

Florida Department of Education



Office of Early Learning
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Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers

2007

FINAL REPORT



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This document was developed by the Office of Early Learning, Florida Department of Education.

Copies of this document are available free on request from the Florida Department of Education.

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Introduction

In 2002, Floridians approved an [amendment to the state constitution](#) creating a prekindergarten program that was voluntary, high quality, and free. The legislation implementing what has become known as Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) includes the requirement for an accountability measure for VPK programs that are placed on probation as a result of their kindergarten readiness rates falling below the minimum rate adopted by the State Board of Education for two consecutive years. [Section 1002.67\(2\)\(c\)](#), Florida Statutes, directs the Department of Education (DOE) to approve and maintain a list of curricula for required use by those providers.

The law also requires that all curricula used in VPK classrooms must be developmentally appropriate, designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance the age-appropriate progress of children attaining the VPK Education Standards, and prepare children to be ready for kindergarten based on the statewide kindergarten screening.

The State Board of Education further defined “curricula” as a set of written materials that ([State Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 3-15-05](#))

- is replicable
- addresses the use of materials, scheduling, arranging the environment, and interaction between children and adults either separately or in combination
- includes more than activity suggestions and more than theory and pedagogy
- is aligned with the VPK Education Standards
- is aligned with scientifically-based research.

In order to establish an approved list of curricula for programs not meeting the readiness rates for two consecutive years, the Office of Early Learning (OEL), Florida Department of Education, conducted a review process based on protocol established for K-12 instructional materials adoption. Although the statutory requirements for K-12 instructional materials adoption and VPK Curriculum Approval are quite different, the K-12 process has been used successfully for the past ten years. DOE/OEL was able to apply the criteria and specifications as appropriate for low-performing VPK providers.

Six components were reviewed and are described later in this report: content, presentation, learning, professional development, parent/family materials, and research base. The first three components are comparable to K-12’s adoption process; however the last three components were added due to statutory need. Specifically, the VPK Approved Curriculum List is for providers who have failed to meet the readiness rate for two consecutive years (low performing providers). The professional development plan and parent/family materials are considered key to helping a provider make meaningful, lasting improvements in their VPK education program. Additionally, it was desirable to review empirical research, specifically research that was conducted to determine the efficacy of the curriculum in creating meaningful learning gains.

This process began with the selection of the review committees in March 2007, and concluding with the presentation of the list to the Commissioner for consideration in November 2007. All documents pertaining to the Curriculum Approval Process can be found on the [DOE/OEL’s Curriculum webpage](#).

Publishers' Process

Interested publishers were invited to attend a Publisher’s Information Meeting on April 11, 2007. They were provided with a copy of the *VPK Education Standards* (2005) and the *Emergent*

Literacy for VPK Instructors manual and DVD. They were also given two documents, [Curriculum Approval Specifications \(2007\)](#) (Appendix A) and [Policies and Procedures for Curriculum Approval \(2007\)](#) (Appendix B) which delineated all of the requirements and timelines for submission from content to pricing to evaluation criteria (including the evaluation form that would be used in review). Most importantly, publishers were made aware that the Department of Education would only approve comprehensive curricula for four-year-old children that addressed the seven domains of the VPK Education Standards in their entirety (Physical Health, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Communication, Emergent Literacy, Cognitive Development and General Knowledge, and Motor Development). Also, any curriculum submitted for review must provide explicit, systematic instruction, assessment and intervention that leads to children's growing proficiency at each stage of skill development. Curriculum must also be accessible – suitable for a range of children and instructors, including children with developmental, behavioral, or physical needs, children who are English language learners and children who may be at risk of learning or school difficulties for a variety of reasons.

Publishers wishing to submit programs for review were asked to provide letters of intent by May 1, 2007, and a total of 24 did so. On May 10 -11, 2007, publishers who indicated intent to submit by the due date were allowed, but not required, to present their programs to the VPK Curriculum Approval Committee. A timeframe was specified for each presentation, followed by question-and-answer time. The presentations were videotaped for any members of the committee who could not attend, although all members received copies of the presentations regardless of their presence or absence at the meeting.

All publishers were asked to submit an affidavit agreeing to maintain ethical standards for the approval of curriculum materials.

Review Process

The members of the VPK Curriculum Approval Committee were appointed as volunteers by the Commissioner of Education. Stakeholders representing public schools, private and faith-based VPK programs, early learning coalitions, and higher education were included as outlined below:

- four directors of early learning coalitions or their designee
- five directors of VPK education programs
- one instructor of a VPK education program (more instructors were recruited, but could not get release time from the school day to participate)
- four representatives of a public school district
- two representatives of an institute of higher education
- two representatives from the Agency for Workforce Innovation Office of Early Learning (AWI/OEL).

Prior to attending a two-day Curriculum Approval Process for Low Income Providers training (two sessions were held, one in March and one in April 2007), each member completed the DOE-approved [VPK Education Standards](#) training and the [Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors](#) online course. In addition, members of the Committee had to have, at a minimum, a bachelor's or higher degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, or Educational Leadership. (Instructors had to have an associates or higher degree in the same, and the higher education representatives had to have a master's or higher degree in the same.) Varying years of experience were also required, commensurate with the position. Each member was also required to sign an affidavit ensuring no conflicts of interest existed with publishers.

Meetings were open to the public and advertised in *Florida Administrative Weekly*. Floridians were invited to submit comments, either written or oral, on any of the programs being reviewed; no public input was received. All documents for the Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers were approved by the Department, and these documents were also placed on the Office of Early Learning Website's Curriculum section, <http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/curric.asp>.

The DOE/OEL asked all reviewers if they had any potential conflicts of interest with any of the curricula titles to be reviewed. No reviewer was assigned a curricula title where a potential conflict of interest was identified. Titles were randomly assigned, by drawing the name of a curriculum from a bowl and a reviewer's name from another container, with the exception of any potential conflicts of interest cited by reviewers beforehand. Five of the programs for which an Intent to Submit form was received chose not to continue participation in the approval process for various reasons: one was not comprehensive, two (same publisher) didn't think that their curriculum met our needs, one did not specify the reason, and one was in the process of revision and final materials would not be available in accordance with our timeline.

Of the original 24 programs for which an Intent to Submit form was received, seven withdrew for a variety of business reasons. The Committee received participating publishers' curricula by the submission deadline on May 18, 2007, and were asked to review the programs in the areas of content, presentation, learning, professional development, and parent/family materials.

For the content portion, members were asked to specifically determine how the program aligned with the VPK education standards; the level of treatment of content, the accuracy, relevance, and authenticity of content; and the degrees of multicultural representation, humanity and compassion.

For the presentation portion, members were asked to pay specific attention to the comprehensiveness of student and instructor resources, the alignment of instructional components, the organization and readability of the program, the pacing of content, and the ease of use of materials.

For the learning portion, members were asked to review for motivational strategies, explicit instruction, the level of guidance and support, the active participation of children, and targeted instructional and assessment strategies.

The Committee reviewed professional development plans submitted for each curriculum title, specifically designed to target low performing VPK providers. Because VPK is a parent choice program and parents are recognized as the child's first and most important teacher, the committee also reviewed each curriculum's parent/family materials.

A second part of the review process paid specific attention to the research base of each program. A committee of DOE staff, called the Research Base Committee, was formed to determine whether or not programs were grounded in scientifically-based research. Training was held for the review committee on July 23, 2007. Two members reviewed each curriculum, which was assigned at random unless a conflict of interest existed.

The Research Base Committee was asked to review for expertise for content development, and specific primary and secondary sources of research. Because of the importance of ensuring each approved program was steeped in scientifically-based research, the committee paid

special attention to the types of research submitted by the publishers. Market research, position papers and promotional items stating that the program was based on the latest research were not accepted.

