

# Early Childhood Curriculum Guide

Pacific Southwest District  
School Ministries  
August 2022

# PSD EC Curriculum Guide

This guide was a joint project of the Pacific Southwest District Early Childhood Cabinet and Early Childhood Accreditation Commission and was formally adopted in January of 2013. This revision was completed in August 2022.

Curriculum development and implementation are key components of successful early childhood programs and the accreditation process. This curriculum guide draws from several sources, including state early childhood standards.

The ‘outcomes’ are integral to the development of the whole child and are grouped in curricular domains. EC educators understand the essential premise that children do not learn in isolation but through integration.

# Key Principles of Early Childhood Education

- ▶ Children learn best when they have developed the age-appropriate social and emotional components necessary for school and society.
- ▶ Children are best prepared for future success when early education focuses on the whole child - social, emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual.
- ▶ The “how-to’s” of teaching young children include the prominent role of play, hands-on learning activities and an appropriate learning environment.
- ▶ Purposeful play promotes active involvement in learning and provides children with opportunities to engage with language, math and science concepts, and other foundational skills in context (natural settings).

# Spiritual Development

**Spiritual development is the cornerstone of our Lutheran faith. Therefore, the spiritual domain is presented first, in keeping with the mission and ministry of our Lutheran churches - to share the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ with young children and their families.**

**Faith development is innately connected with the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth of young children. True faith is integrated throughout the 'whole person'. It cannot be separated from the intellect, the personality, or the moral development of young children.**

# Spiritual Development

Children have a natural interest in God and an inborn sense of the divine. The “spiritual” aspect of development therefore must be nurtured by the family and community. Parents and other adult caregivers will help to determine if the future spiritual growth and development will be healthy or unhealthy by their actions and attitudes during the formative years.

**Three basic ingredients lay a healthy foundation for spiritual development:**

**Unconditional love with appropriate and genuine positive reinforcement;**

**Realistic discipline which holds the child responsible for their actions within the limits of their abilities; and**

**A support system that is dependable and truthful.**

# Key Components of Spiritual Development

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Through their personal experiences, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the children will expand their understanding of the Triune God:

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**GOD** - Father, Creator, Giver of all good things, loves all people, provides all we need to live

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**JESUS** - Savior, Redeemer, true Son of God, forgives all my sin, gives both grace and mercy

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**HOLY SPIRIT** - Sanctifier and Counselor, empowers us to live as disciples, prays on our behalf

# What does this mean for us as Lutheran Christian Early Childhood Educators?

## Young children:

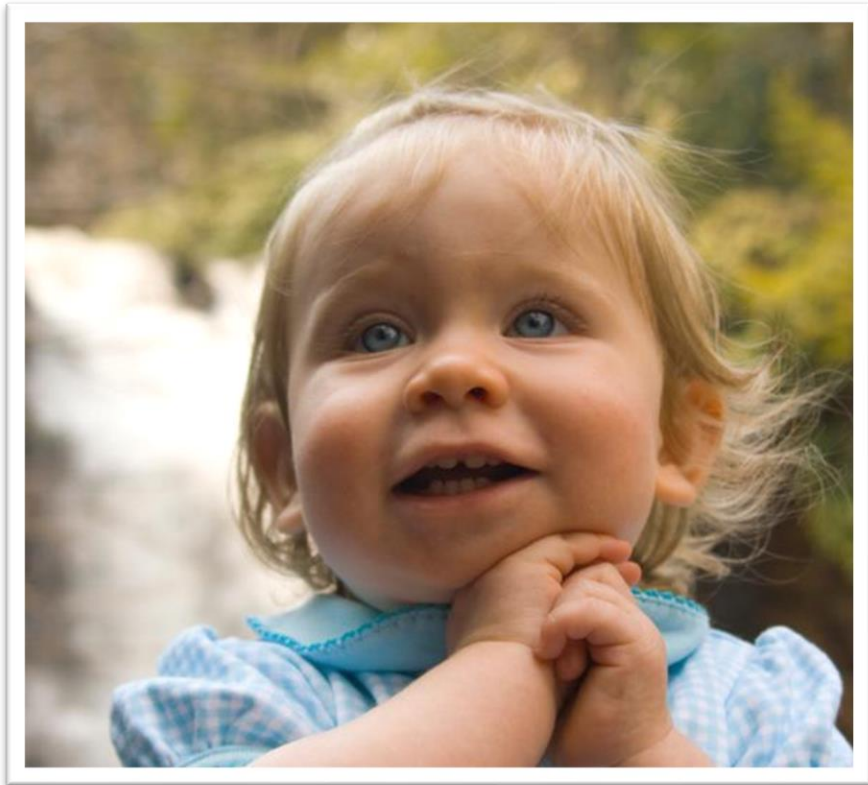
- ▶ **Connect the idea of an adult's love with God's love.**
- ▶ **Need praise, encouragement, and forgiveness.**



