

Using the Pre-Kindergarten Standards to Guide Practice

A How-to Guide for Leaders

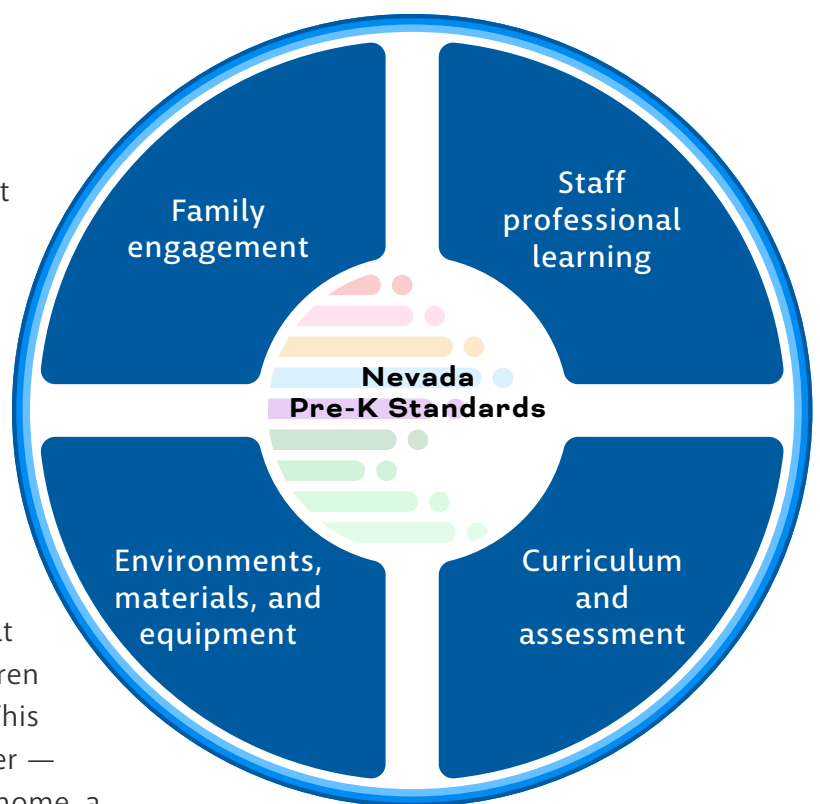
This guide is designed to support leaders of programs that serve four-to-five-year-old children in using [Nevada's Pre-Kindergarten Standards](#) to strengthen high-quality program practices. The *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* provide a framework to promote children's optimal development and learning. 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

As a program leader, you may wonder, how do I use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to strengthen my program? How can I ensure that my program fosters strong outcomes for children in all domains of learning and development? This how-to guide provides you as a program leader — whether you oversee a small family childcare home, a large center, or a school district — with a tool to guide you in using the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to inform program practices in each of the following areas:

- Staff professional learning
- Curriculum and assessment
- Environments, materials, and equipment
- Family engagement

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



How can you use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to inform staff professional learning opportunities?

The *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* outline key areas and expectations for child development and learning. As a program leader, you can plan professional learning opportunities to build your staff's knowledge of the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* and their capacity to support children's development in all domains. Staff need guidance on how to use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to guide their daily interactions with children and the intentional design of learning environments and teaching practices. Questions in the box "Sample Questions to Gauge Staff Needs" provide a starting place to engage staff in discussions of their professional learning needs and interests. Additionally, the reflection questions below can guide you in thinking about how you can support your staff in using the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*.

- What opportunities for professional learning do you currently provide staff to inform their understanding of the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*?
- What domain-specific training does your staff need to understand and use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*? What tools or resources can you provide to support your staff in using the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to inform their practice?
- What professional learning opportunities would support staff in using the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* across different areas of practices (e.g., planning learning environments and learning experiences, interacting with children, engaging families)?
- Are there additional opportunities for professional learning (e.g., online courses, regional trainings, coaching, conferences) that could benefit your staff?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GAUGE STAFF NEEDS

These questions serve as a starting point to assess your staff needs and interests in professional learning opportunities about the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*. Ask your staff the following questions:

- Overall, how would you describe your understanding of the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*?
- What domains in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* are you interested in learning more about?
- What training would help you use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to support children's learning and development?
- What professional learning opportunities on the standards (e.g., hands-on activities, group discussion, self-guided online modules, one-on-one coaching and training) would benefit you most?

