



by the Children's Learning Institute



by the Children's Learning Institute







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Circle Pre-K Curriculum Overview

THE CIRCLE PRE-K CURRICULUM FEATURES:

- Comprehensive coverage of skill domains supporting cognitive and social and emotional development
- Balance of teacher-directed lessons and child-initiated activities
- Daily playful and purposeful experiences across whole group, small group, and center time
- Lesson scripting that follows a teaching and learning cycle
- Flexible *Theme Guides* for building language and background knowledge through meaningful and relevant experiences
- Scaffolds and teacher tips for modifying lessons
- Authentic videos of lessons in action (available through the online CIRCLE Activity Collection)
- English and Spanish versions

CURRICULUM COMPONENTS

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum is comprised of a variety of resources designed to support your weekly planning and delivery of instruction.

- Scope and Sequences
- Theme Guides
- Supplemental resources



The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes *Scope and Sequences* and *Theme Guides* for addressing all aspects of the prekindergarten day throughout the school year. These components are supported by a comprehensive bank of high-quality lessons housed in the CIRCLE Activity Collection (CAC) on CLI Engage. Lessons are scripted, providing guidance for teachers to move through a cycle of modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Many of the lessons are accompanied by videos showing demonstrations of the lessons in authentic settings. Lessons also include Teacher Tips, which provide ideas for extensions and changes, and Scaffolds, which suggest ways to adjust lessons based on children's individual needs. These ideas for how to differentiate instruction help teachers deliver lessons that are appropriate and targeted for the children in their group or class, whether children are three- or four-years-old, or need more foundational or more advanced support.

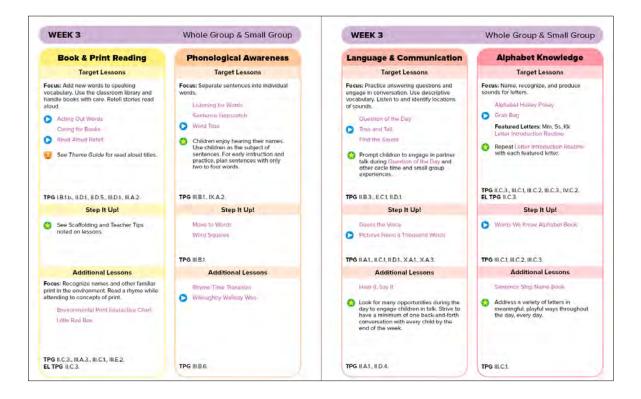
The Scope and Sequences and Theme Guides work together to provide weekly instruction that comprehensively supports the cognitive, social, and emotional development of prekindergarten children. As teachers use these resources to plan lessons for a week, they have the ability to select fewer lessons to teach, and to adjust how quickly they move from one week of content to the next. This flexibility will be especially helpful for teachers with more three-year-olds, who may move through the curriculum more slowly, and for teachers of half-day programs, who will include fewer of the curriculum components in their lesson plans.

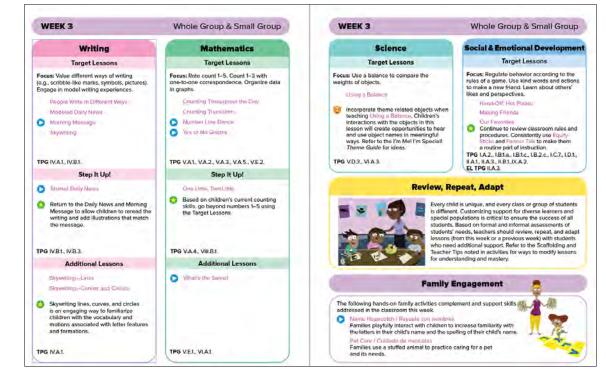
Scope and Sequence

The Scope and Sequence is the primary curriculum component. It addresses skills in a sequence that ensures progression of skills across the school year. The Scope and Sequences cover 35 weeks of instruction. Lessons are organized into the following categories with other skill domains integrated:

- Book & Print Reading
- Phonological Awareness
- Language & Communication
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social & Emotional Development

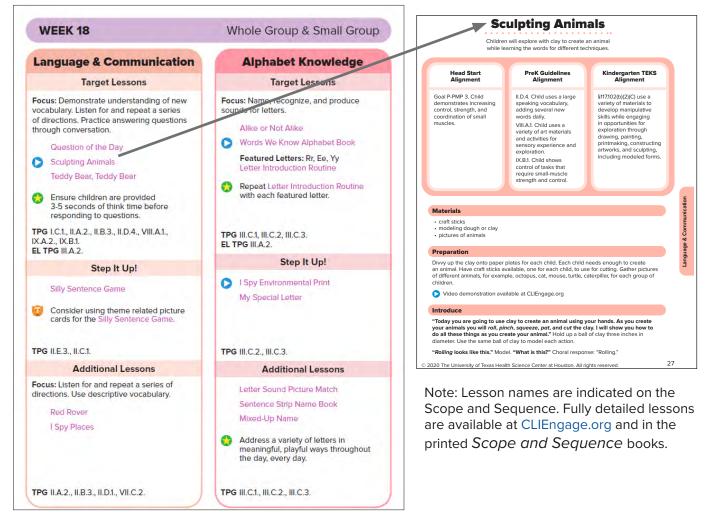






See the Skill Domain Areas Addressed section of this *Teacher's Manual* for detailed information on each of the above categories to learn the skills addressed and the progression of skills.

The Scope and Sequence indicates the names of lessons designated for the week. Lesson names are always indicated in colored font. You can view the detailed lesson at CLIEngage.org or in the printed Scope and Sequence book.



The flexible design of the *Scope and Sequence* allows you to select the day of the week and setting (whole or small group) for each lesson. Lessons can be used multiple times across the week as concepts are introduced, practiced, and reinforced. You determine which lessons to repeat and the number of times. The table below describes the three categories of lessons indicated on the *Scope and Sequence*.

Target Lessons	Use each Target Lesson with all children one or more times during the week to ensure skill coverage and progression. Repeat lessons across the week as needed or desired.
Step It Up	Use these optional lessons with children who might benefit from more challenging tasks than those included in the Target Lessons.
Additional Lessons	Additional Lessons are Target Lessons from previous weeks in the curriculum. Use these optional lessons to address a greater range of skills and to revisit previously taught lessons. Repeat lessons across the week as needed or desired.

A Family Engagement section is also included in every Scope and Sequence. These activities can be provided to families as a way to enhance the family-school partnership and encourage families to engage in playful learning experiences. Through these activities, families become involved in supporting the skills children are learning that week in school. Learn more in the Family Engagement section of this Teacher's Manual.

Theme Guide

Theme Guides work in partnership with the *Scope and Sequence* to organize meaningful, hands-on lessons and experiences around a common theme. While the *Scope and Sequence* ensures systematic coverage of all skill domains, the *Theme Guide* enhances the *Scope and Sequence*. There are ten themes designed to address concepts and experiences that build important background and content area knowledge. In addition to supporting the skill domains from the *Scope and Sequence, Theme Guides* address:

- Fine Arts
- Physical Development
- Social Studies
- Technology

Using a *Theme Guide* in conjunction with the *Scope and Sequence* ensures comprehensive coverage of all skill domain areas while addressing all aspects of the prekindergarten schedule.

Within each theme is a set of topics, or subthemes. Each topic addresses approximately one week of activities and lessons for all aspects of the prekindergarten day. Topics are flexible, allowing teachers to spend more or less than one week on a topic, if desired.

Welcome to Pre-K! is an integrated *Scope and Sequence* and *Theme Guide* designed specifically to address the particular needs of young children during the first two weeks of prekindergarten.

Integrated Scope and Sequence and Theme Guide	Topics	Weeks
Welcome to Pre-K!	My School	Week 1
	My Friends	Week 2

Beginning with week 3 of school, teachers can use themes in any order or follow the suggested sequence provided below.

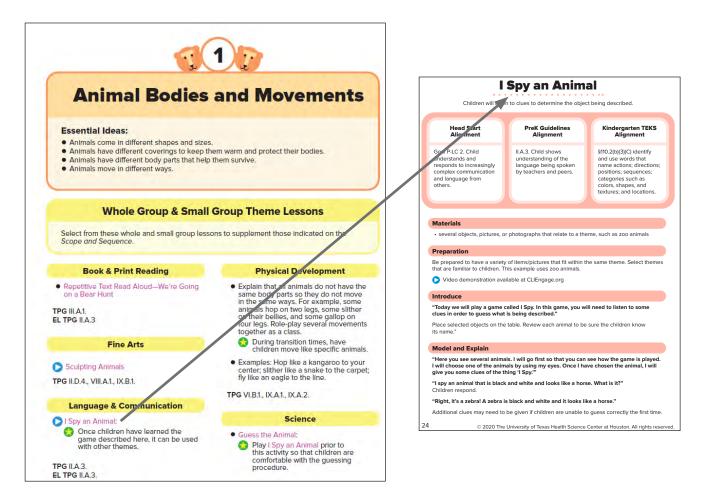
Suggested Theme Sequence

Theme	Topics	Scope and Sequence
I'm Me! I'm Special!	My Home and Family My Amazing Body My Five Senses My Important Feelings	Weeks 3-6
All Around My Community	Places in My Community People and Jobs in My Community Getting Around in My Community Construction in My Community	Weeks 7-10
lt's Harvest Time!	Signs of Fall Harvest Harvesting Crops Bringing the Harvest Home	Weeks 11-13
The Sky Above Me	The Cloudy Sky The Sunny Sky The Night Sky The Seasonal Sky	Weeks 14-17
Animals All Around	Animal Bodies and Movements Animal Homes and Habitats Animal Babies and Diets Animal Adaptations and Habits	Weeks 18-21
I'm Healthy! I'm Safe!	My Safe and Active Body My Safe and Healthy Eating Habits My Healthy Body and Teeth	Weeks 22-24
Get Moving!	Moving Through Air Moving on Land Moving on Water	Weeks 25-27
The Earth Around Me	Land All Around Plants All Around Water All Around Caring All Around	Weeks 28-31
Creepy Crawly Critters	Critter Bodies and Movements Critter Homes and Habitats Critter Life Cycle and Diet Critter Adaptations and Habits	Weeks 32-35

Theme Guides are organized into three sections to support lesson planning and implementation. The three sections are described below.

Whole Group and Small Group Theme Lessons	Additional whole group and small group lessons which may not be included in the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> . These supplemental lessons appear in the <i>Theme Guide</i> because they directly connect to theme concepts.
Theme Extenders	Suggestions for ways to integrate theme vocabulary, read aloud books, and activities with the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> activities and lessons.
Learning Centers	Recommendations for adding thematic materials and activities to supplement or replace your classroom's existing center materials and activities.

Like the Scope and Sequence, the Theme Guide indicates the names of lessons designated for the topic. Lesson names are always indicated in colored font. You can view the detailed lesson at CLIEngage.org or in the printed Theme Guide book.



Refer to the overview section at the front of each *Theme Guide* for additional information to support implementation of particular themes.

Downloadable Resources

Picture cards or workmats are included with some lessons. The availability of these resources is indicated by a PDF icon in the Materials section of the digital lesson. Curriculum users can download and print these resources as needed.

Some lessons require materials not included as supplemental resources. In these cases, directions are provided for creating the resource.