# Positive Spiritual Formation

*As children participate in daily Jesus Time, weekly Chapel and worship experiences , along with meaningful conversations throughout the day, the children will learn that:*

- ▶ **The Bible is God's true Word.**
- ▶ **God loves and cares for His people.**
- ▶ **Jesus is their best friend.**
- ▶ **Prayer is talking to God.**



# Spiritual Formation

# Social - Emotional Development

It is significant that the state standards first address the social-emotional development of young children. It underscores what we as Lutheran Christian early childhood educators know in our hearts - that young children learn best when they are nurtured by caring adults, provided with experiences that help them to grow into the person God desires them to be and given the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with others.

We can best provide children the opportunity to develop their social-emotional domain by allowing them to be children - giving them plenty of opportunities to PLAY as they explore their environments and interact with their peers and significant adults!

# Social - Emotional Development

**Social-emotional development includes:**

**Self-Awareness:** Identifying one's own feelings and abilities

**Interpersonal Awareness:** Understanding the feelings of others and the 'roles' of people

**Self-Regulation:** Accepts responsibility, follows directions, completes a task

**Self-Expression:** Communicates preferences and makes choices

**Communication:** Uses verbal and non-verbal communication, age-appropriate attention span

**Social Interactions:** Shares and takes turns, participates in group activities

**Stages of Play:** Engage in and initiate active play, play with a purpose, assumes leadership roles

# Social - Emotional Development

When do the children have opportunities to develop these social and emotional life-skills during a typical day?