Rubrics were established to guide both committees during the review and to ensure a fair process. The Rubrics are a part of the [Curriculum Approval Specifications \(2007\)](#), and are also available individually on the Curriculum portion of the DOE/OEL website under '[Forms](#)'.

The Curriculum Review Committee and the Research Base Committee turned their forms in to DOE/OEL by July 18 and August 31, 2007, respectively. As the forms were received, the scores were entered into an excel spreadsheet for each curriculum title. Scores entered into the spreadsheet were independently checked by two other staff members to ensure accuracy.

Staff from the Accountability and Quality Assurance section of DOE/OEL reviewed inter-rater agreement and intra-rater agreement. The inter-rater agreement process measured the extent to which raters agreed on the criteria when they reviewed the curriculum. Three Curriculum Approval and two Research Base reviewers rated each curriculum. To examine the inter-rater agreements between any of the two raters, the "*Pearson Correlation Index*" was used. An "*average measure intraclass correlation*" was conducted through a reliability procedure to find out the averaged inter-rater agreement among the three Curriculum Approval and two Research Base reviewers.

Intra-rater reliability was computed for each rater across all curricula they rated to examine if a rater scored curricula consistently high or low.

The Commissioner was presented the results of the VPK Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers and approved the curriculum submissions for Florida's first approved list of curricula for VPK programs that fail to meet kindergarten readiness rates for two consecutive years.

Listed below, alphabetically, are the seventeen curriculum titles that are recommended for approval.

Approved VPK Curriculum for Low Performing Providers

Curriculum Title	Publisher
Beyond Centers & Circle Time Curriculum Series	Kaplan Early Learning Company
Creative Curriculum for Preschool	Teaching Strategies
Curiosity Corner	Success for All Foundation, Inc.
DLM Early Childhood Express	Wright Group/McGraw-Hill
Doors to Discovery	Wright Group/McGraw-Hill
Early Literacy and Learning Model/Plus (ELLM/Plus)	Florida Institute of Education
High/Scope Preschool Curriculum	High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
Houghton Mifflin Pre K Florida Complete & Math Extension Bundle	Houghton Mifflin Company
Investigator Club Pre-Kindergarten Learning System	Robert-Leslie Publishing
Let's Begin with the Letter People Comprehensive Program	Abrams & Company Publishers, Inc.
Literacy Express	Literacy Express LLC
Opening the World of Learning (OWL)	Pearson Learning Group
Ready, Set, Leap!	LeapFrog SchoolHouse
Saxon Early Learning	Saxon, A Harcourt Company
Scholastic Early Childhood Program	Scholastic Inc.
We Can!	Sopris West Educational Services
Wright Skills /Growing with Mathematics	Wright Group/McGraw-Hill

Conclusion

It is important to note that all approved curricula have been specially packaged for Florida VPK Provider use and may include supplemental materials and specially designed professional development. Communication with the vendor will ensure that the desired curricula is the designated Florida VPK curriculum to be purchased. Visiting the [Office of Early Learning's Curriculum webpage](#) is important to determine the full scope of what was reviewed for this VPK Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers.

All approved documents relating to the 2007 VPK Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers can be found on our website, www.fldoe.org/earlylearning, in the Curriculum section.

The next Curriculum Approval Process for Low Performing Providers is scheduled to take place one year after the VPK Education Standards have been revised and released. The VPK Standards are due to be reviewed and revised prior to the 2008-2009 school year.

Appendices

Appendix A: Curriculum Approval Specifications (2007)

Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program:

Curriculum Approval Specifications

2007



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I. Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

A. Background

The state constitution was amended in 2004 to include Section 1(b), Article IX:

Every four-year old child in Florida shall be provided by the State a high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.

The legislation implementing the VPK Education Program includes the requirement for an accountability measure for providers offering the VPK program. Section 1002.67(2)(c), Florida Statutes (F.S.), directs the Department of Education (DOE) to approve curricula for use by private prekindergarten providers and public schools that are placed on probation as a result of their kindergarten readiness rates falling below the minimum rate adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) for two consecutive years. The DOE must maintain a list of such approved curricula. The curriculum approval process for low performing providers described in this document has been developed in accordance with this statutory requirement.

B. Developmentally Appropriate Curricula

Section 1002.67, F.S., requires that all curricula used in VPK classrooms must be developmentally appropriate, be designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance the age-appropriate progress of children in attaining the VPK Education Standards, and prepare children to be ready for kindergarten based upon the statewide kindergarten screening (i.e., Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS)). Developmentally appropriate curriculum should be appropriate for four-year-olds and flexible enough to modify for individual four-year-olds who have skills at either end of a developmental continuum (individually appropriate).

For the purposes of this approval process, curricular was defined by the State Board of Education as a set of written materials that

- is replicable
- addresses the use of materials, scheduling, arranging the environment, and interaction between children and adults either separately or in combination
- includes more than activity suggestions and more than theory and pedagogy
- is aligned with the *VPK Education Standards*
- is aligned with scientifically-based research.

The following is a description of characteristics expected of challenging, interesting curricula and pedagogy submitted for consideration.

1. **Comprehensiveness**

A comprehensive curriculum is one that contains a mix of instruction and practice activities sufficient to build strong skills in each of the seven domains of the VPK Education Standards.

2. Integration

The VPK curriculum used to teach skills in any of the domains must be authentic and support and reinforce Florida's VPK Education Standards in other subject areas. Research emphasizes the importance of connecting classroom learning to real-life situations which is accomplished most effectively when children are able to move seamlessly from one activity to the next.

3. Alignment with Florida's VPK Education Standards

Section 1002.67, F.S., requires that DOE develop and adopt performance standards for children in the VPK program that address emergent literacy, including oral communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonemic and phonological awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development, in addition to the specific capabilities, capacities, and skills referenced in the Constitution. High-level child performance standards, called the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Standards, were adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) on March 15, 2005. The purpose of the VPK Education Standards is to describe skills that four-year-old children should know and be able to do by the end of their prekindergarten year.

The VPK Education Standards are grouped around the following seven domains or areas of development:

- physical health
- approaches to learning
- social and emotional development
- language and communication
- emergent literacy
- cognitive development and general knowledge
- motor development.

The seven domains comprise 73 individual standards and include 37 benchmarks in the domains of language and communication and emergent literacy. All submitted curricula and instructional methods must align with and support these standards.

C. Access to the Curriculum

Florida's VPK Education Program ensures four-year-olds access to a high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity. It is important to note the great diversity of four-year-olds residing in Florida, including children with special developmental, behavioral, or physical needs, who are English language learners (ELL), or who may be at-risk of future learning or school difficulties for a variety of reasons. Evaluating the extent to which a curriculum can accommodate a wide range of children's needs and/or skill levels and be implemented across a variety of settings is part of the curriculum approval process for low performing providers.

Accommodations implemented to foster access to the program do not lessen achievement expectations; they should, however, provide a wide range of techniques and support systems to help children work around areas of special need. Frequently, accommodations that may be required to ensure meaningful participation by a given child are found to benefit many other children in the classroom. Accommodations include changes in instructional methods and materials, learning activities and assessments, time demands and scheduling, the learning environment, and the use of special communication systems, among others.

II. Submissions for VPK Curriculum Approval: General Description

A. Publishers' Submissions

The Department of Education will accept for review and approval submissions of comprehensive early childhood curricula for four-year-old children that address the seven domains of the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Standards. In order to be considered comprehensive, the materials submitted must “stand alone” and cover the VPK Education Standards in all seven domains. If ancillary or supplemental materials are required in order for a given curriculum to be considered comprehensive, those additional materials must be submitted with the basic curriculum as a packaged set and must be made available to providers as a complete curriculum at a set price.