Understanding Icons

- Identifies lessons with English video demonstrations. Visit the digital lesson in the CIRCLE Activity Collection at CLIEngage.org to view these lessons in action with children.
- Identifies lessons with **Spanish video demonstrations**. Visit the digital lesson in the CIRCLE Activity Collection at CLIEngage.org to view these lessons in action with children. English videos may be available when Spanish videos are not. To view the lesson in English, visit the Spanish digital lesson, then click the "View Activity in English" button.
- Indicates lessons recommended for use in a **small group** setting. Most lessons are appropriate in either whole group or small group settings. Teachers determine the setting based on children's needs, materials, and classroom management considerations.
- Indicates **notes or tips** for preparing and delivering lessons or activities.
 - Reminds you to select and use a *Theme Guide* in conjunction with the *Scope and Sequence*.
 - Indicates **songs and rhymes** found in *The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants* by Jackie Silberg and Pam Schiller for English curriculum users or in *The Bilingual Book of Rhymes, Songs, Stories, and Fingerplays* por Pam Schiller, Rafael Lara-Alecio, y Beverly J. Irby for Spanish curriculum users. Most songs and rhymes can also be found through an online search.



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Lesson Planning

This section provides lesson planning guidance for new users of the curriculum. A teacher's approach to lesson planning is a unique process informed by a variety of factors, including the daily schedule and children's developmental needs. Curriculum components flexibly meet the needs of full- and half-day prekindergarten programs, as well as those serving three- and four-year-old children.

The Scope and Sequence and Theme Guide are used together to comprehensively plan how children will engage in whole group (circle time), small groups, and centers during a week. Teachers can easily plan for a full-day schedule, while the flexible design allows half-day programs to select fewer lessons and activities when planning. To address the different developmental and instructional needs of the children, teachers can select from Target Lessons, Additional Lessons, and Step It Up! lessons. Within each lesson, Teacher Tips can adjust or extend the activity and Scaffolds can simplify the task or support understanding. Teachers should plan each week using the flexible features of the Scope and Sequence and Theme Guide to meet the specific needs of the children in the class.

Steps for Planning				
 Step 1: Gather Materials Scope and Sequence for the week you are planning—for example, use the Week 3 Scope and Sequence for the third week of the year Theme Guide—a recommended theme sequence is included in the Theme Guide section of this Teacher's Manual Any preferred lesson plan document or tool—a sample template is included to use or modify as needed Assessment data—formal and informal data are critical considerations 				
 throughout the planning process and should be considered in each step Step 2: Review Scope and Sequence Lessons Identify the skills addressed this week. Look at the lessons indicated in colored font and briefly review the detailed/scripted version of each lesson. For each lesson, determine the following: Will I use the lesson? Note: Use of all Target Lessons ensures comprehensive skill coverage and progression. Lessons in the Step It Up! and Additional Lessons sections are optional. If you will use the lesson: Will the lesson be used with all children or only some children? Will the lesson take place in whole group or small group(s)? 				
Step 3: Plan Using the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> Add <i>Scope and Sequence</i> lessons to your lesson plan according to decisions made in Step 2.				

Step 4: Review *Theme Guide* Lessons and Activities Review the three sections for the Topic: 1) Whole Group and Small Group Theme Lessons, 2) Theme Extenders, and 3) Learning Centers.

Determine the following:

- Will I use the lesson or activity?
- Will it take place in whole group or small group(s)? Note: Demonstrate center activities during whole group or small group(s) before adding to centers.

Step 5: Plan Using the *Theme Guide*

- Add *Theme Guide* lessons and activities to your lesson plan according to decisions made in Step 4.
- Document any adaptations you will make to *Scope and Sequence* lessons in order to incorporate the theme into your lessons.

Step 6: Review and Reflect

Review the lesson plan carefully to ensure all components of the school day have been addressed. For example:

- Are all learning domains addressed?
- Is each component of the daily schedule accounted for?
- Is it necessary to back up to earlier lessons for any skills? Note: This may apply to the whole class or to particular children who may benefit from targeted small group instruction.
- Have you determined which transitions you will use?
- Do you know what books and materials are needed?

These steps provide a general overview of how to use each component of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum to plan for a week of instruction. Effective planning is a detailed

process that includes planning for teacher-led and child-initiated experiences, preparing and gathering materials, and adjusting the physical environment to support language and learning.

Themes are most successful when teachers begin to plan for them in advance. Identify your upcoming theme and carefully review the Theme Guide to identify resources and materials that may take time to gather or prepare. *Theme Guides* offer detailed information to support effective implementation.



Skill Domain Areas Addressed

All domains are targeted using high quality lessons and activities to grow skills throughout the year. Skills are introduced and practiced, then revisited repeatedly across the school year through a variety of meaningful, hands-on experiences.

ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE

Alphabet knowledge consists of knowing the names, shapes, and sounds of uppercase and lowercase letters; it is a strong predictor of later literacy (Huang, Tortorelli, & Invernizzi, 2014). While adults might consider these skills simple, for children in prekindergarten, letters can seem like abstract lines and curves without meaning. The challenge of interpreting these is great, involving all of the following: associating these symbols with particular names and sounds, distinguishing between similar-looking letters, connecting uppercase and lowercase letters, and strengthening small motor skills to produce these shapes. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes instructional routines and strategic sequencing to meet these challenges.

Phonological awareness (PA) provides the foundation for what is known as the alphabetic principle: associating letters with their sounds (Moats & Tolman, 2009). As PA and alphabet knowledge both develop, they come to have a reciprocal relationship (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). Children progress in their PA skills and are then better able to associate letters to the corresponding sounds, which in turn helps them better distinguish the sounds in spoken words. The PA lessons and alphabet knowledge lessons in the curriculum are critical interlocking pieces preparing children to enter kindergarten with foundational skills necessary to get ready to read.

How Should Alphabet Knowledge Be Taught?

Prekindergarten children benefit from varied experiences with letters in print that are planned, playful, meaningful, and engaging. This includes informal alphabet activities and games as well as formal instruction of letter names, sounds, and features.

Letter Wall

The letter wall is an interactive tool that exposes young children to a variety of concepts and helps emergent readers and writers become aware of letter names, sounds, and forms. The letter wall sequentially displays letters from A to Z with space for important words, such as children's names and vocabulary. Letter walls are effective tools for developing letter knowledge when used daily in whole group, small group, and oneon-one settings. It is also an effective way to organize words and support children's interaction with current vocabulary in print. See the Physical Environment section for information on setting up the letter wall. See Making the Most of the Letter Wall in the appendices for a detailed description of implementing and using the letter wall effectively.

Informal Alphabet Activities and Games

Playful alphabet activities are especially powerful mechanisms for acquiring letter knowledge in prekindergarten. Although informal, these interactions are planned and intentional. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes informal lessons that address the skills necessary to build letter knowledge. It also offers guidance for facilitating child-directed alphabet activities. These informal learning opportunities take place throughout the prekindergarten day and across settings. Examples of these include:

• Name Activities and Games: Children's names can act as a meaningful springboard for learning letter names and sounds (Huang et al., 2014; Children's Learning Institute, 2010). Young children delight in seeing their names in writing, along with the names of peers and family members. They learn to recognize their names in

print, pronounce, and write the letters of their names by exposure and practice.

• **ABC Center:** The ABC Center allows children to practice working with letters through engaging, hands-on activities. *Theme Guides* share ideas for center activities to accompany the topics in each theme. The Letter Wall can become part of the ABC center to act as an additional tool for working with letters.



- **Other Centers:** Print can be an important part of all centers by way of books and writing materials. Intentionally include these materials in all centers, and refresh them often. In particular, the Pretend and Learn Center offers many opportunities for children to practice reading and writing in authentic ways.
- **Print Referencing:** Print referencing is the practice of verbally and nonverbally cuing children to notice or attend to print around them, such as in books, on signs, and even on clothing. Explicitly referencing print during shared reading experiences has been shown to increase letter knowledge (Roberts, Vadasy, & Sanders, 2019). Print referencing is a feature of some Book and Print Reading and Writing lessons.
- **Transitions and Routines:** Throughout the day, the letter wall can be used to play games and review letter names and sounds. For example, when calling children to transition to centers, you might ask them to point to a word that begins with a particular letter or letter sound.
- **Spontaneous Opportunities:** Unplanned opportunities for addressing letters are abundant in the prekindergarten day. A child may notice a word on a friend's shirt, point to a sign, or become excited to see a letter from his name on the cover of a book. Capitalize on these meaningful opportunities by engaging children in conversations about letters, pointing to the letters, and helping children make additional connections.

Targeted Letter Instruction

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum further supports alphabet knowledge through instructional routines and strategic sequencing delivered through direct instruction. Effective direct instruction is brief, explicit, and includes the letter names, sounds, and formations of both uppercase and lowercase letters (Jones, Clark, & Reutzel, 2013; Piasta, Purpura, & Wagner, 2010). The letter routine in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum is designed to follow these principles, consisting of the following parts:

- 1. The teacher introduces the letter name, accompanied by a visual of the letter and a picture beginning with that letter. Children repeat the letter name. This step connects the letter name to its printed form.
- 2. The sound of the letter is introduced, and children repeat it. This step provides children with an auditory representation of the letter's sound.
- 3. The teacher demonstrates how to form the letter, narrating the strokes used to make up the letter. Children practice, writing with a finger in the air, on the carpet, etc. This step reinforces the shape or physical features of the letter to support letter identification and writing.



The sequence of English and Spanish letter lessons intentionally takes into account the ways children learn letters (Huang et al., 2014). The below criteria informed the English and Spanish letter sequences. Different sequences emerged as a result of the differences in letter names and sounds.

- It is easier to learn letters for which the uppercase and lowercase forms are similar.
- When letter names begin with the letter sound (e.g., B's name begins with the /b/ sound), they are easier to learn.
- Continuous sounds (e.g., /m/) are easier to emphasize and learn.
- Letters that have similar shapes (e.g., b and d) or similar sounds (e.g., /m/ and /n/) can be easily confused, and so should not be ordered close together in the sequence of lessons.
- Letters that appear infrequently in print (e.g., z and q) are more difficult to learn.

While some instructional approaches might focus on a letter a week, this pacing gives children only one or two significant exposures to a letter across the school year (Jones et al., 2013). By explicitly teaching 2-3 letters a week in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum and spiraling instruction back again, teachers provide several intentional exposures to each letter. Given these factors, the letters are sequenced in the following order:

English Letter Sequence	Spanish Letter Sequence	1 st Week of Explicit Instruction	2 nd Week of Explicit Instruction	3 rd Week of Explicit Instruction
Mm	Oo			
Ss	Рр	3	13	23
Kk	Uu			
Рр	Mm			
Oo	Ii	4	14	24
Ff	Ss			
Uu	Aa			
LI	Сс	5	15	25
Сс	Ee			
Ww	Vv			
Bb	Bb	6	16	26
Nn	Tt			
Aa	Yy			
Tt	Dd	7	17	27
Dd	Qq			

English Letter Sequence	Spanish Letter Sequence	1 st Week of Explicit Instruction	2 nd Week of Explicit Instruction	3 rd Week of Explicit Instruction
Rr	Ff			
Ee	LI	8	18	28
Yy	Nn			
Hh	Rr			
Ii	Gg	9 19	29	
11	Kk			
Vv	Jj	10	20	30
Gg	Ññ	10	20	30
Jj	Zz	11	21	31
Zz	Xx	11	21	31
Xx	Ww	- 12	22	22
Qq	Hh		22	32

Note that instruction in specific letters does not begin until the third week of the *Scope and Sequence*. Prior to this, the focus will be on letters in children's names and initial familiarity with the alphabet. Working with names in the early days of the school year is not only a fun way to address alphabet knowledge—it can also help children get to know one another and build relationships.

