull, pigeon, shrub) or naming materials used in art activities (e.g., paper, paintbrush, etc.) as well as actions (e.g., skipping, tripping) and descriptions (e.g., fast, quick, swift)	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Making predictions	Questions, prompts, and instructional strategies focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary development, with suggestions for prompts or questions that ask children to make predictions, with follow-up questions or guidance on how to respond to children where appropriate.	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, small group read-alouds, independent book exploration, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review
Rubric for Language and Literacy

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Scaffolding questions	Questions, prompts, and instructional strategies focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary development, with suggestions for prompts or questions that include options for scaffolding (including providing answer options versus asking fully open-ended questions) and promoting higher-level thinking.	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, small group read-alouds, independent book exploration, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Retelling and recall	Activities framing read-alouds that allow children to retell, re-enact, or represent the story structure, key events, or important information through dialogue or pictures.	Drawing events from a story or parallels in their lives, pre- or post-reading discussions, describing or retelling story elements, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Text recognition	Activities that prompt children to recognize, use, and or discuss text they have been previously introduced to in stories, signs, etc.	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, environmental print, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Organization, concepts, and features of text	Activities that allow children to explore and/or demonstrate understanding of the organization, concepts, and features of text (e.g., text direction, how lines and pages of text are organized).	Read-alouds with a pointer following words, prompts on where to find information in a book (e.g., top, bottom, beginning, end)	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Extended conversation	Activities that allow children to practice extended conversation with each other and adults, including structured closed- and open-ended questions, as well as individually and in groups.	Dramatic play centers, shared art and hands-on exploration activities, cooperative games (e.g., catch, relay exercises), call and response music activities, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.
Culturally responsive texts with “mirrors” and “windows”	Activities and materials that include texts and stories that explicitly provide “mirrors” (i.e., where children see their identities reflected positively and with agency/influence) and “windows” (i.e., where children learn about and empathize with others different than themselves) to children, which can spark children’s interests and curiosity about reading.	Circle time, story time, whole-group read-alouds, small group read-alouds, independent book exploration, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week.



Criterion 6: Supports for Multilingual Learners

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Social conversations	Activities that prompt and scaffold social conversations between children.	Dramatic play centers, shared art and hands-on exploration activities, cooperative games (e.g., catch, relay exercises), call and response music activities, small group creative activities, planning conversations that include discussion of next steps or children’s preferences, conversation prompts, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week (and more often based on individual children’s needs).
Value children’s home languages	Activities that incorporate and value children’s home languages and activities that allow children to share language used at home or in their community.	Options for books in multiple languages, prompts for connecting English vocabulary to vocabulary from children’s home languages, use of phrases and idioms in home language(s), learning the same songs or chants in multiple languages, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week (and more often based on individual children’s needs).
Visual aids to support communication in English	Suggestions for visual aids or gestures to help children developing language and English language learners communicate in English.	Labels in the classroom environment (e.g., “chair”, “table”, “door”, “bookshelf”), word cards for new vocabulary words, common American Sign language signs used with verbal language, etc.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week (and more often based on individual children’s needs).
Support for receptive and expressive language	Supports for receptive and expressive language with explicit scaffolding and connections across English and children’s home language(s) (e.g., a focus on cognates).	Language stems and prompts with scaffolds such as cards or visuals, parallel home language speech, and group play.	All children engage in some of these activities multiple times a day, with all activities happening at least once a week (and more often based on individual children’s needs).



Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Mathematics



Introduction

The Mathematics Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric is not designed to be a standalone tool; rather, this rubric is designed to be used in tandem with the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric. This rubric presents criteria focused on mathematics preschool curriculum only and is not designed to include all evidence-based or best practices used in preschool settings.

Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) created the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to assess the overall quality of preschool curricula. The review criteria in the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric reflect the attributes of high-quality early childhood curricula identified in research and best practice. EEC uses the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to share information about curriculum quality with the field and provide professional learning opportunities to help early childhood educators and administrators thoughtfully select curricula that fully support young children’s learning and development. The Preschool Curriculum Review process focuses solely on the *written* curriculum, not how it is enacted, which allows educators and administrators to systematically reflect on how the strengths and limitations of written curricula may affect teaching and learning in their context. There is no specific minimum score a curriculum must receive for a program or district to use it. Rather, based on the results of the review, programs and districts may consider whether a curriculum is a good fit for their community, whether their educators may need additional professional development or support around curriculum implementation, or whether they may wish to supplement or adapt the curriculum to better meet their needs.

Mathematics Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with AIR, EEC created the Mathematics Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to conduct secondary, in-depth reviews of curricula that have already been reviewed using the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and scored at least “Adequately Met” at the criterion level. The purpose of this secondary review is to use more rigorous and detailed review criteria to determine whether an educator implementing the curriculum with fidelity is likely to have a positive impact on children’s language and literacy development. This secondary review can also determine the alignment of a curricula with the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Mathematics. The process for conducting the Mathematics Preschool Curriculum Review is the same as the process for the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review, although reviewers use different rating labels when presenting the results in the final report (i.e., ratings indicating whether the evidence is Strong, Sufficient, Limited, or Not Present). Likewise, programs and districts may use the results of this review in similar ways as the results of the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Mathematics

This Mathematics Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric can be used with any preschool curriculum; however, the dosages in the rubric may be more appropriate for curricula designed primarily for four-year-olds. When using this rubric to review curricula designed primarily for three-year-olds, the final ratings may be based on an adjusted dosage for certain indicators.

Curriculum Review Rubric Organization and Scoring

The Mathematics Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric has 23 unique indicators, which are categorized by five criteria:

1. **Alignment with Standards:** This criterion has four indicators on the extent to which the curriculum includes learning activities that address the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Mathematics.
2. **Curriculum Design:** This criterion has five indicators that focus on specific curricular design elements that are important for the quality of mathematics instruction.
3. **Mathematics Integration and Environment:** This criterion includes four indicators on evidence-based practices for how mathematics should be integrated in a curriculum.
4. **Numbers and Operations:** This criterion has six indicators on evidence-based practices for instruction on numbers and operations.
5. **Geometry and Patterns:** This criterion has four indicators on evidence-based practices for instruction on geometry and patterns.

Individual reviewers will each identify, review, and assess the depth and breadth of evidence in the curriculum for each of the indicators, taking notes on where they see evidence across the curriculum. Then, the reviewers will come together to come to consensus on whether the evidence for the curriculum is not present, limited, sufficient, or strong. Finally, the reviewers will produce a report that summarizes the strengths and limitations of the curriculum for language and literacy instruction and supports, including overall ratings of not present, limited, sufficient, or strong for each criterion.



Criterion 1: Alignment with Standards

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities
Alignment with Mathematics Standards for Counting and Cardinality	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Mathematics Standards for Counting and Cardinality within the standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	See the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences .
Alignment with Mathematics Standards for Operations and Algebraic Thinking	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Mathematics Standards for Operations and Algebraic Thinking within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	
Alignment with Mathematics Standards for Measurement and Data	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Mathematics Standards for Measurement and Data within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	
Alignment with Mathematics Standards for Geometry	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Mathematics Standards for Geometry within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	



