

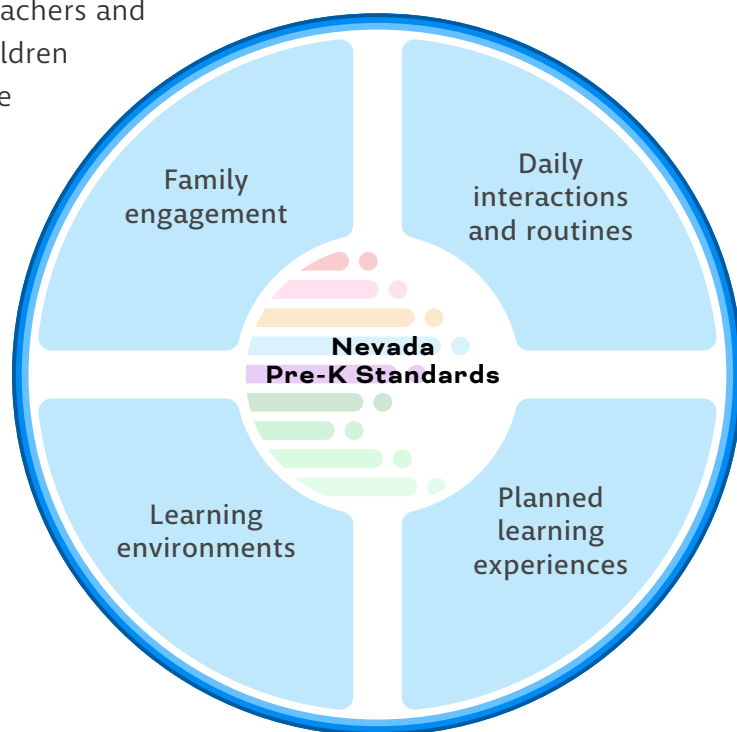
Using the Pre-Kindergarten Standards to Guide Practice

A How-to Guide for Educators

Four-to-five-year-old children benefit from rich learning environments and a wide range of learning opportunities during play, everyday interactions and routines, and planned learning experiences. The [Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards](#) provide a framework to promote children's optimal development and learning through joyful, play-based experiences.

This guide aims to help pre-kindergarten (pre-K) teachers and other adults working with four-to-five-year-old children use the *Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to guide their practice. The standards describe the specific skills and knowledge that four-to-five-year-old children develop across nine domains:

1. Approaches to Learning
2. Social Emotional
3. Social Studies
4. Health, Safety, and Physical Development
5. Language and Early Literacy
6. Science
7. Technology
8. Creative Expression
9. Mathematics



This guide invites you to reflect on your current practices and consider what other strategies you can implement to support children's learning across all domains of learning and development. The guide is designed to assist you in using the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to inform your practice in each of the following areas:

- Daily interactions and routines
- Planned learning experiences
- Learning environments
- Family engagement

For additional resources to guide practice, please visit: <https://doe.nv.gov/offices/oeld/ece-professionals>

How can you use the standards to support children's learning through daily interactions and routines?

Everyday interactions are unplanned moments when adults engage with children. These interactions provide many opportunities for bonding with children; engaging in rich conversations; and promoting joyful, play-based learning. During interactions, you can intentionally support children's learning and development across domains. For example, conversations during mealtimes can build on children's curiosity to extend their knowledge on a topic of interest and develop their language skills. Daily transitions provide children with opportunities to learn how to follow directions and manage transitions with less frustration. Play develops children's social skills and provides opportunities for teachable moments. For example, children's outdoor play with natural materials provides an opportunity to talk about what they observe with their different senses and learn about concepts from science.

Below are questions and examples to guide your thinking about how the standards can inform and enhance the ways that you support children's learning during everyday interactions and routines.

In what ways during daily interactions might you expand on children's curiosity to build their knowledge?

- A conversation with a child about why we wash our hands before eating informs their understanding of handwashing for disease prevention (HSP.HE.PK3).^{*} Through this interaction, you also encourage engagement in conversation (L.EC.PK3) and curiosity and initiative (A.CI.PK1).
- A child might ask why another child, who uses an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device to communicate, gets to use a tablet. This question offers an opportunity to learn

about how assistive technology can help children communicate (T.TT.PK3).