BOOK AND PRINT READING

The Book and Print Reading category of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum addresses a range of important knowledge and skills, including:

- Letter knowledge
- Listening comprehension
- Print concepts
- Awareness that print has meaning
- Vocabulary and oral language development

Curriculum lessons engage children in a variety of experiences with print using books and other materials. These experiences facilitate rich early literacy learning and are designed to promote children's motivation to read and write.

Book Reading Experiences

Reading and discussing books together is a fundamental part of the prekindergarten day. Interactive read alouds represent a significant component of the Book and Print Reading curriculum. During these readings, teachers read high-quality literature and ask questions to spark rich teacher-child discussions. Curriculum lessons include opportunities for children to actively engage as they participate in partner talk, share thinking with the larger group, act out words, discuss and answer questions, and repeat book phrases. Teacher-initiated talk before, during, and after reading supports language and literacy development in prekindergarten and beyond (Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2012).

Book and Print Reading lessons often suggest book titles to use with particular objectives. Teachers may substitute a different book for the suggested title, as desired. When doing so, it is important to ensure the book selected lends itself well to the goal of the lesson. For example, if a lesson is on making predictions, it's important that children have not heard the story before.

Book substitutions are encouraged as a way to incorporate theme-related titles during read alouds. To aid in selecting theme-related titles, a Book Club list is provided with each *Theme Guide*. The Book Club is an expansive list of high-quality texts that complement the theme. You may wish to refer to the Book Club list as you gather books from your school and classroom libraries prior to beginning a new theme. Included within each topic of a *Theme Guide* is a shorter list of curated titles to support topic-specific content.

When selecting books, plan to read a balance of informational and narrative texts. High-quality narrative texts expose children to new, rich language and to familiar words used in new ways. Informational texts allow children to see and experience things that are impossible or impractical to experience firsthand (Hoffman, Teale, & Yokota, 2015; Schickedanz & Collins, 2013). Book Clubs are organized by narrative and

informational titles to make the textselection task easier for teachers.

Concept books are another genre to incorporate into lessons. These include books focused on concepts such as the alphabet, numbers, colors, and shapes. These books can be effective springboards for introducing new concepts to children or for highlighting a concept in a novel context. These books also make good additions to centers (e.g., the Math Center might include a basket of books about numbers, shapes, and other math concepts).



Print Reading Experiences

Research suggests that teachers can "capitalize on children's natural attraction to environmental print by using it to promote their literacy development" (Neumann, Hood, Ford, & Neumann, 2011). Children often engage successfully with environmental print before recognizing print in books. The Book and Print Reading category of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes lessons for addressing literacy concepts through print in the environment.

Curriculum lessons also offer children abundant interactions with print beyond books. Each week, children will recite nursery rhymes and sing songs written on charts. During these experiences, children and teachers use pointers to track words and match hand or body movements to words. These printed rhymes and songs are later incorporated into the classroom library for children's independent use during centers.

FINE ARTS

Singing, dancing, acting out stories, and creating visual art are all common parts of the prekindergarten day. However, these fine arts experiences are more than simply fun and engaging activities. According to Libby Doggett of the Department of Education, "Every child is born with creative potential. It is our job in early learning programs...to nurture that creativity and support resourceful problem-solving, imaginative thinking, and transference of skills and knowledge to new experiences" (quoted in Menzer, 2015). Fine arts experiences in early childhood are associated with positive outcomes in many domains, particularly social and emotional development (Menzer, 2015).

The Circle Pre-K Curriculum includes activities that encourage children's engagement in visual art, music, and dramatic expression. These can be found in the *Theme Guides*, under the category of Learning Centers—particularly the Creativity and Pretend and Learn centers. Many lessons in other domains of the *Scope and Sequence* and in other sections of the *Theme Guides* also contain elements of fine arts. Activities include:

Art: In the Creativity Center, ideas for theme-aligned arts and crafts are provided. These use common materials and provide opportunities for children to cut, paint, color, and glue—helping them build fine motor skills while creating artistic masterpieces.

Music: Music can be incorporated throughout the day, such as singing during circle time. Weekly suggestions of theme-aligned rhymes and songs are provided in the Theme Extenders section of the *Theme Guides*.

Dramatic Expression: In the Pretend and Learn Center, children can take on roles and act out scenarios of their choosing. Lessons in the Language and Communication section and in the Book and Print Reading section of Theme Extenders also often involve acting out words or stories using props and puppets.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Even before their first words are spoken, children are learning about language and communication from their interactions with people around them. While early language experiences vary among individuals, all children enter school with a foundation built from the languages heard in their homes and communities. The developing brain is wired to learn language from everyday experiences, but learning language is also an active process that adults can facilitate (Perry, n.d.). The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum provides teachers with lessons that support core language building skills through playful, meaningful learning opportunities.

Oral Language

Oral language is "really a combination of two separate but related skills. The first, receptive comprehension, is the ability to process and understand speech—a story read aloud, a question asked, a request made. The second, expressive, is the ability to speak to others—to talk about experiences and feelings, respond to questions, and communicate wants and needs" (Children's Learning Institute, n.d.). Vocabulary knowledge is linked to both receptive (listening) and expressive (speaking) language. Taken together, listening, speaking and vocabulary knowledge are all important components of early literacy development (Whorrall & Cabell, 2015).

Listening: Listening skills are strengthened through teacher directed gamelike experiences. Activities in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum that support the development of listening skills might involve children listening carefully to a stimulus, then responding in a planned way—such as recreating a pattern the teacher has clapped, identifying the source of a familiar sound, or following directions in a game like Simon Says. Children who demonstrate listening skills show they understand what is being said around them; for example, they respond appropriately to others' talk and follow directions of two or three steps.

Speaking: Speaking skills include accurate production of language (i.e., the child can be understood by peers and teachers), conversational abilities such as turn-taking and answering questions, and structural skills such as using plurals correctly and speaking in sentences that involve several words. Activities that address speaking allow children to practice these skills in formal and informal settings. Phonological awareness activities also support children's speech production. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum supports the development of speaking by presenting children with numerous reasons to engage in meaningful talk throughout the day. Such experiences include using puppets to practice greeting others, sharing personal experiences, reciting songs and chants, and retelling stories.

Vocabulary: Young children learn new words rapidly—at 12-months of age, children can recognize approximately fifty words, but by five years old, children can recognize up to 10,000 words (Shipley & McAfee as cited in Law, Mahr, Schneeberg, & Edwards, 2017). The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum offers explicit activities that help children build larger vocabularies. For example, for a story read aloud, specific

words can be chosen to be taught and reinforced before, during, and after reading. As children's vocabularies become more sophisticated, they develop networks of associations that can help them build even greater knowledge (Willingham, 2006). A larger vocabulary also allows for the development of more abstract language abilities, such as categorization of words.

Building Language & Communication with the Complete Curriculum

Aside from language lessons, the curriculum as a whole is designed to support children in deepening their language abilities. While explicit lessons are important for building language skills, routines and informal opportunities are also critical.

In order to make language learning meaningful throughout the school day, teachers must be intentional in their conversations with children, using multiple conversational turns ("I talk, then you talk") to expand children's chances to use language. Whorrall & Cabell (2015) recommend the following practices to make classroom conversations more meaningful and impactful:

- Use sophisticated vocabulary and provide child-friendly definitions for unknown words. Focus on defining words that children will hear and use often.
- Use children's interests to drive conversations.
- Use open-ended questions about challenging topics. For example, instead of asking, "Is your sister nice to you," the teacher might ask, "Tell me about a time your sister did something kind for you."

Some of the additional opportunities for language learning in the curriculum include:

Circle Time: During circle time, the Question of the Day/La pregunta del día routine can be used to help children practice listening and responding. In this routine, children all answer a question posed by the teacher, and then they discuss the answer with a partner. Teachers can extend the language learning opportunities by listening in on partner interactions and prompting further conversation using the types of questions described above.

Pretend and Learn Center: When children engage in sociodramatic play, abundant and varied opportunities for language learning are presented (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 2003). Children must plan their play, inhabit roles, and use narrative structures to guide their play. Teachers can model ways to increase language use during play scenarios and provide children with adequate time (20-30 minutes) to develop robust interactions in the Pretend and Learn Center. For specific recommendations on how to facilitate and scaffold language in the Pretend and Learn Center, read Building Language through the Dramatic Play Center in the CIRCLE Activity Collection at CLIEngage.org.

Themes: Background knowledge helps children learn and remember new things (Willingham, 2006). By providing instruction centered on content-integrated themes,

teachers can give children opportunities to develop vocabulary around specific concepts and create rich networks of knowledge with which to associate new words. Themes facilitate use of these words in authentic formal and informal contexts.

MATHEMATICS

Young children possess a natural interest in mathematical concepts and bring their growing knowledge of these concepts when they enter pre-K (Frye et al., 2013; Reid, 2016). High-quality math instruction capitalizes on this interest to position children for success in school; competence in early math skills is a strong predictor of later mathematical learning and achievement (Clements & Sarama, 2013; Reid, 2016).

Research findings indicate the importance of high-quality, challenging experiences that are achievable and focused on building foundational skills (Clements, Fuson, & Sarama, 2017; National Research Council, 2009). The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum engages children in learning math through a variety of formal and informal experiences, balancing targeted mathematics lessons with connected, meaningful, and playful experiences. The curriculum supports math across whole group, small group, centers, transitions, and daily routines, targeting individual skills in the following areas:

- Adding To and Taking Away
- Counting
- Classification and Patterns
- Geometry and Spatial Sense
- Measurement

Formal Mathematics Instruction

Formal instruction refers to the dedicated time in the day set apart for planned instruction on specific math skills. Whole group and small group lessons and activities that support a progression of skills and concepts are outlined in the *Scope and Sequence*. Foundational skills are taught and practiced prior to more complex skills. For example, children will have many experiences counting objects in collections and comparing sets before the formal introduction of adding small sets.

Individual skills and concepts repeat regularly in the curriculum to ensure continued practice and building of math skills. Early lessons and activities have children working with small numbers and collections. Over time, numbers and collections increase to deepen and broaden concept understanding. This gradual increase of skill expectations reflects developmental progressions recognized in research (Clements & Sarama, 2014; Frye et al., 2013).

Informal Mathematics Experiences

Informal math experiences refer to those that occur outside of structured lessons. Daily routines offer many opportunities for mathematical thinking and problem solving. Frequent reminders are given throughout the curriculum to capitalize on everyday opportunities to apply mathematical thinking and language. Such opportunities may include sorting materials into buckets during clean up or counting vegetables placed in a grocery basket. The curriculum provides examples of informal math experiences that can be integrated into daily routines and transitions.

Math in Centers

The math center is an area of the classroom designed to facilitate child-initiated and teacher-guided explorations and play. Both formal and informal math experiences take place in the center. Support for planning meaningful center activities is provided in the *Theme Guides*. Theme-related math manipulatives and books are suggested, as well as recommendations for transitioning whole group and small group activities to the math center for continued practice and development.