IN-PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Creating a Staff Development Plan

Ms. Frieda runs a childcare center with two pre-K classes, each with a lead pre-K teacher and a pre-K teaching assistant. Ms. Frieda and the staff recently engaged in a reflective conversation focused on what they know about and how they use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to support children's learning. Together, they identified areas for future training. All four pre-K teachers would like more training on the Social Emotional domain, and both lead teachers would like more support in using the standards to plan learning experiences and engage families. After their conversation, Ms. Frieda identified an online training through the Nevada Registry on the Social Emotional domain and planned time during a staff development day for the pre-K teachers to discuss the training. Ms. Frieda also allocated time during weekly staff meetings to discuss the use of standards to guide practice and set aside time to work through the *How-To Guide for Educators*.

How can you use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to guide the selection and implementation of curriculum and assessment?

The standards serve as a starting point for identifying developmental goals for four-to-five-year-old children. While the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* define expectations for children, the curriculum focuses on how to support children's learning and development across domains. Programs may consider the following: "Does the curriculum we use cover all domains in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*? Does it support the learning expectations in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*? Is it balanced across domains?"

The standards also aid program leaders in the selection of assessment instruments that evaluate key skills, behaviors, and knowledge described in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*. When reviewing an assessment tool, use the standards to identify which domains are addressed in the assessment, which domains are not addressed, and any gaps between the assessment and the skills and development described in the standards. The questions below can guide you as a program leader in ensuring that your program uses the standards to implement a curriculum that covers children's development in all domains and in selecting assessment tools that address key areas of learning and development.

- To what extent do the learning objectives in your curriculum align with the standards?
- What assessment tools does your program currently use? How do you assess children's development of the skills and knowledge described in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*?
- Are there any areas of child development and learning that are not fully addressed in your curriculum? How can you identify and address any gaps in your curriculum?
- How do you ensure that planned learning experiences are developmentally appropriate and supportive of development across domains?

HOW ARE STANDARDS RELATED TO CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT?

The standards are not a curriculum or a checklist to assess children's development and learning. Educators use the standards to inform curriculum and assessment planning, selection, and implementation. Below are descriptions of standards, curriculum, and assessment.

- **STANDARDS:** What children learn and develop during pre-K across different domains of development
- **CURRICULUM:** A plan for fostering children's learning and development through planned learning experiences, daily interactions and routines, the classroom environment, and materials
- **ASSESSMENT:** Measurement of children's learning and development across time to help meet individual development needs

IN-PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In-Practice Example: Enhancing Curriculum Implementation to Address the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*

Mr. Chris oversees pre-K programs in a school district and has used the same pre-K curriculum for several years. The teachers all appreciate how user-friendly it is and how much the children enjoy the activities. During his review of how the curriculum supports learning across the domains described in the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*, Mr. Chris notes that there are a few areas the curriculum does not address, including the Technology domain. Mr. Chris meets with his pre-K teachers, who tell him that they have already identified some ways to improve children's understanding of technology in their classroom but would appreciate guidance in planning more ways to add technology to their curriculum. They decide to use a planning meeting to review upcoming learning experiences and identify ways to add supportive practices around technology to the learning experiences

How can you use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to guide the planning and design of the learning environment, including selection of materials and equipment?