Criterion 2: Curriculum Design

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Guidance for teacher actions	Activities and materials include concrete directions for teachers on how to present and extend children’s learning.	All activities include explicit enough directions that a newer teacher can share the activity with fidelity.	Most activities reflect the indicators in this criterion.
Learning goals that draw on evidence-based practices	Activities include and are designed to help children reach learning goals that explicitly address the extent to which children can demonstrate skills that are aligned with standards addressed in Criterion 1.	There are clear learning goals for all activities in the curriculum that align with the indicators (which represent evidence-based practices) in Criteria 4 and 5.	Daily experiences to address the learning goals for activities in Criteria 4 and 5.
Assessment	Formative assessment opportunities (including observation of play and structured activities such as sorting) are included to help teachers understand children’s progress towards learning goals in mathematics and how to differentiate instruction.	Formative assessments align with most or all learning goals in the curriculum.	Formative assessment opportunities are presented at least once a week on average.
Differentiation	Activities and materials include suggestions on how to scaffold learning for children of different ages and skill levels (including multilingual learners and children with disabilities), with options for multiple ways to differentiate (e.g., via environment, materials, instructional practices, or content) and multiple ways to access and demonstrate learning, where possible.	All activities focused specifically on mathematics include suggestions for scaffolding and multi-modal instruction, including providing additional support or greater challenge (including strategies from the Universal Design for Learning framework); if the curriculum is designed for a wide range of preschoolers (i.e., ages 3 – 5), the curriculum also includes differentiation suggestions for younger and older preschoolers as well as preschoolers of different skill levels. Materials should include multiple entry points for learning and multiple ways for children across ages and skill levels to demonstrate their learning.	The majority of activities include suggestions for differentiation, where applicable, with a variety of differentiation options where possible.
Multiple ways of learning and knowing	Activities and materials give children multiple ways to engage in learning and demonstrate their understanding.	Giving children choices of whether to observe or lead activities; or whether to create or revise activities or materials using a mix of audio, visual, and physical cues or information (e.g., inviting a child to create their own “Simon Says” move or create their own puzzle shapes).	The majority of activities include multiple ways to engage and demonstrate their understanding, where applicable.



Criterion 3: Mathematics Integration and Environment

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Integration of mathematics activities	Mathematics is integrated into other content areas (e.g., science, language), everyday life, and play.	Many activities (i.e., across content areas and play) should have some integration of mathematics, such as using mathematical language (e.g., numbers, equal, addition) in activities focused on other content areas or informal conversation.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week.
Teaching mathematics to describe the real world	Activities that relate concepts to the child’s understanding of and experiences in the world, as well as opportunities to reflect on how math is used in their lives.	Activities with everyday objects and tasks related to mathematics such as identifying money, counting objects (using both words and hand signs), and estimating size and distance of real-life spaces and objects.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week.
Guided play	Guided play activities with clear learning goals, teacher guidance on how to talk to children about ways to engage in the activities, and opportunities for children to make decisions on how to engage in the activity.	Open-ended activities with multiple structured ways to count, estimate, and build such as blocks, sets of objects or toys (e.g., nested dolls), or magnetic shape tiles.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week.
Executive thinking	Activities that directly promote children’s executive function and working memory development, which is associated with mathematics development and learning.	Activities such as puzzles, matching games, sorting games, games with turn-taking, navigating obstacle courses, freeze, Simon Says, or following a sequence of directions.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week.



Criterion 4: Numbers and Operations

Explicit Instruction in Math Dimensions	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Counting	Activities that explicitly teach children to speak numbers from 1 - 10 out loud when looking at or touching a corresponding group of objects. Counting activities are ordered begin with smaller number sets (e.g., 1 – 3) and expand to sets up to 10 over time. Counting activities also emphasize that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each item should only be counted once.• We use the same number order every time.• The last number said when counting out loud is the number of objects in a group.	Counting physical objects children can touch and hold, objects children can point to in the environment, or objects in pictures (including in books).	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Recognizing quantities	Activities that prompt children to rapidly identify quantities of physical or pictorial objects up to five.	Activities that prompt children to recognize quantities without counting, such as identifying three hats in a picture or four crackers arranged in a square.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Comparing and organizing numbers	Activities that compare small quantities (one to ten) to emphasize concepts such as bigger, smaller, and equal.	Creating a number line, identifying bigger and smaller sets of physical objects, moving items across sets to make larger or smaller sets.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Arithmetic operations	Activities that explicitly teach how addition is putting two groups together which can be done by counting and subtraction is taking away numbers from a group.	Using manipulatives, stories, and physical body movement to visualize operations, using counting to reinforce these concepts.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Measurements	Activities that explicitly teach the concepts of length, area, and volume, including comparison of different amounts or quantities	Comparing two measurements, ordering objects by size, and setting up objects next to each other to measure length or area.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.