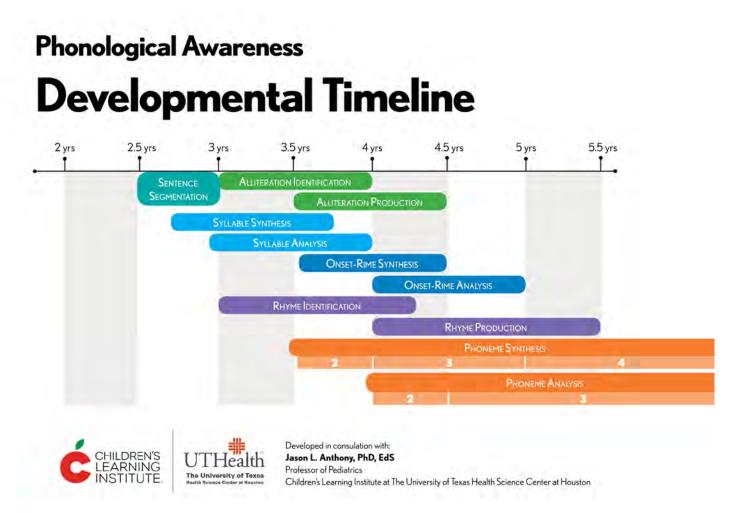
Math is also an important component of other classroom centers. The dramatic play center offers a myriad of opportunities for children to engage in mathematical thinking. Children may classify and sort fruits and vegetables at a farmer's market, or determine the amount of money owed for purchasing supplies at the pet store. Building block play in the construction center requires problem solving and spatial reasoning as children plan the design of a building, determine how to fit shapes together, create stable structures, and more. Curriculum *Theme Guides* provide weekly recommendations for incorporating materials into these centers to enhance children's play experiences.

The mathematical learning that occurs in centers is enhanced when teachers join in. By posing questions, scaffolding tasks, and encouraging the use of math vocabulary, the teacher can stimulate deeper math thinking and help children make connections across contexts.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness (PA) is the ability to detect and manipulate units of oral language—words, parts of words, and sounds (phonemes)—without linking these units to print. PA is a key predictor of early reading ability and considered a necessary development in learning how to read and write (Anthony & Francis, 2005; Hjetland, Brinchmann, Scherer, & Melby-Lervåg, 2017; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004).

Developing PA skills is foundational for children's understanding that letters or groups of letters can represent phonemes, but this development can vary considerably from child to child. Explicit instruction in PA is often necessary to ensure all children gain these skills. The Phonological Awareness Developmental Timeline (below) shows how these skills typically emerge.



The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum sequences PA instruction to reflect this timeline, moving from larger to smaller units of sound, and repeating cycles throughout the year. Cycles of instruction are sequenced in the following manner:

- Sentence Segmentation
- Compound Words
- Syllables
- Alliteration
- Rhyme
- Onset-rime
- Phonemes

Instruction in PA is varied in complexity across time to accommodate and build the skill level of each child. Earlier instruction focuses on children identifying units of language and blending sounds together, followed by producing units of language. Later instruction supports children's ability to segment and delete these units.

Phoneme-level skills are the most complex, with development occurring well into kindergarten and even first grade. Although some prekindergarten children may be able to perform simple manipulations at the phoneme level (e.g., removing /n/ from nice to make ice), it is not an expectation that prekindergarten children independently perform difficult manipulations with individual phonemes (e.g., segmenting frog into /f/ /r/ /o/ /g/).

In addition to isolated PA instruction and practice, PA is integrated into many Alphabet Knowledge, Language and Communication, and Writing lessons to ensure abundant opportunities to practice these skills across the day and week. Ideas for practicing these skills during transitions are also included, and the *Theme Guides* suggest ways to link PA activities to the current theme. Many lessons include downloadable picture cards to enhance and support PA tasks.

When implementing PA activities, keep in mind the following best practices:

- Clearly articulate units of language and sound, with crisp pronunciation. When saying the sounds of individual consonant phonemes, be sure to cut the sound off without adding a schwa (an "uh" sound) to the end of the consonant.
- Encourage children to also use clear, crisp pronunciation.
- Keep a brisk pace to maintain children's engagement.
- Add hand motions or other body movements to make concepts concrete and to maximize children's attention; for example, when segmenting words in a sentence, you might make a cutting motion between each word.

To learn about the design of phonological awareness specific to the Spanish curriculum, refer to the Phonological Awareness or Conciencia fonológica section of the Spanish *Teacher's Manual.*

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Healthy physical development creates a foundation for cognitive and social-emotional development. Young children need opportunities and space for engaging in physical development learning and activities during the school day. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum addresses this need with lessons and activities that support motor skills and personal health and safety.

Motor Skills

"Critical ages for children to develop motor proficiency occur between ages two and seven with the ideal age being three or four" (Liu, Hamilton, & Smith, 2015, p. 198).

This highlights the important role of the prekindergarten teacher and classroom environment in young children's physical growth and development. Fine and gross motor development is addressed with lessons and activities included in *Theme Guides* and *Scope and Sequences*. While some activities are designed solely to support fine and gross motor development, many cross-curricular lessons targeting other domains (e.g., math, science) integrate fine or gross motor tasks in meaningful ways.

Gross Motor Skills: Gross motor skills refer to control of movements using large muscles. This includes the ability to walk up and down stairs while alternating feet, kicking and catching a large ball with accuracy, hopping, and climbing a small jungle gym (University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2013). Research suggests that as young children's gross motor abilities improve, so does the likelihood that they will develop and maintain a healthy and active lifestyle into adulthood (Goldfield, Harvey, Grattan, and Adamo, 2012; Liu et al., 2015).



Outdoor play offers natural opportunities for gross motor activities. The curriculum includes ideas for structured play using a parachute, engaging in stop-and-start running games, and much more. Time should be included in the daily schedule for planned outdoor activities as well as for unstructured activities that encourage movements like climbing and balancing. These skills can also be supported with indoor activities. Indoor and outdoor activities, such as Hot Potato and Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, are included throughout the curriculum.

Fine Motor Development: Fine motor skills refer to small muscle control over movements, such as reaching, grasping, coloring, and turning pages in a book (University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2013). Intentional support for the development of fine motor skills is necessary, with research showing a positive relationship between children's fine motor development and academic success (Liu et al., 2015). Prekindergarten children can be expected to perform tasks such as squeezing tiny objects between the thumb and forefinger and coordinating eye and hand movements (University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2013). Active and intentional fine motor development is essential to development of writing (Liu et al., 2015). The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum supports children's fine motor tasks into centers. Tasks that develop fine motor skills are also included within activities and lessons that target other domain areas (e.g., alphabet knowledge and science). To provide additional experiences, the teacher may set up a fine motor

skills center to include activities such as beading, sand tracing, blunt needle sewing, and polishing small items.

Personal Health and Safety

The early childhood years are ideal for introducing children to the importance of caring for their bodies. Physical health education includes teaching children the importance of an active lifestyle, making healthy food choices, and observing physical safety practices.

For preschool-aged children, physical activity throughout the day enhances growth and development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Adults must create opportunities for children to engage in many types of physical activities and educate them on its importance to healthy living. Children's healthy eating habits can also be shaped by adults. Teachers and family members can model the importance of a healthy diet by regularly making nutritious beverage, snack, and meal choices in front of children (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011). Attention must also be given to teaching good hygiene and safety practices, including fire drill procedures, proper handling and use of scissors, and the importance of wearing a helmet and other safety equipment when riding a bicycle. In addition, the everyday modeling of practices such as regular hand washing and sneezing into an elbow helps to establish norms that children are more likely to replicate.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes a variety of lessons and activities for introducing and deepening children's knowledge of safe

and healthy habits. The I'm Healthy! I'm Safe! *Theme Guide* focuses on these important concepts in depth through three topics— My Safe and Active Body, My Safe and Healthy Eating Habits, and My Healthy Body and Teeth. Children will engage in a variety of hands-on experiences, comprehensive lessons, and discussions within each topic. Physical health and safety is also addressed in other themes (e.g., Get Moving!) and with crosscurricular lessons found in the *Scope and Sequences*.



SCIENCE

Young children begin school filled with curiosity about the world around them, almost as if they are natural scientists (Eshach & Fried, 2005). The National Academy of Sciences points to findings indicating that "children can use a wide range of reasoning processes that form the underpinnings of scientific reasoning. ... young children can think both concretely and abstractly" (National Research Council, 2007). Teachers can capitalize on these abilities by including rich, hands-on science learning in their classrooms, like the lessons found in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum.

This CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum is designed to provide teachers and children with a series of science lessons that encourage engagement in the core processes of scientific discovery. These processes include observation, exploration, asking questions, making and testing predictions, and communicating ideas (University of Texas System, 2008). Across the prekindergarten year, science lessons will not only address science as a set of processes, but also as a body of knowledge (National Research Council, 2007). Over the course of a year, children will explore this body of knowledge through activities in the areas of physical science, life science, earth and space science, and engineering.

Physical Science: Physical science lessons include observation and description of objects, exploration of force and motion, and the study of energy. Children have opportunities to investigate questions like these: How much sand will make a bottle sink? Which tools and toys need electricity, and which do not? How do objects move through liquids? Through seeking real-world answers to these questions, children practice scientific reasoning, as well as related math skills, such as measuring and sorting.

Life Science: Life science lessons encourage children to observe animals' features closely, categorize organisms, make connections between organisms and their environments, and to describe life cycles. These lessons include many handson experiences, such as investigating organisms around the school and testing conditions for successfully growing plants.

Earth and Space Science: During earth and space science lessons, children inquire into objects in the sky and their changes, earth materials and their uses, and the ways people can care for the environment. These lessons can have lasting impacts—children who learn to take care of the Earth when they are young are more likely than others to be environmentally aware later in life (Blanchard & Buchanan, 2011).

Engineering: Children are provided opportunities to apply science and math through engineering lessons. They learn about various jobs related to engineering and building, and they implement what they have learned to design, build, and test construction projects.

The strands of physical science, life science, earth and space science, and engineering are embedded in cross-curricular themes that take advantage of links between various content areas. Making these connections can help children see and apply science to the broader world (Basile & White, 2000). Lessons are designed to build scientific knowledge while also advancing learning in other domains. Specifically, science provides a particularly rich ground for building language competency due to the wide range of vocabulary included, such as words connected to "science equipment/tools (e.g., magnifying glass), natural materials (e.g., pine needle), science processes (e.g., evaporation), and words to describe phenomena (e.g., rough/smooth)" (Gerde, Schachter, & Wasik, 2013). These science activities also provide innovative opportunities to apply math knowledge through observation (e.g., counting) and recording data (e.g., making graphs).