As a program leader, you play a crucial role in planning and designing the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* can inform your choices around the design of the learning environments, including selection of materials and equipment, as illustrated in these examples:

- How to help your staff design well-defined interest areas that invite individual children and small groups to play, explore, and experiment
- How to ensure that your program selects and offers open-ended materials that encourage children’s exploration, creativity, and learning
- How to select developmentally appropriate materials and equipment that meet children’s various developmental levels

By using the standards to guide these decisions, you can ensure that your program provides learning environments, materials, and equipment that promote optimal development of children in each domain. The questions below can guide you

in leveraging the standards as you plan and design the learning environment and select materials and equipment:

- How are spaces in your program designed to support children’s development? Are there interest centers or play areas with a focus on development in specific domains?
- In what ways does the environment encourage children’s exploration, creativity, and learning? How do the materials, equipment, and environment allow for appropriate levels of challenges and risks?
- What materials or equipment would you add to your program to support development in each domain (e.g., creative expression, science, technology, language and early literacy)?
- Ask teachers what they have observed about the learning environment. Are there areas in which you could work with teachers to make changes to better meet children’s developmental needs?

IN-PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Designing Shared Learning Environments

Mrs. Saunders is a licensed home childcare provider with an outdoor play area shared by children of different ages. While the equipment offers challenges to the younger age groups, after reading the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards*, she considers how the playground could better support learning across domains for four-to-five-year-old children. She decides to use a corner of the yard to add a raised planter where children can explore plant life, observe insects, and learn about the weather, encouraging scientific inquiry and discovery as well as providing opportunities for learning in other domains.

How can you use the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* to engage families in children’s learning?

As a program leader, you can use the standards in partnership with staff and families to identify strategies that support and reinforce learning and development in the learning setting and the home environment. The *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* can enhance family engagement by helping staff and families develop a shared understanding of children’s learning and development. The standards provide a starting point for the development of home learning strategies and for family engagement in the classroom. The questions below can guide you in using the standards to engage families as partners in supporting children’s learning and development.

- How can your staff share the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* with families to develop a shared understanding of children’s learning and development in your program?
- How can your staff use the standards to share with families the ideas they have for supporting learning and development at home?
- How can your program use the standards with families to communicate developmental expectations and learning goals for children?
- In what ways do you currently engage families in activities in your program? How can you use the standards to design and implement additional activities that actively involve families in learning experiences?

IN-PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Planning an Activity to Engage Families

After reading the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* and reflecting on her current family engagement practices, Ms. Choudry decides to have a center-wide Family Storytelling Circle in which families can share their own stories with the community. The Family Storytelling Circle will not only build connections with families but also support children’s development in areas such as language and early literacy and creative expression. Every Friday, a family is invited to share a short story about a recent family outing, holiday, or activity, which encourages children to describe events from the immediate past. Families bring in photos, and older children draw pictures of their story. After a family shares, Ms. Choudry adds their story to a binder in the school library, and at the end-of-year celebration, she shares a copy of the book with every family.



Reflection and Planning Tool

The tool below will guide you in collaborating with your staff to review current practices and plan how to enhance your program's capacity to support children's learning and development in specific domains of the *Pre-Kindergarten Standards* across areas of practice. Start by reviewing the *Pre-Kindergarten 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 your staff and build your program's capacity to support children's learning and development in the domain(s) selected.

Domain

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

Staff Professional Learning

How can you work with staff to identify and plan professional development opportunities that enhance staff skills and knowledge in this domain?

What additional training or coaching do you need to provide staff?

Curriculum

How does your curriculum reflect the development described in this domain?

How can you identify and address any gaps in your curriculum?

What supports do your staff need to enhance learning experiences in this domain?



Reflection and Planning Tool

Assessment

In what ways do your assessment methods document children's progress in relation to the standards in this domain?
How can you address any gaps in your assessment tools?

Learning Environments, Materials, and Equipment

How do the learning environment, materials, and equipment support children's development in this domain?
What additional materials or equipment would you add to your program to support children's learning in this domain?

Family Engagement

As you review your plans for family engagement, how can you engage families in program planning or program activities to support children's learning in this domain (e.g., STEAM event, family storytelling event, cultural night)?