How can you use everyday interactions to support children's engagement and behavior in the classroom?

- When children show frustration while solving a puzzle, encourage them to keep trying by saying, "I see that you're frustrated. Where do you think the next piece goes?" By offering assistance without solving the puzzle for them, you help children learn to manage their feelings (A.EL.PK2, A.EL.PK4).
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage children to communicate more freely. For instance, if children are playing unsafely on furniture, once they are safely off, asking them to reflect on their decisions with questions — like "What might have happened if you fell?" or "What are safe ways we could play in this area?" — develops their understanding of the impact of their actions (SEL.RDM.PK3) and their ability to make reasoned decisions (SEL.RDM.PK2).

How can you use routines as opportunities to support children's learning and development?

- Gently warning children of upcoming transitions between routines can help them plan for a transition and be ready to participate in transition activities like cleaning up their toys (A.RC.PK7). Creating fun, engaging ways to help children transition can make the process smoother and more enjoyable.
- During meals, children can practice communicating their own needs or engage in conversations with others (HSP.HE.PK8, L.EC.PK2).

^{*} The numbers and characters shown in parentheses here and throughout this document represent each unique standard. Three sets of characters are separated by periods. The first set of characters represents the domain. The second set of characters represents the standard. The final set of characters represents the indicator number.

How can you use the standards to inform planning of learning experiences?

Intentionally planned daily routines and learning experiences support children's learning and development across domains. The standards identify important areas of development and specific expectations for four-to-five-year-old children. Whether you use a commercially available curriculum or use your own curriculum with guidance from a variety of approaches (e.g., project-based learning, Montessori), the standards can guide you in planning learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate and support domain-specific skills and knowledge. For example, the standards can help guide you in how to:

- Support important skills in approaches to learning, such as curiosity, exploration, creativity, and problem-solving;
- Plan playful, hands-on experiences to support children's understanding of math concepts;
- Engage children in science investigations; and
- Promote early literacy skills.

The standards can provide you with initial ideas for supportive practices that you can implement. The questions and examples below can help guide you to reflect on how you can use the standards as you plan learning experiences.

What planned learning experiences have you introduced in your classroom in the past week? Which domains did these experiences support?

- A small group learning activity led by the teacher in which children collect leaves and sort them by shape or color supports children in approaches to learning (A.RC.PK5), science (S.SI.PK3, S.AC.PK1), math (M.PO.PK1), and language (L.EC.PK1, L.EC.PK4).

How do you use play-based approaches to support children's learning across domains? How could you incorporate more play into your teaching?

- You might play a game to playfully practice identifying the beginning sounds of words (L.PA.PK2) by having children move based on the sounds they hear.
- You might give children magnifying glasses to explore during free play in a grassy space (S.EO.PK1-S.EO.PK4).

What domains could you support more intentionally? What additional learning experiences could you plan to facilitate learning in those domains?

- To incorporate the use of technology, you might help children look up answers to their questions online (T.CT.PK2).
- To encourage group decision-making, you could have a class vote to decide on a color during a group art project (SS.CI.PK5). Class votes also provide the opportunity for children to practice counting votes (M.NQ.PK.7) and comparing the number of votes for different groups (M.NQ.PK11).
- If you use a published curriculum, does it address all domains in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*? If not, how would you plan new experiences or enhance existing experiences to fill those gaps? If you notice that your curriculum does not include times for children to express themselves creatively, you might have children move their bodies to act out stories you read aloud (C.SE.PK7).

How can you use the standards to guide planning of learning environments?

The design of learning environments sets the stage for learning through the organization of physical space and materials. Learning environments are dynamic and can change from day to day or week to week. The standards can help guide your thinking about choosing materials and arranging spaces to create environments that support children's learning and development across domains. For example, to support literacy, you might arrange a space with cushions and low bookshelves where children can pick their own books to explore. An environment that is organized into spaces where children can engage in different types of play allows children to make choices about their own play.

Below are some questions and examples to help you think about how you can use learning spaces and materials to support development across domains.

In what ways have you set up your indoor and outdoor spaces to support children's learning? What domains do these spaces support?