In order to make the most of the science lessons in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum, consider the following:

- Children should investigate and inquire through hands-on experiences. Children will develop a richer understanding if they are the ones to actually conduct the experiments and manipulate the materials when they can safely do so.
- Scientific thinking can be encouraged throughout the day (Gerde et al., 2013). For example, children can consider physical science concepts when playing with blocks or life science concepts at recess.
- Children show more engagement in science—including more persistence with challenges—when they feel like part of a community (Master, Cheryan, & Meltzoff, 2017). In order to build this sense of group identity, send positive messages about science such as, "We're all scientists here!" or, "Anyone can do science!" Showing images of scientists who represent a number of backgrounds can also support children's sense of belonging to a scientific community.
- Ensure children have opportunities to communicate during investigations—talking, drawing, and writing.
- To extend science learning, look to the *Theme Guides* for additional suggestions for read-alouds, oral language activities, center ideas, and lesson extensions.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While many curricula focus primarily on building academic skills, the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum provides resources for instruction in another critical aspect of children's growth: social and emotional development. Instruction that develops children's social and emotional skills can provide advantages for all children, including those who might initially struggle with these skills (Zins & Elias, 2006). While social and emotional development is important in its own right, it also helps to facilitate academic learning and is predictive of academic results in the early elementary years (Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014; Shala, 2013). Successful programs that promote social and emotional development occur in the context of caring, stable relationships (Boyd, Barnett, Bodrova, Leong, & Gomby, 2005). In contrast, when children learn in an environment of high stress or unpredictable relationships, they can struggle to develop a strong foundation for social and emotional skills. For this reason, teachers should model their own social and emotional competence and make time to build relationships with individual children. It is also important for children to have friends amongst their peers, rather than simply acquaintances (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). Children need time not only to work with other children, but to play, talk, and cultivate close relationships with others. This curriculum focuses on development in four areas:

- Self-concept
- Self-regulation
- Relationships with Others
- Social Awareness Skills

Self-Concept

Self-concept refers to a person's sense of themselves—physically, emotionally, and cognitively. For children in prekindergarten, this includes awareness of their bodies in space and personal boundaries. For example, a child might begin to understand that during circle time, in order to avoid hitting other children, hands and feet should be kept to oneself. Children also begin to understand their own likes and dislikes, and to develop a clearer picture of their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, children begin to identify with particular groups that they belong to, such as their families, classes, teams, and religious groups.

In order to promote the growth of children's self-concept, teachers should model talking about themselves—including talking about the growth of skills—and should encourage children to do the same. For example, rather than saying, "Good job writing your letters," the teacher might give specific feedback, recognizing what the child has learned: "Last week, I noticed you had trouble writing those letters with slant lines, but you kept practicing, and now you're writing them easily. See what happens when you practice something that seems hard at first?"

Children should be encouraged to do as much as possible on their own and to persist in solving problems when they arise. This can be facilitated by matching the challenge of activities to children's individual abilities, providing lessons that are neither too easy nor too hard. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum lessons include scaffolds that can increase or decrease an activity's level of challenge. Step It Up Lessons and Additional Lessons in the *Scope and Sequence* also provide options for individualizing levels of challenge.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to manage one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Selfregulation skills often require children to use cognitive skills (called executive functions) to focus and shift attention, remember instructions, and hold back impulsive responses. Self-regulation is a crucial skill for becoming an active learner because it helps with making plans, setting goals, and persisting in working toward those goals. Research has shown that children who participate in programs to improve self-regulation see benefits in early literacy and math skills, compared to children who participate only in academic activities (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). Activities in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum are designed to explicitly teach children strategies for recognizing and discussing emotions and calming intense feelings, as well as other aspects of self-regulation.

Relationships with Others/Social Awareness Skills

Learning in school takes place within a network of relationships—with adults, peers, and communities teachers can help develop children's relationship skills through intentional lessons, modeling, and practice. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum provides lessons that allow children to learn and apply specific skills, such as playing together, asking adults for help, resolving conflicts, and making friends. Through these classroom experiences, children will grow their toolkits for working and playing together.



In particular, children in preschool are beginning to develop the awareness that others have perspectives different from their own. By encouraging this social awareness and providing opportunities to practice empathic responses, teachers can help children build strong foundations for relationships now and later in life.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Most children enter prekindergarten with experiences of home, family, and community. Through lessons in social studies, children are provided opportunities to expand their understanding of the world, learn additional skills, and develop mindsets that will support them as they grow into responsible citizens. It is this emphasis on civic participation that is the primary goal of social studies, according to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (2019).

In early childhood, social studies knowledge is developed through two lenses: social systems and social concepts (Epstein, 2014; NCSS, 2019).

• Social systems are the "norms, values, and procedures that affect human relationships in our day-to-day lives" (Epstein, 2014). In pre-K, this includes learning

about the importance of rules, taking on roles within the classroom, and coming to appreciate the diversity of the world children experience.

• Social concepts are the content topics taught in the social studies, such as history, economics, and geography.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum provides lessons and activities that support both of these components. While learning about social systems is embedded throughout social studies activities (as well as other areas, such as Social and Emotional Development, Book and Print Reading, and Writing), the curriculum also addresses four concept areas: People, Culture, and Events; Economics; Geography; and Citizenship.

People, Culture, and Events: Lessons and activities in this concept area provide children opportunities to identify and value the familial and cultural similarities and differences between themselves and their classmates. Children will also participate in activities that encourage them to reflect on past and present experiences in sequence, helping them connect to history. While young children's experiences of history are brief and personal, activities such as storytelling about family events can help them develop a sense of time (Snider, 2013).

Economics: Children often come to school with misconceptions about how the economic system works; for example, they may not connect the exchange of money to the purchasing of goods and services that they need (Schug, 1996). Economics activities help to demystify these processes, allowing children to gain a better understanding of the people and places that provide for their needs and wants.

Geography: Young children develop a sense of place early on, connecting to home and neighborhood (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015). Through geography activities, children broaden their awareness to encompass a

larger community by exploring, beginning mapping, role-playing, and writing.

Citizenship: Preparing for responsible citizenship consists of learning basics of law and history, developing critical reasoning, participating in social activities, and cultivating basic civic values (Rebell, 2018). While these might seem weighty topics for pre-K, children can begin to understand them through daily classroom activities, such as their role in the classroom via completing their helper job. Specific lessons allow children to practice important life skills such as voting, sharing space, and taking turns.



In the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum, social studies concepts are primarily located in the *Theme Guides*' whole group and small group theme lessons. By focusing on social studies through the themes, teachers can lead children through playful, inquiry-based experiences that build a holistic understanding of the world around them. For example, during the theme It's Harvest Time, children explore types of clothing worn during different seasons, role-play working and shopping in a harvest market, and create maps of farms. This type of inquiry helps children to develop "curiosity, problem-solving skills, and appreciation of investigation" (Mindes, 2005, p. 14)—the very critical thinking skills which are so essential to democratic citizenship.

TECHNOLOGY

By prekindergarten, children have often had countless exposures to and experiences with technology, including smartphones, tablets, and gaming systems. In the classroom, technology centers on computers, interactive boards, digital projectors, and document readers, in addition to more familiar devices such as tablets and smartphones.

There is a growing consensus among experts in the early childhood community that "meaningful use of high-quality digital resources is essential in preparing all young children for long-term academic success" (International Literary Association, 2019, p. 4). This support is contingent upon guidelines developed to emphasize the thoughtful and strategic use of technology in the early childhood setting.

Benefits and Guidelines

When used well, evidence shows technology can enhance learning experiences, adding a new dimension and excitement (Donohue and Schomburg, 2017). In a policy brief, the U.S. Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (USDE and DHHS, 2016) recognizes "promising ways to help early learners use technology with peers and adults to foster relationships, expand learning, and solve meaningful problems" (p. 4). More specifically, evidence suggests benefits in the areas of reading, math, science, social and emotional development, and motor skills "by providing new opportunities to engage students, access to new content, and new ways for children to explore and create" (Daugherty, Dossani, Johnson, & Wright, 2014, p. 4).

Just as with manipulative and print materials, technology resources are most beneficial when implementation is tightly aligned with principles of developmentally appropriate practice (Gartrell, 2014, p. 487). This requires a strategic and meaningful approach to technology in the classroom. In each instance, teachers must identify the potential benefits, plan adult interactions surrounding the experience (before, during, or after), and consider the developmental needs of children (USDE, 2016).

Experiences with Technology

Although children often arrive in prekindergarten having experienced some forms of technology, they require instruction on the particular tools, programs, and applications to be used in the classroom. This includes the proper care and handling of devices. "These skills and the use of technology should generally not be taught as a separate rotation or class, but rather integrated into the learning objective of the lesson" (USDE and DHHS, 2016, p. 9).

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum supports technology goals as an integrated part of other learning domains, such as literacy, math, science, and social studies. Children have opportunities to learn about new technology through teacher modeling and practicing with adult guidance. After these initial lessons, children use the technology more independently as part of center experiences (following the guideline that adults must play an active role). In the first weeks of school, students receive targeted instruction on the purpose of a computer mouse and practice its use to ensure their success using school computers. Other lessons, such as Drawing with Details/Dibujar con detalles, meaningfully integrate technology objectives to enhance the primary learning goal(s) of the lesson. Whole group, small group, and center activities make connections to technology used in our daily lives. In addition to lessons like these, notes are included in *Scope and Sequences* to suggest additional ways to add technology to lessons and activities.



Limitations

Researchers and experts caution parents and teachers about some of the potential drawbacks to using technology with young children. These can be avoided by following established guidelines and recommendations.

Concerns	Recommendations
Decreased social interactions with peers and adults	Never allow technology to take the place of human interactions. Ensure children's time is overwhelmingly devoted to engaging with peers and adults in structured and unstructured activities. Refer to the Social and Emotional section for more information.
Decreased physical activity	Keep children active throughout the day in accordance with guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018). Technology should not replace outdoor time, active play, music and movement activities, or the like. Consider ways technology can encourage physical activity (e.g., using a handheld device to learn about insects observed as the class explores the outdoors). Refer to the Physical Development section for more information.
Passive use of technology and exposure to poor content	Plan for technology use that requires active engagement with content. Select activities that are appropriate for the child's developmental level and that stimulate cognitive processing. Include adult interactions to help children make connections across contexts and to the real world.

(USDE, 2016)

For more detailed information on technology guidelines, refer to *The Early Learning and Educational Technology Policy Brief* from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at http://tech.ed.gov/files/2016/10/Early-Learning-Tech-Policy-Brief.pdf

WRITING

Writing allows children to share stories, represent their learning, and experiment with what they have learned about print. In prekindergarten, this writing might take the form of drawings, scribbles, letter-like forms, letters, or combinations of these. This emergent writing not only sets children on the path to later fluent writing, but also supports foundational reading skills and predicts later reading success in the areas of decoding, reading comprehension, and spelling (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Prekindergarten children benefit from writing instruction that intentionally incorporates early literacy skills in the following areas:

- attitudes toward and engagement in writing
- oral language skills
- alphabet knowledge
- concepts about print
- phonological awareness
- early writing skills, such as representing meaning through the uses of symbol or drawing (Hall, Simpson, Guo, & Wang, 2015)

Instructional Approaches

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum supports writing through meaningful daily experiences that allow children to observe writing in action, write and draw independently, and discover the connections between language and print. Lessons and activities offer authentic opportunities for engaging children in writing for a variety of purposes. The curriculum addresses writing through the four instructional approaches described below:

Modeled writing: The teacher acts as both composer and scribe of a short written piece. The teacher writes on a large chart tablet or white board, thinking out loud about what to write and how to write it. In Weeks 1-2 of the curriculum, modeled writing is used during Morning Message/Mensaje de la mañana to introduce children to concepts of writing. Modeled writing lessons are also ideal for launching new genres of writing (e.g., journal writing or personal stories) and new concepts of print throughout the year.



Shared writing: The teacher is still the scribe, but children are now actively involved in composing the message. As the teacher writes, children engage in the process by helping to come up with ideas, identifying sounds they hear in words, or naming familiar letters for the teacher to write. During Weeks 3-12 of the curriculum, the routine of Shared Daily News/Compartiendo noticias diarias is introduced to children. During this routine, individual children share "news," or personal events from their lives, which the teacher scribes.