B. Comprehensive Curricula

A VPK approved curriculum must cover all seven domains of the VPK Education Standards. Development of many skills requires explicit instruction in the particular skill area, strategies or steps to follow, and scaffolding of instruction by the instructor. The curriculum must provide explicit, systematic instruction, assessment, and intervention that leads to children’s growing proficiency at each stage of skill development. To support success in learning, a VPK curriculum should include clear presentation and explanations of the following:

- purposes, goals, and expected outcomes
- concepts, processes, rules, information, and terms
- models, examples, questions, and feedback.

The overall instructional design should include the following:

- a clear ‘road map’ or ‘blueprint’ for instructors to get an overall picture of the program (i.e., a scope and sequence)
- clearly stated goals and objectives
- resources to help the instructor understand the rationale for the instructional approach and strategies utilized in the program (e.g., articles, explanations in the instructor manuals, references, reliable websites)
- a coherent instructional design
- explicit instruction in appropriate areas
- consistently systematic and intentional instruction
- a logical organization to the materials so that it’s clear in what order the lesson proceeds
- consistent ‘instructor friendly’ instructional routines
- student materials aligned with the VPK Education Standards
- examples of constructive feedback
- scaffolding with specific instructions
- differentiated instruction
- guidelines and materials for flexible grouping
- enrichment activities for advanced children
- guidelines for use with diverse populations such as English Language Learners and children with disabilities
- components that foster intrinsic motivation in children (Approaches to Learning domain)
- ample opportunities for practice

Brief, frequent practice activities and games must be provided within the curriculum to attain mastery of each of the VPK Education Standards. Activities should include options for children of disparate abilities and backgrounds, providing instructors with alternatives to teach all children the required skills and content.

C. Learning Opportunities in the VPK Classroom

In order to provide Florida's four-year-olds with a high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning opportunity, several things are of critical importance.

Children need one-on-one interactions with classroom instructors and classmates each day. Through one-on-one interactions with children, instructors scaffold children's activities and can provide feedback and support. Additionally, they build rapport and a trusting relationship. When children are given many daily experiences to interact with classmates, they begin to develop skills in negotiating, turn-taking, and cooperative play.

Four-year-old children are very curious and inquisitive by nature. The curriculum used in a VPK classroom should include active learning experiences that are child-initiated, as well as those planned and initiated by the instructor. As stated previously, the curriculum should be developmentally appropriate, meaning that it is appropriate for four-year-olds and can be modified for individual four-year-olds who have skills throughout the developmental continuum (i.e., individually appropriate). Also, when planning and implementing the curriculum the instructor should take into account the children's personal knowledge, often related to culture (culturally appropriate), and then use this information to build on their strengths and skills. It is developmentally inappropriate to use a kindergarten curriculum with prekindergarteners.

Throughout the course of the day, the curriculum should include instruction in varying formats, such as large group, small group, and learning centers. Instructors have a very distinct role in facilitating and scaffolding the activities of the classroom, but it is not developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds to spend extended amounts of time in instructor-directed activities. Of course, children's attention spans will grow over the year and will be longer when engaged by an enthusiastic, invigorating instructor.

As a part of active learning within a VPK classroom, children should be engaged in many hands-on experiences throughout the day. Children should not learn about concepts through paper and pencil activities, work sheets, or coloring pages. Learning occurs when the child is engaged in the activity (instructor- or child-directed), and a child's attention span tends to be longer in activities and topics that are of interest to the child.

Early literacy skills are critical to children's success in K-12, and curricula used in VPK classrooms must be designed to prepare a student in this area. There is a large body of empirical research in the area of emergent literacy, specifically phonological awareness and letter knowledge, which shows that daily attention to these skills, as little as twenty minutes a day, can make a huge impact on children's emergent literacy skills.

Research shows that young children learn best through hands-on experiences (e.g., "play with a purpose") that have been planned by knowledgeable instructors. When young children explore things directly with their senses and practice new skills through play, they are learning in ways that are meaningful to them at their stage of development.

D. Domain-Specific Guidance

1. Physical Health

There are two primary themes or components of physical health for four-year-old children. The first component is physical health across all body systems. The status and support of nutritional, physical, dental, auditory, and visual health are included in this component. Knowledge of wellness is the second component and is demonstrated when children follow basic health and safety rules and habits, such as making good food choices, participating in physical activities, and performing self-care tasks independently.

2. Approaches to Learning

The development of a child's approach to learning is highly dependent on the quality and quantity of interactions with supportive adults. Instructors who observe and assess learning styles, provide a well-designed learning environment, plan a variety of challenging activities, encourage children, and ask questions to scaffold group and individual learning opportunities will help children develop positive approaches to learning. Four-year-old children learn best when eagerness, curiosity, persistence, creativity, inventiveness, and planning and reflection are encouraged and supported across all domains of development.

3. Social and Emotional Development

Social and emotional readiness is critical to a child's successful kindergarten transition, early school success, and even later well-being. Studies indicate that young children who are able to understand and express their own feelings, understand the viewpoint and feelings of others, cooperate with peers and adults, and resolve conflicts are more likely to be successful in school. These skills appear to be rooted in relationships with adults.

Children who have developed positive relationships with adults are secure and confident and can master new learning challenges. Positive relationships with adults set the stage for learning as children want to interact with, convey their thoughts and ideas to, understand the feelings of, cooperate with, and model the actions of the adults who care for them. Relationships guide how young children learn about themselves, others, and the world.

Positive relationships with adults lead to positive relationships with peers. Four-year-old children are developing important interpersonal skills. They are learning how to join, question, and listen to their peers and to adults. They construct knowledge by interacting with others and their environment, and they learn how to interact successfully with a variety of people and in different settings and circumstances.

4. Language and Communication

Prekindergarten children's language and communication develops in five primary areas. Listening or receptive language is demonstrated by the way a child verbally and behaviorally responds to oral communication. Speaking or expressive language refers to the child's own skill at clearly expressing him or herself in words. Vocabulary development includes a huge expansion in the words that a child understands, especially words related to a growing knowledge of the world and the ways that people describe objects and actions, as well as substantial growth in the words children use in their own verbal expression. Children's development in the area of sentences and structure is expanded as they use more complete sentences and demonstrate growing mastery of correct structure in the way they arrange words used to communicate. Conversation skills include how to initiate, participate appropriately, and modify speaking patterns for different contexts and settings.

Additionally, participation in a VPK program allows children to learn the language of school, including vocabulary, sentence structure, and content that is a key part of the educational experience in the United States.

5. Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy includes two components, emergent reading and emergent writing. Both reflect the development of the knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills that form the basis for later reading and writing. Emergent reading includes showing motivation for reading demonstrated by interest in being read to and told what written words mean, and development in appropriate use of books and other printed materials. Children also develop age-appropriate phonological awareness, demonstrated by their growing capacity to recognize that words are made up of smaller units of sounds, and that they can blend sounds together to form words, or break words apart into smaller pieces. Alphabetic knowledge refers to children's growing recognition of and ability to name the letters and the sounds they make. As children are growing in their ability to comprehend spoken language, they also are developing their understanding of text read aloud, as demonstrated by their accurate reenactment or retelling of stories read to them, and by their ability to ask and answer factual and abstract questions about the texts. These are oral language skills that emerge with adult support; children who are four-years-old typically are not reading text.

In emergent writing, children develop motivation for written expression and learn the concept that print conveys meaning. Just as children grow in their ability to name and recognize alphabet letters, they also gain skill in using letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning, and age-appropriate skill at writing letters. Children's knowledge of the structure of written composition is demonstrated in their dictated stories and their own beginning forms of written expression.

6. Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

Cognitive development is multidimensional, involving skills and strategies that children employ to explore and learn about their world. General knowledge is the accumulation of information that informs and facilitates daily interactions and is gained through explorations with the environment and people. Mathematical thinking refers to the child's reasoning, using simple strategies to solve problems such as sorting and grouping, recognizing patterns and relationships, collecting and describing information in a variety of ways, understanding spatial relations, and comparing and measuring objects. Mathematics helps children understand and make sense of their world. Scientific thinking is evidenced through the asking of questions, the use of simple tools, and the making of comparisons. The natural world and physical events are fascinating to prekindergarteners, and instructor's questions can foster inquisitiveness and scientific thinking. Social studies knowledge is demonstrated through identifying attributes of familiar people and understanding family roles and relationships. Children are developing new ways of examining and noticing places and the environment. Group rules are becoming easier to understand and follow, and four-year-olds have a beginning understanding of leadership. The arts provide opportunities for children to express what they know, pursue their own interests and abilities, and appreciate the contributions of others in creative ways. Children express and represent their ideas through various art media, and begin to understand and appreciate art.

7. Motor Development

Motor development activities must include opportunities for both gross and fine motor development. While unstructured play and movement activities are important and provide opportunities to practice developing movement skills, play alone is not sufficient for the development of physical skills. Planned movement activities are needed, and exposure too

many different types of movements should be the goal rather than high performance in one or more particular skills.

E. Assessment

Publishers are required to include assessment(s) that instructors can use to guide student instruction. The assessment should measure progress in the seven domains of the VPK Education Standards so the results can guide instruction according to the needs of their children. The assessment should identify children who are at-risk or are experiencing difficulty with learning and/or development.

III. Major Priorities for VPK Curriculum

As with K-12 instructional materials, VPK curriculum must be effective in six major priority areas: content, presentation, learning, professional development, parent/family materials, and research-base. The following sections describe essential features for each of these priority areas. These features generally apply to all formats of VPK curriculum, whether print or other media/multiple media formats.

A. Content

Features of content coverage include:

- alignment with the VPK Education Standards
- level of treatment of content
- accuracy of content
- relevance of content
- authenticity of content
- multicultural representation
- humanity and compassion

1. *Alignment with VPK Education Standards*

Content must align with the VPK Education Standards for each of the seven domains. A list of the standards can be accessed at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/earlylearning/pdf/vpkedstandard.pdf>. In addition, the document entitled *Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Standards 2005* is available online at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/earlylearning/pdf/standards.pdf> or from the Office of Early Learning, Florida Department of Education. This document includes the standards themselves, by domain and by indicator; related skills; descriptions of child skills; environmental considerations; instructional strategies; benchmarks, as appropriate; and, other information pertinent to the implementation of a VPK program. The following requirements apply to the alignment of the submission to the VPK Education Standards:

- **Correlations** – Publishers are expected to provide information that identifies exactly where and to what extent (e.g., included in one or more activities, in-depth coverage across multiple activities and/or domains) the VPK curriculum addresses each of the VPK Education Standards and benchmarks. If a particular standard is not addressed, the information provided should also indicate this. However, since the VPK curriculum approval process is only for the review of comprehensive curricula, all seven domains should be adequately covered, even if each individual standard may not be addressed directly.
- **Scope** – The content should address Florida’s VPK Education Standards for each domain and associated learning outcomes, including thinking and learning skills.
- **Completeness** – The content of the curriculum should be complete enough to “stand on its own,” without additional curricular supports. To be useful for classroom instruction, the curriculum must be adaptable to the instructional goals of individual VPK providers. There should be no major omissions in the required content coverage. The curriculum may include concepts and topics that enrich and extend children’s knowledge and learning, but should be free of unrelated facts and information that would detract from achievement of Florida’s VPK Education Standards.

2. *Level of Treatment of Content*

The level of complexity or difficulty of content must be appropriate for the VPK Education Standards, developmental levels of the children, and the time periods allowed for teaching (540 hours for the school-year VPK program and 300 hours for the summer VPK program).

The following requirements apply to the level of treatment of the submission to the VPK Education Standards:

- **Objectives** – Content should be sufficiently simple or complex, technical or non-technical, to match the objectives and developmental levels of a typical group of four-year-old children.
- **Children** – Content should be developmentally appropriate for four-year old children, while still allowing for individual and cultural differences. It should contain sufficient details for children to understand the significance of the information presented and to engage in reflection and discussion.
- **Time** – The level of complexity or difficulty of content also should allow for its coverage during the time periods available for teaching, given the daily schedule and the hour requirements of the VPK program year.
- **Coverage** – Each domain must be adequately covered to ensure the comprehensiveness of a curriculum. Skills should be introduced and practiced throughout the year, in varying group settings (whole group, small groups, and one-on-one) as well as throughout the program day (transitions, center time, routine times, planned small groups, whole group time, and outdoor play).

The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), funded by the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), has worked to synthesize scientific research of emergent literacy skills in young children. Among empirical research studies reviewed, five emergent literacy skills have been found to consistently and uniquely predict children's later (conventional) reading skills. These skills include alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming of letters and digits or naming of objects and colors, writing/writing name, and phonological short-term memory. Several of these skills relate directly to the VPK Education Standards and require specific attention by publishers and reviewers in this approval process. (Alphabet knowledge: V.A.3., Phonological Awareness: V.A.2., Writing/Writing Name: V.B.2.b. and V.B.3.). For further information on the NELP's preliminary work, visit <http://www.famlit.org> and click on "About Us" and then "Current Initiatives," or http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/early_childhood.html.

In the domain of Emergent Literacy, in addition to adequate coverage of the eight standards (four in emergent reading and four in emergent writing), the following must exist to be considered thorough:

- **Alphabetic knowledge** – A systematic way of ensuring that *all alphabet letter names* and at least *the most common sounds associated with each letter* are introduced and revisited throughout the year in meaningful, developmentally-appropriate ways should be included.
- **Phonological awareness** – A systematic way of ensuring that phonological awareness skills are introduced and revisited throughout the year, to include a minimum of ten- to twenty-minutes per day, and occur in meaningful, developmentally-appropriate ways, should be included. These skills include addition and deletion of compound words, syllables, and onset and rime (alliteration and rhyme).

3. Accuracy of Content

Content must be accurate in historical context and contemporary facts and concepts.

- **Objectivity** – Content that is included in the materials should accurately represent the domain of knowledge and events. It should be factual and objective. It should be free of mistakes, errors, inconsistencies, contradictions within itself, and biases of interpretation. It should be free of the biased selection of information. Materials should distinguish between facts and possible interpretations or opinions expressed about factual

information. Visuals or other elements of instruction should contribute to the accuracy of the text or narrative.

- **Representativeness** – The selection of content should not misrepresent the domains of the VPK Education Standards. It should include the generally accepted and prevalent theories, major concepts, laws, standards, and models used within prekindergarten education.
- **Correctness** – Presentation of content should be free of typographical and visual errors. It should include correct grammar, spelling, linguistics, terminology, definitions, descriptions, visuals, graphs, sounds, videos, and all other components of the VPK curriculum.

4. Relevance of Content

Content must be up-to-date for the academic discipline and the context in which the content is presented.

- **Dates or editions** – Copyright dates for photographs and other materials and editions should suggest sufficient currency of content. Copyright dates and editions serve as indicators about currency. However, neither the copyright date nor the edition guarantees currency. Subsequent editions should reflect more up-to-date information than earlier editions. Informed examination of the text, narrative, and visuals contained in the materials provides the most direct information about currency of the materials.
- **Context** – Text or narrative, visuals, photographs, and other features should reflect the time periods appropriate for the objectives and the intended learners. Sometimes context should be current. For example, a photograph used to show stages of human growth and development will be more relevant when the clothing, hairstyles, and activities reflect present-day styles. Sometimes context should be historical. For example, illustrations and photographs of historical events should reflect the historical time period. Sometimes context should be both current and historical. For example, historic images alongside modern ones would convey changes in styles over time. At all times the context should be relevant to the learner, to the VPK Education Standards, and to the concept presented.