- You might have an outdoor space set up with climbing equipment, a sandbox, and space for using tricycles so children can engage in large motor movements and physical activities (HSP.LM.PK1-HSP.LM.PK5, HSP.HE.PK4).
- You might have a quiet area with sensory materials where children can go to calm down or take a break (SEL.SM.PK1).

How can you use the standards to guide your choice of materials?

- You might use a variety of collections of objects, like small plastic bears or blocks, for children to practice sorting, patterning, or counting (M.PO.PK1-M.PO.PK4, M.NQ.PK6-M.NQ.PK8).
- You might use a graphic daily schedule, which you review each morning, to help children transition between activities and anticipate any changes to the daily routine (A.RC.PK7).

In what ways does the environment encourage exploration, creativity, and choice?

- You might set up an area where children can build with open-ended materials like blocks or cardboard (HSP.SM.PK3).
- You might have an area where children can use props and costumes for dramatic play (A.PL.PK1).
- You might have an area where children can create with a variety of art materials, like paint, crayons, and markers (C.SE.PK11).

PLAY IS A POWERFUL CONTEXT for Learning Across Domains

The *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* are organized into separate domains, but children learn and develop in ways that are integrated across domains of development. During any given interaction or experience, children may be using language, engaging socially with an adult or peer, manipulating materials with their hands or bodies, and thinking about a particular concept.

Play is a primary context in which children develop and learn in an integrated way. Playful learning experiences provide opportunities to develop skills in social interaction, creativity, problem-solving, self-regulation, and communication. As you plan playful learning experiences for children, use a balance of child-led and adult-guided play to promote joyful, meaningful learning across domains.

How can you use the standards to engage families in children’s learning?

You can use the standards in a conversation with a family to identify their child’s strengths and develop shared goals for their child. The standards can also be an effective tool for partnering with families to discuss strategies to support and reinforce their child’s learning in the home and community. Families may find that some of the supportive practices included in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* are also practices they might try at home. Below are some reflection questions and examples to guide your thinking about how to use the standards with families.

How do you share knowledge with families about their children’s learning and development? How can you include the standards in your conversations with families?

- You might share your observations of a child’s development toward specific standards during family conferences. For instance, you could share examples of a child’s approximation of their own name on art (L.W.PK5) or written observations over a week of how a child has learned to climb a challenging ladder on the playground (HSP.LM.PK2).

How can you use the standards to partner with families to support children’s learning in the home and community?

- You may use the standards to explore strategies that a family can use at home to engage in joyful literacy experiences and encourage the family to bring in examples of stories their child enjoys to share with the class (L.C.PK1-L.C.PK5).

How do you include families in classroom activities? How can you partner with families to lead or join classroom activities in which they share an area of expertise, family traditions, or customs?

- You might invite families to share photos or tell the children stories about their practices, customs, and culture as part of a learning experience that supports social studies (SS.ID.PK3).



Reflection and Planning Tool

The tool below will guide your planning of how to support children's learning and development in all domains of the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* across areas of practice. Start by reviewing the standards. You may choose one domain to focus on or a few domains. Keep in mind that while the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* are organized by discrete domains, learning and development are integrated across domains. Use this tool to identify ways you can support children's learning and development in the domain(s) selected. Look to the examples and supportive practices that are outlined throughout this document for some ideas of ways to support children's learning.

Domain

Choose one domain, or multiple domains, to focus on.

Daily Interactions and Routines

How do you currently support children's learning in this domain during everyday interactions?

How can you use daily interactions and routines to support learning in this domain?

Planned Learning Experiences

How do you currently support learning in this domain through planned learning experiences?

How can you enhance your curriculum to support learning in this domain?

What specific teaching strategies might you incorporate into your planned learning experiences?



Reflection and Planning Tool

Learning Environments

How do you currently support learning in this domain through the learning environment and materials in your setting?

How can the standards in this domain help you in designing the learning environment to support children's learning in this domain?

What materials can you provide in the environment to enhance children's learning in this domain?

Family Engagement

How do you currently partner with families to support children's learning and development?

How can you use the standards with families to build a shared knowledge of children's development in this domain?

How can you use the standards with families to support children's learning at home and in the community?