*Circle Time*

*Center Time*

*During  
outside play*

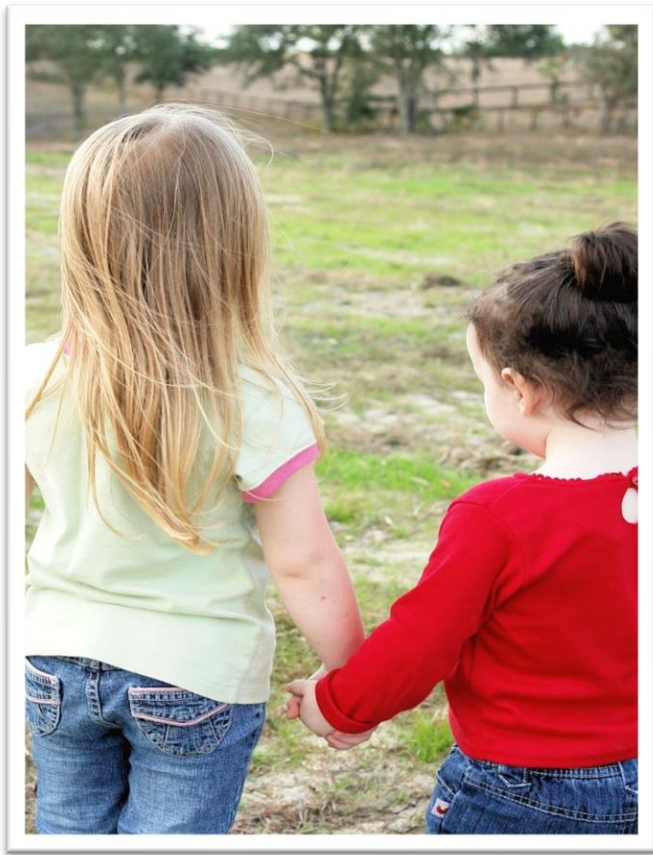
*Story time*

*Finger plays*

*Songs*

*Snack and  
mealtime*

*Meaningful  
conversations  
with adults  
and peers*



# Social - Emotional Development



# English Language Arts

This central domain identifies key outcomes typical of children who are making steady progress toward being ready for kindergarten and becoming fluent readers and communicators. Language and literacy acquisition is based on the underlying assumption that children should experience the kinds of interactions, relationships, activities and PLAY that research has shown to support successful learning and development.

These outcomes are considered ‘typical’ - with appropriate support - at the conclusion of a child’s early childhood educational experience.

# English Language Arts

## Foundational Skills

- Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition

## Literature and Informational Text

- Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Range of Reading/Level of Text Complexity, Integration of Knowledge

## Writing

- Text Types and Uses

## Speaking and Listening

- Comprehension and Collaboration, Presentation of Ideas

## Language

- Conventions of Standard English, Vocabulary Acquisition



# English Language Arts

What activities provide the opportunities to develop these English Language Art skills during a typical day?

*Story Time*

*Sequencing*

*Prediction*

*Rhyming*

*Sound  
Discrimination*

*Dictation*

*Calendar*

*Graphs*

*Directions*

*Writing Center*

*Environmental  
Print*

*Dramatic Play*

*Meaningful  
Conversations*

# English Language Learners

Additional opportunities and strategies for English Language Learners:

*Environmental print in dual/multiple languages*

*Modeling*

*Gestures*

*Specific use of questioning*

*Left-to-right progression*

*Listening Opportunities*

*Meaningful Conversations*





# English Language Arts

# Mathematics

Mathematics is a way of thinking about the world, and observing and describing it in terms of numbers, shapes and patterns. Young children's mathematical thinking is informal - it involves the manipulation of concrete objects and sets of objects. This informal thinking develops quickly during the preschool years and prepares the child for the more formal - and abstract - thinking that will come in elementary school. Environmental support in the preschool experience is critical to the development of a broad foundation of mathematical knowledge if children are to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

# Mathematics



**Counting and Number Sense: Count from 1-30, use one-to-one correspondence**



**Operations and Algebraic Thinking: Add and subtract using objects and situations**



**Measurement and Data: Compare and classify objects, days of the week**



**Geometry: Identify common shapes, understand position words, patterning**

# Learning Opportunities include:

*Counting*

*Calendar*

*One-to-one  
Correspondence*

*Classifying*

*Sorting*

*Patterning*

*Problem Solving*

*Comparisons*

*Estimation*

*Shapes and  
blocks*

*Positions*

*Meaningful  
Conversations*





# Mathematics

# Science

Science provides children with the opportunity to investigate and explore the world around them and to communicate their discoveries to others. Most of what young children know and understand about the world is tied directly to their personal experiences. These experiences may vary greatly from child to child, based on socio-economic and cultural factors. Therefore, the preschool environment and curriculum should intentionally include opportunities for children to explore, investigate, discover and experiment within the world God has created.



# Science



**Physical Science: Identify common physical properties of objects (size, shape)**



**Life Science: Name common animals and plants, describe stages of life**



**Earth Science: Identify weather and seasons, understand objects in space**



**Investigation and Experimentation:  
Use senses to explore the environment**

# Learning Opportunities Include:

*Identifying  
common  
properties  
(size, shape, color)*

*Learning Centers*

*Science  
Read-Alouds*

*Hypotheses*

*Predicting*

*Experimentation  
with a variety of  
materials*

*Field Trips*

*Meaningful  
Conversations*



# Science

## History/ Social Science

A key outcome of the Social Sciences for the preschool child is an understanding of their place in society - within their family, community and society.