5. Authenticity of Content

Content should include problem-centered connections to life in a context that is meaningful to children.

- **Life connections** – VPK curriculum should include connections to the child's life situations in order to make the content meaningful. Children might be expected to deal with time constraints, consider risks and trade-offs in decision-making, and work with teams. Connections may be made to children's situations in daily home life, family, their local community, community events, and services.
- **Interdisciplinary treatment** – VPK curriculum also should include interdisciplinary connections in order to make content meaningful. Examples of situations that connect a variety of subject areas include building projects, playing sports or games, retrieving information or objects, creating products, and researching information. In addition to subject area connections, VPK curriculum should connect themes or lessons taught to other disciplines. Examples of approaches to interdisciplinary connections include:
 - Explanations and activities for using skills and knowledge from other domains
 - Projects and activities that require children to relate learning from other domains rather than to isolate knowledge or skills
 - The focus on common themes across several subject areas (infusion, parallel, transdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary instruction)

6. Multicultural Representation

Portrayal of gender, ethnicity, age, work situations, and various social groups must include multicultural fairness and advocacy.

- **Multicultural fairness** – Through balanced representation of cultures and groups in multiple settings, occupations, careers, and lifestyles, the materials should support equal opportunity without regard for age, color, gender, disability, national origin, race, or religion. It is not the number of pages devoted to diversity, equity, or work roles, but the substance of what is stated and portrayed that matters most. For this reason, it can be misleading to count the number of pages or illustrations devoted to a social issue or group. It is more important to focus on the integration of social diversity throughout a set of VPK curriculum. In addition to balanced representations, the portrayal of individuals and situations must exclude biases and stereotypes. These portrayals must promote an understanding and appreciation of the importance and contributions of diverse cultures and heritage.
- **Multicultural advocacy** – The understanding and appreciation of multiple cultures extends beyond fair representation. It involves embracing a multicultural context, not just through pictures, but through information about ways to honor differences and deal with conflicts, promote a positive self-image for members of all groups, and provide for the development of healthy attitudes and values. Effective treatment of multicultural issues requires consideration of the age and ability levels of children and whether or not it is appropriate to include multicultural issues in the study of a particular topic. Overall, however, materials should reflect both multicultural fairness and advocacy.

7. Humanity and Compassion

Portrayal of the appropriate care and treatment of people and animals must include compassion, sympathy, and consideration of their needs and values.

- **Inclusion of compassion** – When providing examples in narrative or visuals, materials sometimes depict the care and treatment of people and animals. Generally, this means showing in some way a measure of compassion, sympathy, or consideration of their needs and feelings.

B. Presentation

Features of presentation affect the practical usefulness of materials and the ease of finding and understanding content. These features include:

- comprehensiveness of student and instructor resources
- alignment of instructional components
- organization of curriculum
- readability of curriculum
- pacing of content
- ease of use of materials

1. Comprehensiveness of Student and Instructor Resources

Resources must be complete enough to address the targeted learning outcomes without requiring the instructor to prepare additional teaching materials for the classroom beyond those available in a typical preschool classroom.

Materials should contain support for children in completing instructional activities and assessments and for instructors in implementing all of the instructional elements. A variety of components can accomplish this purpose. Typically, materials will include outlines and strategies for teaching, media supplements, learning activities, and projects.

All curricula will likely include activities that use additional materials that are not a part of the curriculum, such as play dough, blocks, or puppets, which are typically available in a preschool classroom. Activities of this sort should explain in detail, possibly with illustration, the material(s) needed to include alternate ways of making or substituting the material.

The major components generally expected for instructor and student resources are listed below.

- **Instructor Resources.** Instructor materials typically include an instructor's manual, so that the instructor has to use only one guide, or one guide per unit/theme. Inservice training, workshops, and consulting services should be made available by publishers to support instructors in implementing the VPK curriculum. Professional development is essential to the success of any program, especially when a program contains non-traditional elements. Publishers should clearly indicate the recommended amount and types of professional development that they will provide, and they should work with local early learning coalitions and VPK providers to ensure that instructors receive the support that they need. The materials for the instructor should support continued instructor learning. Support, guidelines, resources, or features such as the ones described below should be available to help instructors effectively implement materials in classroom and school settings.
 - **Components and materials are easy to use:** Examples include clearance, license, or agreement for copying and use of materials; clear description and accurate directions for use of required equipment, facilities, resources, and environment; clearly labeled grade, lesson, content, and other information to identify components; correct specifications for making instructional media and electronic programs work effectively.
 - **Materials support lesson planning, teaching, and learning:** Instructor materials should support lesson planning, teaching, and learning. Examples include overview of components and objectives; background for group time and discussions; vocabulary, and reinforcement and review strategies; scope and sequence chart for activities and planning; sample lesson plans; suggestions for learning centers, individualized study, small-group and large-group presentations and discussions, opportunities for community-based experiences, safety procedures, and other extension activities; suggestions for integrating themes across the subject area or course curriculum and forming connections to other disciplines; and suggestions for parental and community involvement.
 - **Suggestions are provided for adapting instruction for varying needs:** This section includes children with disabilities, English language learners, children who may benefit from additional challenges, etc... Examples include alternative approaches to teaching, pacing, and options for varied delivery of instruction such as media, tools, equipment, and emerging technology; strategies for engaging all children, such as open-ended questions to stimulate thinking, pictorial journaling, hands-on investigations, explorations, and multisensory approaches; suggestions for addressing common student difficulties or adapting to multiple learning styles; and alternative reteaching, enrichment, and remediation strategies.
 - **Guidelines and resources are provided on how to implement and evaluate learning:** Examples include suggestions for using learning tasks for classroom assessment; guidelines for alternative assessments, such as sample project guides and checklists, rubrics, and portfolios.
 - **Resources are provided to use in classroom activities:** Examples include technology resources; lists of resources and references, reading strategies, materials to use for displays or photocopies, classroom management strategies and documentation on how to manage the entire instructional program; in-service workshops or consultation support

from the publisher.

- **Student resources.** Student materials could include a variety of materials, such as children's trade books, manipulatives, posters, games, puzzles, cd's or computer software, puppets, and other props. Formats may include print, audio, visual, computer, or other media, but *should not include work sheets and ditto-type activities, as they will not facilitate optimal progress for children.* The student resources should be complete enough, labeled correctly, and have directions that are easily followed. Review and practice activities might include participation activities such as role-playing activities, opportunities for hands-on practice. Review works best as a logical extension of content, goals, objectives, and lessons, with increased similarity to real-life situations. Review activities should require children to recall or apply previously taught knowledge and skills. Frequent short reviews over time or space improve learning more than a concentrated review after a longer period of time.

2. Alignment of Instructional Components

All components of an instructional package must align with each other, as well as with the curriculum. All components of an instructional package—instructor's edition and materials, any student materials, and supplementary materials—must be integrated and interdependent and must correspond with each other. For example, support materials in the instructor's edition should align with student activities or projects. They must match in content and progression of instructional activities across the seven domains of the VPK Education Standards and over the course of the program year.

3. Organization of Curriculum

The structure and format of materials must have enough order and clarity to allow children and instructors to access content and explicitly identify ideas and sequences. Providing an explicit and teachable structure can double the amount of information remembered. Clear organization allows instructors to discriminate important pieces of information through skimming, reading, or browsing. Clear organization may be accomplished through a combination of features, but generally not through one feature alone.