Criterion 5: Geometry and Patterns

Explicit Instruction in Math Dimensions	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Recognizing and categorizing shapes	Activities that prompt children to recognize basic shapes like circles, squares, and triangles (including the same shapes of different sizes, colors, etc.).	Identifying objects with the same shape, counting the number of sides on a shape, and stacking shapes on top of each other.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Manipulating shapes	Activities that prompt children to use manipulatives to make shapes and recognize the number of sides for each shape.	Creating patterns with tiles, puzzles, matching activities, and stencils.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Algebraic thinking	Activities that prompt children to identify, manipulate, and repeat number, letter, or shape simple patterns (i.e., usually three to four items per pattern, with up to seven items per pattern as a challenge).	Recognizing simple patterns like alternating colors, shapes, and numbers in a line; identifying missing items in patterns, clapping and music activities; and recreating patterns.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.
Spatial visualization and orientation	Activities that focus on the positions and relativity of objects in space, including the concepts of near versus far, up versus down, left versus right, and below versus above.	Using toys and manipulatives to move shapes by sliding them and turning them to see how the shape appears different, labeling positions of different objects in the room, describing relative positions of other people in a physical space.	All children engage in these activities multiple days a week, on average.



Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care

Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric: Social Emotional Development



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Social Emotional Development

Introduction

The Social Emotional Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric is not designed to be a standalone tool; rather, this rubric is designed to be used in tandem with the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric.

Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) created the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to assess the overall quality of preschool curricula. The review criteria in the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric reflect the attributes of high-quality early childhood curricula identified in research and best practice. EEC uses the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to share information about curriculum quality with the field and provide professional learning opportunities to help early childhood educators and administrators thoughtfully select curricula that fully support young children’s learning and development. The Preschool Curriculum Review process focuses solely on the *written* curriculum, not how it is enacted, which allows educators and administrators to systematically reflect on how the strengths and limitations of written curricula may affect teaching and learning in their context. There is no specific minimum score a curriculum must receive for a program or district to use it. Rather, based on the results of the review, programs and districts may consider whether a curriculum is a good fit for their community, whether their educators may need additional professional development or support around curriculum implementation, or whether they may wish to supplement or adapt the curriculum to better meet their needs.

Social Emotional Domain-Specific Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric

In collaboration with AIR, EEC created the Social Emotional Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric to conduct secondary, in-depth reviews of curricula that have already been reviewed using the Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and scored at least “Adequately Met” at the criterion level. The purpose of this secondary review is to use a more rigorous and detailed review criteria to determine whether an educator implementing the curriculum with fidelity is likely to have a positive impact on children’s social emotional development. The process for conducting the Social Emotional Preschool Curriculum Review is the same as the process for the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review, although reviewers use different rating labels when presenting the results in the final report (i.e., ratings indicating whether the evidence is Strong, Sufficient, Limited, or Not Present). Likewise, programs and districts may use the results of this review in similar ways as the results of the holistic Preschool Curriculum Review.



Curriculum Review Rubric Organization and Scoring

The Social Emotional Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric has 21 unique indicators, which are categorized by five criteria:

1. **Alignment with Standards:** This criterion has five indicators on the extent to which the curriculum includes learning activities that address the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Social Emotional Development.
2. **Curriculum Design:** This criterion has two indicators that focus on specific curricular design elements that are important for the quality of social emotional development.
3. **Integration of Social Emotional Skills in Learning and Play Activities:** This criterion includes five indicators on evidence-based practices for how social emotional skill development opportunities should be integrated into a variety of activities within a curriculum.
4. **Instructions and Expectations:** This criterion has four indicators that focus on the evidence-based strategies for implementing curricular activities, including classroom management and relationships.
5. **Explicit Instruction in Social Emotional Concepts and Strategies:** This criterion has five indicators on evidence-based practices for explicit instruction of social emotional skill development.