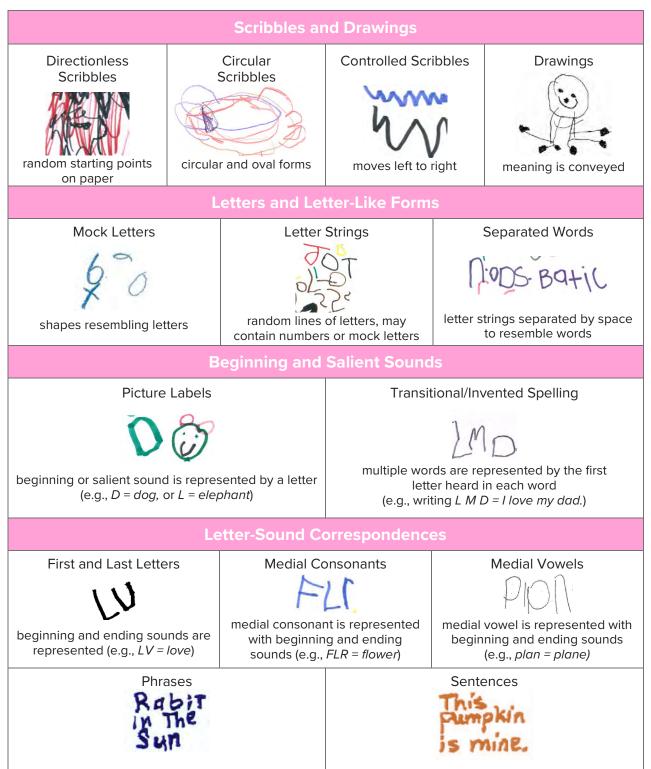
Interactive writing: Interactive writing is similar to shared writing, but the teacher shares the writing instrument with the children. The teacher should carefully consider children's individual writing abilities when deciding which child to call on at a given moment. The Daily News routine shifts from Shared Daily News to Interactive Daily News/Noticias diarias interactivas at Week 13. Both shared and interactive writing can also be used to write whole-class pieces, such as a record of a field trip or class event.

Independent writing: Children write on their own at their specific developmental stages. This may happen in the Writer's Corner center or during dedicated writing time (often preceded by shared or interactive writing to introduce new concepts for children to use in their independent writing). During independent writing, the teacher speaks individually with children, employing appropriate scaffolds to nudge children toward the next developmental writing stage. The teacher might also write words or sentences dictated by the child to help children make connections between oral and written language.

While these instructional approaches are described separately above, a teacher will often toggle between them based on the demands of the writing task and observations of the children's participation.

Developmental Writing Stages

A prekindergarten class will contain a range of writing abilities; many children begin learning about writing prior to school, and both knowledge about writing and writing skills increase between the ages of 3-5 (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011). A model of young children's writing development suggests four broad stages: scribbling and drawing, letters and letter-like forms, beginning and salient sounds, and letter-sound correspondences (Cabell, Tortorelli, & Gerde, 2013). These levels are broken down further in the chart below. Children typically move back and forth across various levels of writing as they progress, but will often show a general tendency toward a specific stage. Remember that the stages of writing are part of a continuum of writing development that children move through in different ways. Teachers can refer to descriptions of these levels to determine children's approximate stages and identify skills that will help children progress.



Writing Developmental Continuum

Adapted from Children's Learning Institute (2010), developed from work of Temple, Nathan, Temple, & Burris (1992), and Cabell, Tortorelli & Gerde (2013)

This chart is also included in the appendices along with a chart designed to help teachers scaffold children's progression along the writing continuum.

Fine Motor Development

Supporting children's emergent writing also requires the active and intentional development of fine motor skills, which vary from child to child based on age, previous experiences, and individual skill development. Refer to the Physical Development section of the *Teacher's Manual* for more information.

Family Engagement

Parents and teachers play an important role in a child's early development. Research suggests that family involvement in education can boost young children's academic success and lead to better schools, contribute to higher standards, and provide lasting opportunities for children (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Park & Holloway, 2017). While there are many family engagement models used, CLI's family engagement resources are designed to



complement the teacher resources so that classroom strategies can be reinforced at home. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum extends classroom learning into children's homes through the CIRCLE Family Activity Collection. Available in English and Spanish, this online collection includes activities that support skill development in language, literacy, social and emotional learning, mathematics, and science.

Bringing the Curriculum into the Home

Two family activities are suggested in each *Scope and Sequence* to complement classroom instruction designated for the week. A substantial research base supports the conclusion that play-based learning, in combination with responsive parent-child interactions, is the best way to build academic and executive functioning skills in young children (Yogman, Garner, Hutchinson, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2018). With this in mind, every family engagement activity features playful parent-child interactions that target prekindergarten learning goals. Activities are written using family-friendly language with a description of the activity, materials needed (usually common household objects), and instructions to help families begin the activity.

Families can freely access these activities by going online to CLIEngageFamily.org. No account setup or login is needed. As an additional support, many activities include demonstration videos of real families conducting activities with their children. Teachers may share direct links to activities through email, text, phone messaging applications, or classroom websites. Alternatively, teachers may download and print activities to send home each week. A sample letter for introducing families to the Family CIRCLE Activity Collection is provided in English and Spanish in the Appendices. The letter may be used to introduce families to the CIRCLE Family Activity Collection. It shares information from research regarding the benefits of play and communicates how the collection can be used at home to support children's weekly classroom instruction.

The Family CIRCLE Activity Collection offers many activities beyond those indicated in the curriculum. Families have access to the full collection of English and Spanish activities, and they may supplement the weekly activities provided by the classroom teacher or use activities with other children in the home. Activities are searchable by age, learning area, and video availability. The collection offers activities for children from birth through prekindergarten.

Family Engagement Toolkit

Additional family resources are available to authorized users of the CLI Engage system in the form of a Family Engagement Toolkit. This online toolkit addresses four broad strategies within the CIRCLE family engagement approach:

- 1. Partnering with Families and Promoting Positive Communication
- 2. Encouraging Play-Based Interactions and Guidance
- 3. Supporting Families with Tracking Children's Development
- 4. Hosting Family Events to Support Children's Development

This online toolkit includes tools for teachers, administrators, and families. It consists of an assortment of quality resources designed to help teachers and schools build strong family partnerships in a variety of ways, including:

- Administrator's Guide: A high-level overview for incorporating Family Engagement Resources into a district-level family engagement plan. The strategies represent a number of research-driven ways to engage families in supporting children's development using resources that are freely available to school districts and families.
- Hosting Family Events: A collection of resources for hosting planned, playful, and purposeful family events to prepare parents to be successful home educators and engage as partners in their child's educational support team.
- Online Professional Development: Learn about research-driven ways to partner with families in supporting children's development using resources that are freely available to school districts and families.
- Support for Understanding and Tracking Children's Development: Downloadable family observation forms and developmental checklists that can be used to promote two-way conversations with families about children's development.

- **Tips for Building Relationships with Families:** A quick reference guide for teachers with strategies for building positive working relationships with families.
- **Teacher Strategy Checklist:** A checklist with all of the strategies in CLI's family engagement program. It can be used by teachers to self-assess family engagement efforts and to set goals for practicing new strategies.

Access the toolkit here: https://public.cliengage.org/tools/quality/family-engagement-resources/



The Structures and Processes of Classroom Management

A warm, structured classroom community is fundamental to children's successes in school. Creating such a community requires planning and attention to the following three areas:

- 1. Relationships
- 2. Rules, Routines, and Procedures
- 3. Physical Environment

Taken together, these elements make up the classroom management system. These structures and processes support teachers as they engage children in academic learning and social and emotional development.

Lessons and guidance are included in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum addressing the three key elements of classroom management listed above.

RELATIONSHIPS

Classroom management is as much about relationships as it is about routines; it is as much about warmth and community as it is about structure. Research indicates "warm, caring, supportive student-teacher relationships, as well as other child-adult relationships, are linked to better school performance and engagement, greater emotional regulation, social competence, and willingness to take on challenges" (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2020, p. 102).

Responsive interactions form the foundation for positive adult-child relationships. Every one of these interactions is an opportunity to acknowledge the child's needs, individuality, and ideas. Teachers can show responsiveness by asking questions as follow-ups to children's statements, smiling and nodding as children speak, and inviting children to share their thinking.

The teacher also sets the tone for caring, nurturing relationships between children by modeling kind, helpful behavior throughout each day and actively encouraging children to behave in the same ways. By acting intentionally to build relationships both with children and between children, teachers create the environment where the classroom management system can be successful.

To support teachers in nurturing classroom relationships, targeted lessons are included as part of the Social and Emotional Development component of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum. Refer to the Social and Emotional Development section of this manual for additional guidance and information on this topic.

RULES, ROUTINES, AND PROCEDURES

A structured environment can help children develop self-regulation by reducing over-stimulation, providing routines that support positive behaviors, and lessening opportunities for challenging behaviors (Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017). Teachers can support children in this type of environment by creating and modeling predictable classroom rules and procedures, reminding children of appropriate actions, and demonstrating proper uses of classroom materials. Specifically, classroom rules, routines, and procedures support children to do the following:

- manage their own behaviors
- operate independently
- interact respectfully with peers and teachers
- learn from one another
- regulate emotions and attention
- enjoy school
- build relationships

Classroom Rules

Classroom rules set expectations for classroom behaviors. To be meaningful and memorable, the classroom should have no more than three to five specific expectations. Each rule should be worded positively and clearly (Lohmann, Boothe, & Nenovich, 2017) in child-friendly language, and it should use only a few words. Examples of such rules are:



Example	Non-Example
We walk.	Don't run. Rationale: Negatively worded, children hear <i>run</i> rather than the desired behavior of walking.
We clean up.	Don't make a mess. Rationale: Negatively worded, unclear expectation (children might have different ideas about what <i>mess</i> means).

Inviting children to participate in the creation of the classroom rules helps instill a sense of ownership over the expectations. In the first days of school, a lesson is provided in the *Scope and Sequence* in which children will be involved in developing rules for the classroom.

Routines and Procedures

Routines and procedures are the repeated activities and ways of doing things in a particular classroom. They are essential components of a successful and productive learning environment. Typical routines and procedures include defined ways of:

- entering the classroom
- coming to the circle time area
- going to centers
- using the restroom/water fountain
- getting and putting away materials
- lining up
- exiting the classroom at dismissal

Tools for Implementing Classroom Routines & Procedures

Management Charts: Management charts are classroom signs that can be used as visual tools for establishing, communicating, and reinforcing daily routines and procedures. Pictures and words are used together to define each routine and make it concrete for children.

Daily Schedule: The daily schedule is a visual plan of the day that helps children understand and remember the order of activities in the classroom. By knowing what to expect at each part of the day, children can more easily regulate their attention, emotions, and behavior.

Use the chart interactively at each transition by moving a clip or other marker down the schedule as an indicator of which activity children are currently doing, which activity is next, and how many more events will occur before they go home.



Attendance Chart: The attendance chart is used by children to indicate their presence in the classroom each day. It also serves as an added space to display children's names for an authentic purpose.

A simple attendance chart might include a picture of a house on one side and picture

of a school on the other side, with space below these pictures for each child's name and photograph. Children place their names under the school as they arrive each morning and then move their names under the house as they leave in the afternoon.

This version of the attendance chart is used early in the school year in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum. In Week 13, a different attendance chart is introduced, called How I Feel Right Now/¿Cómo me siento ahora? In this version, children match their names to an emotion to indicate their feelings as they arrive at school each day.