Access to Content – Some features help in searching and locating information, such as a table of contents; menu or map of content; directions on how to locate information; an index for quick reference; goals and/or objectives, outlines, lists, or checklists for major sections; bibliographies and lists of resources; glossaries for quick access to major terms; introductions, key concepts and themes, visual cues, illustrations, labeled examples, and labeled reviews or summaries.

Visual Features – Visual features that improve readability include print that is dark and clear, with good contrast, on paper with clean-cut edges and without glare; or computer screens without glare; or, margins wide enough on a page or screen to allow easy viewing of the text. Other features are more important in establishing the readability of the curriculum, such as

- chunking text (e.g., sentence ends on same page as it begins)
- visuals that are relevant, clear, vivid, and simple enough for children to understand
- quantity of visuals suitable for the intended children—both lower ability children and higher ability children tend to require more visuals
- left-justified text (ragged on the right) rather than full-justified (lined up on the left and right)
- visuals that contain information in a form different from the text
- graphs, charts, maps, and other visual representations integrated at their point of use
- colors, size of print, spacing, quantity, and type of visuals suitable for the abilities and needs of the intended children.

Visible Structure and Format – At-a-glance features should signal the organization of content. The following features are desirable:

- theme or unit titles and/or frames; headings and subheadings
- typographic cues such as bold, italics or changes in size of type
- divisions of content such as borders, boxes, circles, highlighting, visual signposts, icons, or color cues
- diagrams, labels, and visuals placed near the related content; and numbering of pages and other components.

Objectives or a content outline may serve a similar purpose by introducing main ideas, providing guideposts to use in searching for key information, or serving as a checklist for self-assessment. Certain types of brief narrative sections also contribute to clear organization. For example, the statement of a clear purpose with content organized around main ideas, principles, concepts, and logical relationships supports the unity and flow of information. Introductions also play a major role when they include anchoring ideas, a list of key points, or conceptual schemes such as metaphors. Summaries also can assist children in understanding the logical order of topics presented.

Logical Organization – The pattern of organization of the content should be consistent and logical for the type of domain or topic. Patterns of organization may include compare and contrast, time sequence, cause-effect or problem-solution-effect, concrete to abstract, introduction-review-extension (spiral structure), simple-to-complex, whole-part or part-whole, generalization-examples-review-practice, and conflict-inside view-structure.

4. Readability of Instructional Materials

Narrative and visuals should engage children in an activity as well as in understanding of the content.

Language Style – Language style and visual features can influence the readability of materials. A popular tool for assessing readability has been the use of a *readability formula* of one type or another. However, these formulas tend to focus only on a few *countable* characteristics of language style such as the length of words, sentences, and/or paragraphs. Other features are more important in establishing the readability of, such as:

- organized, coherent text
- language and concepts familiar to the teacher
- language that clarifies, simplifies, and explains information
- transition words such as “yet,” “also,” “next,” “for example,” “moreover,” or “however”
- other phrases that create logical connections
- words with concrete and specific images
- active rather than passive voice
- varied sentence structures and avoiding both choppy sentences and unnecessary words
- specific questions or directions to guide student attention to visuals or key information.

5. Pacing of Content

The amount of content presented at one time or the pace at which it is presented must be of a size or rate that allows children to perceive and understand it. It is important that materials contain “bite-size” chunks or blocks of information. The chunks should not be so large, nor the pacing so fast, as to overwhelm children. Neither should the chunks be so small, nor the pacing so slow, as to bore them.

6. Ease of Use of Materials

Both print and other formats of the curriculum must be easy to use and replace and be durable enough for multiple uses over time.

Use – Materials must be designed for practical use in the classroom and school environments. They must be easy to identify and store. Instructors and children must be able to access and use the materials. Some of the factors influencing their ease of use include number of components, size of components, packaging, and quality of materials, equipment requirements, and cost to purchase or replace components.

The best choice about weight, size, and number of volumes depends on several factors, such as the organization of the content, how well separate volumes may fit time periods for instruction, and the ages of children. Technical production requirements, such as page limits or different types of bindings, may lead to multiple volumes.

Examples of classroom use include repeated copying of consumable materials and repeated use of other materials by children over time. Technology-rich resources should work properly without the purchase of additional software and run without error. Electronic media for student use should be encoded to prevent accidental or intentional erasure or modification. As with textbooks, electronic media should allow instructors to easily access and interact with them without extensive supervision or special assistance.

The physical and technical qualities of materials should match with the resources of VPK programs. Materials such as videos, software, CD-ROMs, Internet sites, and transparencies may serve instructional purposes well, but have little value unless they can be implemented with the program's equipment. Publishers should include training, inservice, and consultation to help in effective use of the materials.

Durability – Children and instructors should be able to have materials that will be durable under conditions of expected use. For example, boxes, books, or other materials should not fall apart after normal classroom use. The packaging and form of materials should be flexible and durable enough for multiple uses over time. Durability includes considerations such as

- high-quality paper, ink, binding, and cover
- back, joints, body block, and individual pages
- worry-free technology that runs properly, with easy to hear, see, and control audio and visuals
- teaching materials that have been tested for use in real-world classrooms
- the publisher's guarantee for replacement conditions and agreements for reproduction needed to effectively use the materials

Cost – The Department of Education will consider the cost of curriculum when approving selecting curriculum for approval. Cost, while not a direct factor in ease of use, influences the ease with which materials can be obtained or replaced. The impact of cost can be complex to estimate. It requires considering the number of materials available at no additional cost with the purchase of the comprehensive curriculum, the cost over the approval list period of several years, and the number of free materials to support implementation. Attractive features such as higher quality paper and visuals and greater use of color may escalate cost, without enhancing learning effectiveness. The Committee will not be considering the cost of curricula when evaluating each submission.

C. Learning

Several features have been found to promote learning and apply to most types of learning outcomes. These include

- motivational strategies
- explicit instruction
- guidance and support
- active participation
- targeted instructional strategies
- targeted assessment strategies.

The following sections describe the learning features expected for each of these priority areas.

1. Motivational Strategies

The curriculum must include features to maintain learner motivation.

Expectations – Materials should positively influence the expectations of children. Examples include

- positive expectations for success
- novel tasks or other approaches to stimulate intellectual curiosity
- meaningful tasks related to student interests, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels
- activities with relevance to the student's life
- thought-provoking challenges such as paradoxes, dilemmas, problems, controversies, and questioning of traditional ways of thinking
- challenges that are neither too difficult to achieve nor so easy that children become bored
- hands-on tasks in a concrete context, and images, sounds, analogies, metaphors, or humorous anecdotes
- variety, including the opportunity for children to ask their own questions, set their own goals, and make other choices during learning.

Feedback – Materials should include informative and positive feedback on progress. Examples include

- frequent checks on progress, including assessment
- explanatory feedback with information about asking questions to further the accurateness of responses, how to avoid or correct common mistakes (problem-solving approach), and/or different approaches to use
- varied forms of assessments (self-assessment, peer assessment, and some learning tasks without formal assessments).

Appearance – Materials should have an appearance generally considered attractive to the intended children.

2. Explicit Instruction

The curriculum must contain clear statements of information and outcomes.

Clarity of Directions and Explanations – To support success in learning, the curriculum should include clear presentation and explanations of

- purposes, goals, and expected outcomes

- concepts, rules, information, and terms
- models, examples, questions, and feedback.

For example, development of specific thinking skills requires an explicit statement of the particular *thinking skills* to be learned, along with the *strategies* or *steps to follow*. Explicit instruction for thinking skills might also involve showing *examples* of successful thinking contrasted with examples of poor thinking processes.

Similarly, the development of learning skills requires explicit directions about *when* and *how* to do activities such as problem-solving, note taking, outlining, paraphrasing, abstracting and analyzing, summarizing, self-coaching, memory strategies, persistence, preview and questioning, reading and listening, reflecting, and reciting.