Individual reviewers will each identify, review, and assess the depth and breadth of evidence in the curriculum for each of the 17 indicators, taking notes on where they see evidence across the curriculum. Then, the reviewers will come together to come to consensus on whether the evidence for the curriculum is not present, limited, sufficient, or strong. Finally, the reviewers will produce a report that summarizes the strengths and limitations of the curriculum for social emotional instruction and supports, including overall ratings of not present, limited, sufficient, or strong for each criterion.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Social Emotional Development

Criterion 1: Alignment with Standards

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities
Alignment with Social Emotional Standards for Self-Awareness	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Social Emotional Standards for Self-Awareness within the standards in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	See the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.
Alignment with Social Emotional Standards for Social Awareness	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Social Emotional Standards for Social Awareness within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	
Alignment with Social Emotional Standards for Relationship Skills	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the preschool Social Emotional Standards for Relationship Skills within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	
Alignment with Social Emotional Standards for Responsible Decision-Making	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Social Emotional Standards for Responsible Decision Making within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	
Alignment with Standards for Approaches to Play and Learning	Activities and materials clearly define specific and-developmentally appropriate learning goals that allow children to develop the knowledge and skills to meet all the Approaches to Learning and Play Standards within the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences.	



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review
Rubric for Social Emotional Development

Criterion 2: Curriculum Design

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Gradual and focused instruction	Activities designed to provide direct and explicit instruction in social emotional knowledge and skills are brief (e.g., 5 – 10 minutes) and introduced gradually over time, beginning with a focus on positive behaviors and feelings before introducing behaviors related to conflict resolution. Activities that include opportunities to practice and develop social emotional knowledge and skills but do not include direct instruction (e.g., cooperative play) may be more frequent and include longer durations.	See Criterion 5 for examples of activities used for direct instruction in social emotional knowledge and skills.	Children received direct instruction in social emotional knowledge and skills no more than 15 minutes at a time and no more than once a day, ideally a few times a week or month.
Differentiation and individualization	Activities and materials include suggestions for differentiation and/or individualized interventions for children with behavioral challenges.	Activities designed to provide direct and explicit instruction in social emotional knowledge and skills (see Criterion 5).	Most activities have suggestions on how to differentiate for children based on their needs or provide additional interventions.



Criterion 3: Integration of Social Emotional Skills in Learning and Play Activities

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Attention and memory	Activities and materials include opportunities to build attention and memory skills that can support overall social-emotional self-regulation, such as listening, focusing attention, following directions, sequencing, and strategies to support working memory (e.g., self-talk).	Memory card games, repeating words or phrases from stories, repeating instructions or a process step-by-step, matching faces or people, identification activities, etc.	All children engage in activities with integrated social emotional development at least a few times a week.
Persistence	Activities and materials include opportunities for children to persist in play or activities despite potential frustrations, including suggestions for teacher questions and talk to encourage persistence, manage frustration, and encourage joy.	Building, balancing, solving puzzles, active play such as Simon Says or Red Light/Green Light.	All children engage in activities with integrated social emotional development at least a few times a week.
Cooperation with other children	Activities and materials include opportunities for children to work together including activities that include sharing, turn taking, requesting and distributing items, and working cooperatively towards shared goals.	Relay races, children exchanging different instruments or tactile items, building towers or other structures, moving large objects as a pair, etc.	All children engage in activities with integrated social emotional development at least a few times a week.
Self-directed learning	Activities and materials include creative play and exploration that allow children to take initiative, explore and test their ideas, and shape their own goals.	Dramatic play, open-ended materials such as sand, building materials, music, etc.	All children engage in activities with integrated social emotional development at least a few times a week.
Self-expression and self-control	Activities and materials that encourage self-expression and self-control, allowing children to practice expression within agreed upon age-appropriate boundaries.	Music, dance, sports, open-ended artistic materials, etc.	All children engage in activities with integrated social emotional development at least a few times a week.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review
Rubric for Social Emotional Development