Children are encouraged to gain knowledge of the world through a variety of resources and meaningful discussions about their families and their communities.

An essential aspect of this includes the awareness of and respect for cultural differences. Skilled early childhood educators will include focused activities to encourage growth and expand understanding of all peoples.

# History/Social Science

**Citizenship:** Identify traits of a good citizen  
*(honesty, responsibility, cooperation)*

**Geography:** Identify relative places  
*(home, school, church, community)*

**History:** Categorize time, identify holidays,  
understand past, present, future

# Learning Opportunities include:

*Family*

*Classroom*

*Community*

*Nation*

*Occupations*

*Geography*

*Geographical  
Features*

*Time Frames  
(minutes,  
hours, days,  
etc.)*

*Historical and  
cultural  
heritage*

*Relationship of  
past events to  
present day (past,  
present, future)*

*Meaningful  
Conversations*





# History/ Social Studies



# Physical Development

Physical development of young children is critical and impacts every other aspect of development - social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual.

Children are physical beings - anyone entering an early childhood classroom cannot help but be aware of the children's constant movement and activity.

Research suggests that many early childhood educators believe that a child's motor skills will develop on their own. However, it is imperative to plan for all aspects of motor development if we are to effectively prepare children for future success.



# Physical Development

**Safety:** Uses materials appropriately, practices emergency drills

**Fine Motor:** Uses tools for their intended purposes, build and construct, cut, color

**Gross Motor:** Can balance, walk, run, hop, jump and climb

**Physical Activities:** Understands directionality, respects personal space

**Health:** Identify healthy foods, understands the need for rest and exercise, understands the need to practice good hygiene

# Mastery Opportunities Include:

*Proper use of materials and equipment*

*Fine motor activities  
(cutting, drawing, etc.)*

*Large muscle activities  
(running, jumping, climbing, etc.)*

*Developmentally-appropriate exercise activities*

*Healthy Foods*

*Hygiene*

*Importance of rest*

*Meaningful Conversations*

# Physical Development



## Fine Arts

In this domain, children are provided with the opportunities to explore and experience the arts - visual and expressive arts, music, dramatic expression and dance.

Early childhood education emphasizes the process and not the product! A wide variety of materials are provided for artistic and imaginative expression.

An art-rich environment is created, with artwork displayed at the child's level.

Children are encouraged to enjoy the arts through both participation and as a part of an audience.

# Fine Arts



**Visual:** Identify common art materials, identify primary and secondary colors



**Music:** Identify basic elements of music (tempo, rhythm), sing age-appropriate songs



**Drama:** Differentiate between real and imaginary, engage in pretend play

# Expressive activities include:

*Art-rich  
Environment*

*Distinctions and  
characteristics  
of art and art  
materials*

*Self-Expression*

*Basic elements  
of music*

*Music  
Appreciation*

*Movement*

*Theatrical  
Experiences*

*Dramatic play  
and drama  
opportunities*

*Meaningful  
Conversations*





# Fine Arts

## Common Denominator in all Curricular Areas?



- ▶ Did you catch the common denominator in the learning/mastery opportunities as we worked through each of these curricular areas?
- ▶ **MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS!**



# Summary Thoughts

**High-quality early childhood programs strive for integration of curriculum, an overlap of all developmental areas, and allow ample time for children to PLAY.**

**Children's play is focused, purposeful and full of learning. As children play, they master motor development, learn and use language, develop social skills, think creatively, problem-solve, and grow in cognitive knowledge.**

**This curriculum - both formal and informal - is all about supporting child-led play and trusting children as capable and engaged learners.**

# PSD Early Childhood Curriculum Resources

Early Childhood resources on the PSD School Ministries website:

<https://www.psd-schools.org/early-childhood>

- ▶ Updated Guiding Principles for Early Childhood Education
- ▶ Updated “MAKING JESUS REAL” video training series
- ▶ Ages and Stages of Young Children