Exclusion of Ambiguity – The directions should avoid terms and phrases with ambiguous meanings, confusing directions or descriptions, and inadequate explanations. For this item, it is important to remember that while some VPK instructors may have an associates or higher degree, VPK instructors are only required to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent credential.

3. Guidance and Support

The curriculum must include guidance and support to help children safely and successfully become more independent learners and thinkers.

Level – The type of guidance and support that helps children to become more independent learners and thinkers is sometimes referred to as *scaffolding*. Scaffolding is a solid structure of support that can be removed after a job has been completed. As children gain proficiency, support can diminish, and children can encounter more complex, life-centered problems. Information and activities should provide guidance and support at the level that is needed—no more and no less. Too much can squelch student interest, and too little can lead to failure. Guidance and support can be accomplished by a combination of the following features:

- organized routines
- advance organizers or models such as
 - simplified views of information
 - visual representations of new information during initial instruction
 - questions to focus on key ideas or important features
 - explanations of how the problems were solved
 - analogies, metaphors, or associations to compare one idea to another
 - prompts or hints during initial practice
- step-by-step instructions
- feedback that fosters and supports the learning of skills
- simulations with features for realistic practice
- opportunities for children to do research, and to organize and communicate results.

Adaptability – Guidance and support must be adaptable to developmental differences and various learning styles. For example, young children tend to understand concepts in concrete terms and over-generalize new concepts. Some children need more time, some tend to be more impulsive than reflective, some have trouble distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and some have better written than spoken language skills.

Approaches for developmental differences and learning styles of children, include

- a variety of *activities* such as
 - structured and unstructured activities
 - independent and group work
 - instructor-directed and discovery learning
 - visual and narrative instruction
 - hands-on activities
 - open-ended activities
 - practice without extrinsic rewards
 - simple, complex, concrete, and abstract examples
 - variable pacing or visual breaks
- a variety of *modalities* for the various learning styles of children, such as
 - linguistic-verbal
 - logical-mathematical
 - musical
 - spatial
 - bodily-kinesthetic
 - interpersonal
 - intrapersonal
 - naturalist.

4. Active Participation of Children

The curriculum must engage the physical and mental activity of children during the learning process.

Assignments – The curriculum should include organized activities of periodic, frequent, short projects that are logical extensions of content, goals, and objectives.

Child Responses – Projects and activities should include questions and application activities during learning that give children opportunities to respond. Active participation of children can be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, information and activities might require children to

- respond orally or through drawing and emergent writing
- create visual representations (block structures, emergent writing, puppet shows, dramatic play scenarios, drawings, two- and three-dimensional artwork)
- generate their own questions or examples
- think of new situations for applying or extending what they learn
- complete discovery activities
- add details to concepts from prior knowledge
- form their own analogies and metaphors
- practice lesson-related tasks, procedures, behaviors, or skills
- choose from a variety of activities.

5. Targeted Instructional Strategies

The curriculum should include the strategies known to be successful for teaching the learning outcomes targeted in the curriculum requirements.

Alignment – Research has documented the strategies that effectively teach different types of learning outcomes. The learning strategies included in the curriculum should match the findings

of research for the targeted learning outcomes. Different types of learning outcomes require different strategies.

Completeness – Not only should strategies be aligned, but they also should be complete enough to effectively teach the targeted outcomes. For example, while the explanation of a problem-solving method or model would be appropriate, other strategies and multiple opportunities for problem-solving practice over time would be necessary in order for children to learn how to resolve different types of problems.

Research Summary – Researchers sometimes use different terms for some similar outcomes. For example, *thinking skills* and *metacognition* refer to some of the same types of skills. The following list includes terms as they have appeared in research, even though some terms clearly overlap with each other.

- attitudes
- cognitive strategies
- comprehension/understanding
- concepts
- creativity
- critical thinking
- insight
- metacognition
- motor skills
- multiple intelligences
- problem solving
- procedural knowledge principles, and rules
- scientific inquiry
- thinking skills
- verbal information, knowledge, or facts

A more detailed summary of these research findings related to instructional strategies for each of these types of learning outcomes will be provided at the VPK Curriculum Approval Committee training.

6. Targeted Assessment Strategies

The curriculum should include assessment strategies that are known to be successful in determining how well children have achieved the targeted learning outcomes.

Alignment. The assessment strategies should match the learner performance requirements for the types of learning outcomes that have been targeted by the VPK Education Standards. Different strategies are appropriate for assessing different types of learning outcomes. For example, a strategy for testing the acquisition of verbal information would not match the requirements for testing whether or not a student has learned a concept or learned how to solve a problem.

The term “assessment,” as used in this section, refers to testing or other strategies that assess student progress as a result of learning activities. The results of such assessment provide information about where to strengthen instruction. Therefore, it is very important to ask the right questions. If the type of question matches the type of learning outcome, then children and teachers have relevant information about learning progress.

Completeness. In addition to including assessment strategies that align with the performance requirements of the targeted learning outcomes, the strategies should be complete enough to effectively assess the student's performance with regard to the targeted outcome while providing information for the instructor to use in guiding student instruction. For example, a test item that requires the student to state a rule does not assess whether or not the student knows how to *use* the rule. Assessment(s) should measure progress in all seven domains of the VPK Education Standards.

Identification. Assessments should identify children who are at risk or potentially at risk of experiencing difficulty with learning and/or development.

Research Summary. The research summary for effective assessment strategies for different types of learning outcomes follows the same alphabetical sequence as the previous section (targeted instructional strategies).

- attitudes
- cognitive strategies
- comprehension/understanding
- concepts
- creativity
- critical thinking
- insight
- metacognition
- motor skills
- multiple intelligences
- problem solving
- procedural knowledge principles, and rules
- scientific inquiry
- thinking skills
- verbal information, knowledge, or facts

A more detailed summary of these research findings related to assessment strategies for each of these types of learning outcomes will be provided at the VPK Curriculum Approval Committee training.

D. Professional Development

Publishers must submit a *Professional Development Plan* for use with the curriculum. This plan must not incur additional cost. There must be initial professional development that provides adequate time for instructors to learn new concepts and practice what they learn. Instructors must also be instructed in the administration and interpretation of assessments that accompany the program. The professional development should be customized to meet the needs of VPK instructors (with a CDA Credential or more) and program directors. There should also be a plan for mentors, peers, or outside experts to provide feedback to instructors and to follow up with assistance as they put new concepts into practice. After initial professional development, ongoing professional development must be offered to provide support and a deeper level of knowledge about the seven domain areas taught. The professional development should also provide support (e.g., principal/director checklists, follow up in class modeling, a CD for instructors to view model lessons) to facilitate application of content. The professional development must emphasize the fidelity of implementation based on research.

As publishers are developing the Professional Development Plan for this approval process, it is important to consider that VPK providers that must choose a curriculum from approval list generated by this process. Only VPK programs that are in the lowest fifteen percent of providers, as determined by the Provider Readiness Rate, will be required to choose a curriculum from the approved list as a part of their improvement plan. Therefore, the Plan should be reflective of the needs of providers that may be a part of this lowest fifteen percent of providers statewide.

E. Materials for Parents and Families

The VPK Education Program is a parent choice program; as such, it is recognized that parents are an important component in the child's education. Parents are the child's first teacher. Curriculum materials that provide information for VPK providers on the importance of family involvement, tips and ideas for involving family members, as well as materials that are sent home with parents and families are desirable. In a state such as Florida, where there is great diversity of children, it is recognized that there is as much or more diversity among children's families. Parent/Family materials may be available in multiple languages to ensure that the child's family can participate as actively as possible in their child's learning.