Criterion 4: Instructions and Expectations

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Accessible routines and schedules	Activities and materials include suggestions on how to set routines and schedules with children so that they are consistently accessible and serve as a cue for behavioral expectations.	Visual schedules, chimes or sounds for transitions, annotated clocks, etc.	Most activities in the curriculum reflect that are included as part of an intentional sequence in the curriculum include suggestions on how to share routines and schedules.
Instructions on explicit behavioral expectations	Activities and materials include suggestions for how to include behavioral expectations or reminders in the activity introduction, teacher questions, opportunities for modeling, or other teacher talk.	Group storytelling (e.g., instructing children to look at the pictures as the teacher reads or wait to share comments until after the teacher is finished reading the page), hands-on exploration (e.g., showing children how to hold their hands over the container when playing with sand to prevent it from spilling on the table or floor), center-based activities (e.g., reminding children that each center has a set number of children allowed in at one time, pointing out the posted visual showing how many children can be at a center at a time.).	Most activities include suggestions for explicit behavioral expectations.
Building positive relationships with children	Activities and materials include guidance on how teachers can build positive relationships, rapport, and trust with children through how they present, extend, and scaffold activities.	Circle time (e.g., giving children a choice of tasks to lead such as updating the daily weather chart or passing out morning snack), center time or other small group activities (e.g., touching base with children to assess their comfort and share additional supports or praise where needed), etc.	Most activities include guidance on how to build positive relationships with children.
Incorporating children’s backgrounds and experiences into activities	Activities and materials include opportunities to adapt plans and integrate children’s backgrounds and experiences into activities.	Sharing items or traditions from home, creating art depicting families, incorporating children’s home languages into activities, etc.	Most activities include options or suggestions on how to adapt plans and integrate children’s backgrounds and experiences into activities.



Criterion 5: Direct Instruction in Social Emotional Concepts and Strategies

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Identity and agency,	Activities explicitly teach children to recognize their identity, preferences, culture, and strengths and how they can influence their choices and behaviors.	“About me” activities (including children’s families, culture, favorites, etc.), activities that assign children roles by their strengths (e.g., “we need someone strong to carry this heavy basket, and we someone with sharp eyes to watch and let us know if someone needs help”), problem-solving activities (e.g., “what can you do to help?”).	Children have activities with direct instruction in social emotional concepts and strategies at least a few times a week.
Empathy and community	Activities explicitly teach children to recognize and respect similarities and differences in others, including opportunities to recognize and explore the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others; build empathy; and create a shared sense of identity as a community.	Dramatic play where children can act out different experiences, feelings, and reactions to events based on different perspectives; stories, art, and songs about different cultures; question prompts for stories that focus on interpreting or predicting characters’ feelings or thoughts; activities that highlight similarities and differences in people’s experiences and feelings; etc.	Children have activities with direct instruction in social emotional concepts and strategies at least a few times a week.
Kindness and fairness	Activities explicitly teach children about pro-social behaviors, why they are important in community/society, and why they are beneficial to everyone.	Activities that teach children language and strategies to use to make friends, include other children in their play, and comfort children in distress; activities that teach rules and principles of fairness (e.g., how to take turns, how to manage feelings of jealousy); activities that highlight the benefits of kindness and fairness (e.g., acting out scenarios, giving gifts to each other), etc.	Children have activities with direct instruction in social emotional concepts and strategies at least a few times a week.
Social emotional language	Activities explicitly teach children how to use language to recognize their thoughts and feelings, express themselves, explore their feelings and ideas through creativity and storytelling, solve problems, build relationships, and reassure themselves and others when distressed.	Recognizing and naming emotions (progressing from simple emotions to more complex emotions over time); using visual aids to categorize and depict emotions; learning and generating phrases to describe others’ emotions, experiences, and choices; creating or co-creating extended stories about themselves and others; etc.	Children have activities with direct instruction in social emotional concepts and strategies at least a few times a week.



Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care—Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric for Social Emotional Development

Indicator	Description	Expected Activities	Dosage
Decision-making and problem solving	Activities explicitly teach children how to recognize problems or distressing situations and multi-step strategies for how to address them (including self-regulation).	Puppets, books, role-play, observation, creating and repeating numbered steps for solving problems, creating scenarios with various different problems and brainstorming solutions, opportunities to children to practice problem-solving strategies with teacher support, making predictions and testing different solutions, use of visuals to break down and display steps in a process, etc.	Children have activities with direct instruction in social emotional concepts and strategies at least a few times a week.