This variation of the attendance chart features the classroom and community. Children place name cards in the classroom as they arrive, then move them into the community as they leave for the day.



Helper Chart: The helper chart shows job assignments with words and pictures. The chart includes a job for every child in the class, which can be rotated periodically.

Having children participate in managing the classroom environment has many benefits, including:

- creating an inclusive community where each child is a contributing member
- encouraging responsibility and follow-through
- building a shared sense of ownership for the state of the classroom
- providing experience with a variety of tasks that build large and small motor skills

Center Management System: The

center management system is a visual tool to help children make choices about which centers they would like to work in each day. Center management systems can also support social and emotional skills such as turn-taking, sharing space, and self-regulation.

Prior to introducing the center management system, determine the maximum number of children each center will accommodate—the number may vary from center to center, based upon the activities and materials available. Label each center with its name, and include enough space under the center label for the appropriate number of children's names. Use a stop sign or other signal to let children know when a center is not available that day.





The spaces above the stop sign are a concrete visual of the maximum number of children allowed in a center at a time.

To ensure the success of the system, define procedures for the following:

- choosing a center
- attaching one's name to the center chart
- choosing a different center if a chart is full
- taking one's name off the chart when moving to a new center

Equity Sticks: Equity sticks are used for selecting children to participate in different components of lessons and activities throughout the day. They ensure every child has an opportunity to speak and participate. For example, the teacher might ask a question and give children time to think about it. The teacher then selects a craft stick with a child's name on it, and that child answers the question. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum introduces children to this practice in Week 2 with a lesson called Equity Sticks/Palitos de equidad.

Create equity sticks using craft sticks and a cup. Write children's names on one side of each craft stick and place them inside the cup. After a child's stick is pulled, turn the stick upside down to signal that the child has had a turn. Other techniques you can use to keep track of which sticks have been pulled include:

- Place a smaller cup inside a larger cup to create a cup-in-a-cup. Place all of the sticks inside the smaller cup. When a name has been selected, place it on the outside of the smaller cup so it is now sitting in the larger cup.
- Color one tip of the craft stick red and color the other tip green. Place all the sticks inside the cup with the green tip pointing up. When a child's name has been called, flip the stick to the red side. Once all sticks are red, flip them back to green.



Routine Signals: Use of planned verbal and nonverbal signals can be a helpful technique to direct children's attention or reduce interruptions during instruction. These signals add to a positive classroom community by allowing teachers and children to communicate their needs in respectful ways.

When thinking about how to establish signals in the classroom, consider ones that are easy to use, non-distracting, and positive. Examples include:

Situation	Example Signal
Child needs to use the restroom	Holds up fist and waits for teacher to signal yes/no
Child needs a tissue	Taps nose and waits for teacher to signal yes/no
Teacher wants attention of entire class	Claps a pattern; children repeat the pattern and then are silent
Teacher reminds children to look at speaker	Taps beside eye and points to person talking
Teacher tells children it is time to go to the circle	Count down from 10 to 0; children stop what they are doing and go to circle time area

Implementing Rules, Routines, and Procedures

To ensure that rules, routines, and procedures work effectively throughout the year:

- Explicitly teach expectations (Alter & Haydon, 2017; Hancock & Carter, 2016). Model each rule or routine, then have children practice it. In the first days of school, repeat modeling and practice many times so that children become comfortable with what is expected of them.
- Display rules and routine management charts at children's eye level. Include both words and pictures/icons to help make expectations concrete. Refer to these charts throughout the day as reminders.
- Offer specific praise when children follow expectations, connecting the child's actions to the rule or routine. For example, instead of saying, "Great job," you might say, "You followed our classroom rule, we clean up, and you put away every block and made the area nice and neat! This looks terrific!"

- Review rules and routines throughout the year—especially if children are struggling to follow certain expectations. These reviews can take the form of informal reminders during the day, or more formal lessons in which children role-play and practice appropriate behaviors. Reviews are especially important when returning from long weekends or extended breaks in the school year.
- Implement rules, routines, and procedures consistently. If there is a disruption to the daily routine, such as a field trip or visitor, prepare children for the change and make any new expectations clear.

Online professional development supporting this content is available through the CLI Engage system to authorized users. The eCIRCLE Classroom Management course features video segments from real classrooms and guidance for introducing key classroom management concepts, strategies, and practices, including the development of rules and routines. Visit CLI's <u>Online Learning and Professional</u> <u>Development</u> offerings at <u>CLIEngage.org</u>.



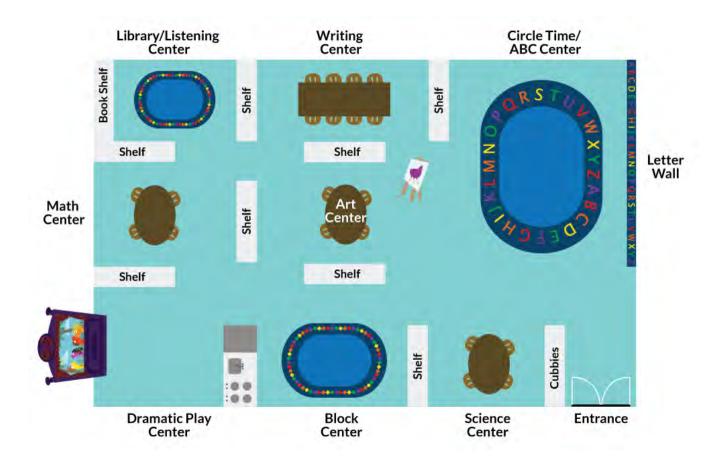
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment is the overall layout of a classroom, including large and small group learning areas, learning centers, furniture, and materials. Setting up a classroom environment requires strategic planning to ensure the design encourages social, verbal, and cognitive development. In addition, it should promote creativity, positive social interactions, vocabulary-rich conversations, and hands-on exploration of new concepts and ideas.

Room Arrangement

When setting up the classroom, it is important to think about the room arrangement as a whole. Traffic patterns need to allow for easy movement between large and small group learning areas and centers. However, large open spaces should be minimized to limit paths for children to run. Consider using the outer edges and the middle of the room for center areas and integrate tables and chairs, as appropriate. In addition, ensure furniture is placed so that children are visible from all areas of the room.

This sample classroom arrangement can be used as a guide for setting up the physical environment.



Circle Time Area: The whole group, or circle time, area is a space that is used many times throughout the day for valuable learning experiences. This area must be large enough for all children to share the space at one time. Some common design practices for the circle time area include:

- Using a large area rug to define the space
- Creating enough space for all children to sit together comfortably
- Including an easel or chart paper for writing experiences
- Organizing instructional materials on a cart or shelf nearby
- Allowing wall space for management charts (e.g., helper chart, daily schedule)
- Displaying the letter wall in the area

Refer to the Learning Settings and Opportunities section of this *Teacher's Manual* for detailed information regarding circle time.

Small Group Area: Small group work can take place in any classroom space that accommodates working with a group of 2-5 children. Small groups take place for approximately 8-10 minutes each while the other children are at centers. To make effective use of this short time, materials must be prepared in advance and readily available in or near the small group area. Small groups can take place in any area of the classroom that comfortably accommodates the group, such as a designated small group table or on the carpet. The teacher may choose to conduct some small group lessons and activities in a center.

Refer to the Learning Settings and Opportunities section for information on the importance of small groups.

Learning Centers: Learning centers are subdivided areas of the classroom devoted to one topic or type of activity. Center areas allow children space to construct their own knowledge through exploration and play. Setting up the classroom with well-defined centers promotes high-quality verbal interactions, provides opportunities for increased cooperative play, and helps children make choices easily.

Curriculum *Theme Guides* provide detailed suggestions for the eight learning centers listed below. Additional centers may be incorporated as needed or desired.

- ABC Center
- Construction Center
- Creativity Center
- Library and Listening Center
- Math Center
- Pretend and Learn Center
- Science Center
- Writer's Corner

Setup of learning centers requires careful planning. Considerations include:

- Space for three to four children to play comfortably
- Well-defined boundaries for each center using walls, shelves, tables, and other furniture
- Location of wet/messy centers on an appropriate surface
- Books and writing materials available in all centers
- Adequate numbers of interesting materials for sharing

Refer to the Learning Settings and Opportunities section of the *Teacher's Manual* for learning goals and recommendations for each center.

Print-Rich Environment

When creating the classroom's physical environment, plan to surround children with a variety of print materials to promote language and literacy development. This includes books, writing materials, the letter wall, labels, environmental print, and authentic print. Display these items at eye level so that children are able to read and interact with the materials independently.

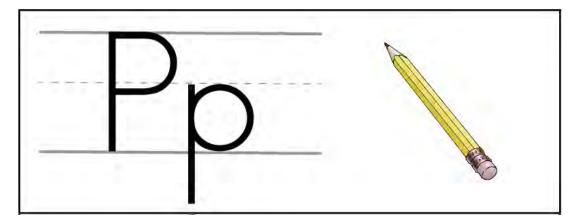
Books: When books are incorporated into the classroom environment, children have opportunities to use them for a variety of purposes, including understanding the concepts of print, learning more about topics of interest, finding known letters or words, or retelling familiar stories. Consider the following as you set up your physical environment:

- Place books in centers and the circle time area.
- Vary available books based on theme/time of year.
- Provide a variety of text types throughout the classroom, as appropriate, including:
 - narrative
 - informational
 - multicultural
 - predictable
 - class-made
 - rhyming/poems
 - concept books for the alphabet, shapes, numbers, colors, etc.

Writing Materials: A print-rich environment provides children with materials and opportunities to write independently in centers for a variety of authentic purposes. Add a variety of materials for children to write on and write with in the Writer's Corner as well as other centers. Also include writing accessories that increase interest, such as paper in different colors and shapes, colored pencils and markers, etc. Refer to the Writing in Centers/Escritura en centros lesson in Week 4 of the curriculum for a list of ideas.

Journals are also an important writing tool to include in the classroom environment. Providing a journal for each child motivates and encourages children to write about their personal experiences, favorite stories, or learning experiences. Journals also provide a record of children's writing over time. Journals can be made using folders, spiral-bound notebooks, or papers stapled together.

Letter Wall: The letter wall is a visual display of the alphabet with a keyword picture for each letter. It is an interactive tool used to promote alphabet knowledge; that is, it helps children understand that the alphabet is made up of a collection of letters, that these letters are arranged in a prescribed sequence, and that each letter has its own sound and visual characteristics. Additionally, it becomes a designated place for children to hunt for and explore known letters, names, and vocabulary words.



Detailed information on setting up the letter wall and teacher tips for the use of this tool can be found in Making the Most of the Letter Wall, located in the appendices. To learn more about the benefits of using the letter wall as an instructional tool and how the letter wall works as part of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum, refer to the Alphabet Knowledge section of this manual.

Labels: Labels can be used throughout the classroom to help children clearly identify items such as manipulative containers, shelves, cubbies, and center areas. They allow children greater independence as they locate, use, and return materials to their proper locations. The use of labels also offers ongoing and abundant opportunities for children to interact with print in meaningful ways. All labels should include pictures or icons if they are to be a useful and supportive tool in the prekindergarten classroom.

Children's names can become labels in the classroom as well. Using names in this way increases children's interactions with their own and classmates' names. In addition to names that appear on the attendance chart, helper chart, and letter wall, use children's names as labels for work display boards, cubbies, and any other area in which children have designated space or supplies.