F. Research Base

The Department of Education's Office of Early Learning will review and score items in the Research Base section, which incorporate specific strategies, teaching/instructional activities, procedures, examples, and opportunities for review and application consistent with current research. Each publisher should carefully review the research basis for any program or strategy submitted for consideration. In particular, attention should be paid to the research that was conducted initially to develop the program as well as the research conducted *after* publication, such as program evaluations. It is important to determine if research supports the effectiveness of the program or approach with children having similar characteristics to those with whom it will be used. Submitted VPK curriculum should prioritize and sequence essential skills and strategies in a logical and coherent manner and should demonstrate the relationship between fundamental skills in the seven domains of the VPK Education Standards.

1. Expertise for Content Development

Expertise in the content area and in education of the intended children must be reflected in the authors, reviewers, and sources that contributed to the development of the materials. The authors, consultants, and reviewers must have actually contributed to the development of the VPK curriculum and should have credentials that reflect expertise in the subject area, course, course category, grade level, pedagogy, education, teaching, or classroom instruction. Qualifications may include expertise in educational psychology or instructional design.

2. Primary Sources of Research

Relevant primary sources of research data from research journals and other recognized scientific sources must be cited and full-text copies provided to the Department. The type of sources considered appropriate will vary with the particular domain.

3. Secondary Sources of Research

Relevant secondary sources of research data from research journals and other recognized scientific sources must be cited and full-text copies provided to the Department. The type of sources considered appropriate will vary with the particular domain.

IV. Criteria for Evaluation

The VPK curriculum approval process must be fair to all publishers. Applying evaluation criteria consistently to each submission assures that the materials will be judged fairly.

Regardless of format or technology, effective materials have certain characteristics in common, and the basic issues, important for the evaluation of VPK curriculum, apply to all subject areas and all formats. These issues are addressed in Florida's Vision for Voluntary Prekindergarten Education and the criteria as detailed in the previous pages of this document. Committee members will evaluate each curriculum using the VPK Curriculum Approval Committee Evaluation Form. Committee members will use the criteria-based instrument to engage in systematic reflection of the processes they follow and decisions they make about the quality of materials submitted by publishers.

The extensive research base and review processes used to identify these criteria establish their validity as an integral part of Florida's VPK curriculum approval process. Applying these criteria consistently to each submission helps assure that the materials submitted by publishers will be judged fairly.

Florida Department of Education
2007 VPK CURRICULUM APPROVAL COMMITTEE
CURRICULUM EVALUATION FORM (Criteria A-E)

Curriculum/Publisher: _____
 Reviewer's Name: _____ Date of Evaluation: _____
 Reviewer's Signature: _____

5 ↑	4.5 5 3.5 3 2.5 2 1.5	1 ↑
Thorough	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
The curriculum thoroughly addresses the criterion.	The curriculum adequately addresses the criterion.	The curriculum does not address the criterion.

For each of the criteria listed below, circle a rating value of "1" through "5." Note that a rating of "5" is the "Thorough" end of the scale, a "3" is Adequate" and a "1" is the "Unsatisfactory" end of the scale. Refer to the evaluation scale above for definitions.

CRITERIA		RATING VALUE									
A. CONTENT											
A.1	Alignment with Standards – How well does the content align with each domain of the VPK Education Standards?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.2	Level of Treatment of Content - How well does the level (complexity or difficulty) of the treatment of content match the VPK standards, the abilities of four-year-olds, and time periods allowed for teaching?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.3	Accuracy of Content - How accurately is the content presented?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.4	Relevance of Content - Is the content up-to-date for the academic discipline and the context in which the content is presented?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.5	Authenticity of Content – To what extent does the content include problem-centered connections to life in a context that is meaningful to students?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.6	Multicultural Representation – How well has the portrayal of gender, ethnicity, age, work situations, and various social groups been fair and unbiased?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
A.7	Humanity and Compassion – How well are people and animals portrayed with compassion, sympathy, and consideration of their needs and values?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	

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5 ↑	4.5	5	3.5	3 ↑	2.5	2	1.5	1 ↑
Thorough			Adequate			Unsatisfactory		
The curriculum thoroughly addresses the criterion.			The curriculum adequately addresses the criterion.			The curriculum does not address the criterion.		

For each of the criteria listed below, circle a rating value of "1" through "5." Note that a rating of "5" is the "Thorough" end of the scale, a "3" is "Adequate" and a "1" is the "Unsatisfactory" end of the scale. Refer to the evaluation scale above for definitions.

CRITERIA		RATING VALUE									
B. PRESENTATION											
B.1	Comprehensiveness of Student and Instructor Resources – How complete are resources in addressing the targeted learning outcomes without requiring the instructor to prepare additional teaching materials for the classroom beyond those available in a typical preschool classroom?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
B.2	Alignment of Instructional Components - How well do all the components of the instructional package align with each other, as well as with the curriculum? To what extent does the content and progression of the instructional activities correspond within instructional components across the VPK Education Standards domains and over the course of the year? How well are all the materials provided by the publisher integrated and interdependent with each other?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
B.3	Organization of Instructional Materials – To what extent does the structure and format of the materials provide order and clarity allowing students and instructors to access content and explicitly identify ideas and sequences? How does the curriculum provide an explicit and teachable structure to the materials?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	
B.4	Readability of Instructional Materials – How well do the narratives and visuals engage students in an activity/lesson appropriate to the student's abilities? To what extent do the narrative and visuals guide students' understanding of the content?	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	

3. Reimbursement

Committee members will be reimbursed by the Department of Education at the state rate that includes mileage and/or airfare to and from the meetings, meals, and lodging. Travel and expense forms will be completed at each meeting for reimbursement of expenses paid by participant's sponsoring agencies.

B. Committee Training

The initial training session for the Committee is scheduled for **March 26-27, 2007**, in Tallahassee, Florida, and will be repeated on **April 16-17, 2007**. Participation in one of these training sessions is mandatory for committee members. All meetings are open to the public.

C. Evaluation Process

To complete the evaluation process, Committee members will receive the following materials:

1. Evaluation Forms

The evaluation forms are based on the VPK Curriculum Approval Specifications document. The Department will furnish to each Committee member copies of the evaluation forms.

2. Curriculum Materials

The deadline for members of the Committee to receive all curriculum materials is no later than **5:00 p.m. (EDT), May 18, 2007**. The Department reserves the right to request curriculum materials as necessary, but publishers are asked **not** to send materials to the Department unless requested.

Committee members are required to evaluate all materials submitted as part of a comprehensive curriculum. Committee members are obligated to return curriculum materials if requested by publishers in a manner prescribed in this document (see Instructions to Publishers section).

3. Publisher's Written Correlations

Written correlations that show the alignment of the submission to the VPK Education Standards, prepared by the publisher, are due to each member of the Committee by no later than **5:00 p.m. (EDT), May 18, 2007**. The correlations may be submitted on the form developed by the Department for this purpose or may be submitted in a format determined by the publisher. The correlations assist the Committee members in determining the degree to which submitted materials align with the VPK Education Standards and/or intended outcomes of the VPK Education Program as required in the VPK Curriculum Specifications.

B. Curriculum Approval

1. State Approval of Materials

The results of the committee members' reviews will be compiled. The Commissioner of Education will identify curricula for approval from the list of suitable, usable, and desirable instructional materials recommended by the Committee. The State reserves the right to reject any or submissions. It also may call for new submissions.

2. Disqualification of Submissions

The Department may waive minor formalities or irregularities in proposals received where such is merely a matter of form and not substance, and the correction or waiver of which is not substantially prejudicial to other publishers. Minor irregularities are defined as those that do not have an adverse affect on the Department's interest and do not affect the price of the proposal by giving a publisher an advantage or benefit not enjoyed by other publishers.

Signature or Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature of Person Submitting (name if emailed):

Title of Person Submitting:



Jeanine Blomberg
Commissioner of Education