Environmental Print: Environmental print is the print that we see around us on signs and products, such as familiar logos and street signs. It is often the first type of print children recognize and to which they attribute meaning. Children and their families can contribute containers and signs displaying environmental print to be incorporated around the classroom.

To increase children's exposure to letters and words and to maintain interest, periodically change the print displayed. Class books can serve a similar purpose. The curriculum includes lessons such as I Spy Environmental Print/Veo, veo palabras impresas del entorno and Environmental Print Interactive Chart/Cartel de palabras impresas del entorno to support these interactions.

Authentic Print: Authentic print is created with or by children during classroom experiences. It might include shared or interactive writing, theme-related charts, nursery rhyme or song posters or pocket charts, graphic organizers, and class surveys or graphs. Display these print materials throughout the classroom, as appropriate.



Note: Remember to include images on labels to make children's selection and cleanup of materials easier, and to support the developing understanding that print conveys meaning.

Learning Settings and Opportunities

Effective teachers are intentional in their use of learning settings for different purposes (NAEYC, 2013). Research suggests that "different activity settings provide children with different opportunities to engage with teachers, peers, and tasks" (Vitiello, Booren, Downer, and Williford, 2012, p. 17). Prekindergarten children benefit from a combination of child-guided activities and direct instruction, which can be achieved with a combination of whole group (circle time), small group, and center experiences (NAEYC, 2013; Morrow, Gambrell, Tracey, & Del Nero, 2011). Transitions in the daily schedule also offer great opportunities for learning when thoughtfully addressed. Thoughtful planning and preparation for daily circle time, small group, centers, and transitions are instrumental in facilitating a range of valuable learning experiences.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes components specifically designed with this research in mind. *Scope and Sequences* support whole and small group learning experiences and transitions. *Theme Guides* offer additional whole and small group lessons and activities, as well as specific suggestions for high-interest center experiences. The combination of these curriculum components ensures children have daily opportunities to engage in learning through meaningful and varied experiences across each of the recommended settings described below.

CIRCLE TIME

Circle time, or whole group time, is when the teacher and all the children come together for valuable large group learning experiences. This time can be dedicated to introducing or reviewing a concept or skill, as well as to fostering a sense of community.

Purposeful, playful circle time experiences are planned in advance to ensure children are engaged in lessons supporting social, emotional, and cognitive development. Specifically, circle time provides opportunities for children to:

- develop language skills through meaningful conversations
- share ideas, feelings, and experiences
- practice taking turns and other social skills
- learn and develop new skills and concepts
- see the teacher model and think-aloud

Ensuring high quality activities and interactions in every circle time is critical for maximizing engagement and learning.



Structure

Circle time meetings take place a number of times throughout the day. The time of year and children's developmental needs help to determine the length of each meeting. As the school year first begins, children respond more positively and show better engagement when this time is brief. Over time, the length of circle time meetings can increase to no more than twenty minutes. Pay attention to children's cues to determine when it is time to end circle time. Learning decreases as children become inattentive or when they indicate the need to move. Adapt and adjust your plan to meet children's needs.

Develop and model routines and expectations to maximize instructional time. Establish a circle time signal (e.g., song, clapping pattern, bell ringing) so that all children know when it is time to gather in the circle time area. Model how children should come to the area, where they should sit, what to do if they need to go to the restroom, and any other procedures you would like implemented. Remember to practice routines and expectations often at the beginning of the year to ensure understanding and success. Circle time disruptions are reduced when teachers establish and reinforce appropriate expectations and behaviors for this time (Bustamante, Hindman, Champagne, & Wasik, 2018).

Types of Experiences

The circle time area allows children to engage with the teacher, peers, and materials through a variety of play-based lessons. Teachers can design experiences to support learning guidelines and outcomes, curriculum goals, and children's needs. When planning, include a variety of cognitively challenging lessons, along with activities that build a sense community, such as:

- accomplishments, birthdays, or student of the week
- language activities
- letter wall games
- literacy, math, science, social and emotional, and social studies lessons
- movement games
- read alouds
- shared and interactive writing
- songs, poems, and fingerplays

SMALL GROUP TIME

Small groups offer benefits for all children in the classroom as they allow for more individualized instruction and interactions. Depending on the need and goal, small groups can be used to support tier 1 and tier 2 instruction.

Tier 1 refers to instruction that is beneficial for all or most children in the classroom. Although tier 1 instruction is often associated with circle time, the teacher may choose to conduct particular lessons and activities in a small group setting. These groups are generally heterogeneous to include children with different skill levels. Small groups can allow the teacher to more closely monitor children's understanding, promote cooperative learning, or increase language use through back-and-forth conversations. The nature of the activity or management of materials may also make small groups ideal for particular activities (e.g., individual practice using a balance or forming letters in shaving cream) (Wasik, 2008).

Tier 2 groups are necessary for children who are not progressing adequately in a particular skill. Based on daily observations and assessment data, the teacher identifies children requiring additional instructional support. Groups are homogeneous to include children with similar instructional needs in a particular area to ensure targeted support. As children's needs change, group formations must be flexible to allow children to move in and out of groups as needed. Benefits of tier 2 small group instruction include:

- immediate validation and corrective feedback
- customized scaffolding to decrease or increase task difficulty
- shorter wait time
- increased participation for every child
- more opportunities to use language skills

Refer to the Assessment section of the *Teacher's Manual* for specific information about using the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring system (CPM) to inform small group planning.



Structure

Small group time is planned in advance and conducted during center time each day for groups of children with similar instructional needs. Each group of up to six children meets for seven to ten minutes for targeted, playful mini-lessons. Depending on the length of time given to center time, the number of groups you meet with may vary. In a fifty-minute center block, you may have approximately three small group sessions with time between each to support children in the centers.

Establish center routines before beginning small groups to help children become selfdirected during this time. Spend a few minutes getting children settled in the centers before starting a small group lesson and check in on children in centers between each small group. It may be helpful to establish a visual signal, such as wearing a special hat, when small groups are in session. Teach and practice expectations for what children should do when they have a question or need something during this time.

CENTER TIME

Center time offers opportunities for children to gain and strengthen knowledge through exploration and play with learning materials throughout the classroom. Centers provide environments where children play, talk, and work independently and with peers. Specifically, center time promotes:

- independent decision making
- active engagement for practicing newly acquired skills
- cooperative play
- higher-quality verbal interactions with adults and peers
- integration of current curriculum
- integration of theme related activities and vocabulary

Structure

Learning centers are subdivided areas of the classroom that offer activity choices devoted to one topic or type of activity. In a full day schedule, children engage in center time activities for two or more hours across the day.

Center time is most successful when children clearly understand the routines and procedures associated with this time. This requires modeling, discussion, and practice to understand the following:

- use of the center management chart
- movement from one center to another
- clean-up, including returning materials to their appropriate locations
- placement of completed work

Center Experiences

Curriculum *Theme Guides* provide detailed suggestions for eight key learning centers. Each center targets particular goals.

- ABC Center activities that allow children to manipulate and explore letters and sounds
- 2. **Construction Center** opportunities for children to work collaboratively and problem solve as they build structures
- 3. **Creativity Center** various material options that allow children to explore their own creativity
- Library and Listening Center opportunities to explore a variety of print types and genres to foster interest in reading, reinforce print concepts, and practice story retell
- 5. **Math Center** hands-on exploration that promotes reasoning and problem-solving skills
- 6. **Pretend and Learn Center** settings that allow children to role play and use authentic vocabulary while building background knowledge

- 7. Science Center opportunities for children to observe, explore, and investigate using their senses
- 8. Writer's Corner unstructured choices that allow children to go through the stages of writing in a natural way

Center activities require careful planning to effectively encourage children to create experiment, discover, and ask questions. It is important to change or adjust materials often to ensure the center supports identified learning goals and to maintain children's interest. Strive to incorporate books and writing materials into all centers. Introduce new activities and materials with children before adding them to centers for independent play and practice. Finally, include time in the center schedule to join children in center activities as an effective way to promote higher levels of learning, language, and engagement.

Refer to the Physical Environment section of the *Teacher's Manual* for recommendations on setting up centers at the start of the school year.

TRANSITION TIME

Children in preschool classrooms spend a significant amount of time transitioning from one activity or setting to another. "Transitions have long been identified as taking up too much class time, and observational research suggests that children experience higher levels of stress during transitions" (Vitiello et al., 2012, p. 14). Maintaining a high level of child engagement and establishing clear expectations are essential for mitigating these potential problems (Vitiello et al., 2012). Well-designed transitions maximize instructional time by addressing learning and development. This is sometimes referred to as a cognitive transition. Cognitive transitions help move children through the day with planned and purposeful mini-activities designed to maximize learning time.

Structure

Transitions occur throughout the day with the length varying according to the purpose of the transition. Depending on the skill or activity, a task might be performed by the entire class, small groups of children, or one child at a time. For example, the entire class may count to 20 when lining up for lunch. Before going to centers, two to three children may come up to point to and name something blue in the circle time area. With more individualized tasks, such as naming the first letter of their name, one child may be called on at a time.

Types of Experiences

Cognitive transitions address a range of skill domains, including literacy, math, science, and social studies. They can also support music and motor skill areas when children need time to move, sing, or dance. Examples include:

- say the beginning sound of a word
- name a thematic item

- name theme word after hearing the definition
- clap syllables of name or theme word
- identify letter on letter wall
- give two rhyming words
- identify a number
- locate a color
- sing Hokey Pokey
- march around the room while rote counting to 20
- answer question of the day

Include transitions in the lesson plan to ensure thoughtful attention to selecting transitions that support and reinforce learning. It is helpful to place a collection of cognitive transitions on a ring of cards to draw from as needed. Additionally, specific types of transitions may be earmarked for particular parts of the daily schedule, creating a routine for that time. For example, letter knowledge games might be used to transition from centers to circle time, or counting games might be used to line up for lunch. Transition activities appear in the *Scope and Sequence* and can be located in the CIRCLE Activity Collection at CLIEngage.org.



SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN ALL SETTINGS

Young children learn and respond to instruction in different ways, each with a unique set of experiences, knowledge, and developmental needs. Learning opportunities must support the various learning needs and interests of the children in the classroom. Supporting all learners in all settings is complex, requiring attention to many factors. Among these are:

- balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed experiences
- building on children's prior knowledge
- helping children connect learning across domains and to real-world examples
- honoring children's background, cultures, families, and languages
- planning engaging, playful, hands-on activities and lessons
- providing cognitively challenging instruction and experiences
- scaffolding according to individual linguistic, cognitive, social, and emotional needs
- supporting all levels of development and learning with varied instructional techniques and materials
- using data to plan and differentiate instruction

Engaging, Hands-on Experiences

Studies show learning occurs best when activities and tasks actively involve children and promote engagement (Zosh et al., 2018). Fun and playful experiences are critical for maximizing learning. "Play provides ample opportunities for adults to scaffold the foundational motor, social–emotional, language, executive functioning, math, and selfregulation skills needed to be successful in an increasingly complex and collaborative world" (Yogman, Garner, Hutchinson, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2018).

Lessons and activities in the *Scope and Sequences* are designed to be playful, engaging, and meaningful. *Theme Guides* further support this by incorporating thematic experiences into each part of the daily schedule and every classroom setting. These experiences often incorporate objects and pictures for children to manipulate, thus increasing engagement and enhancing learning.

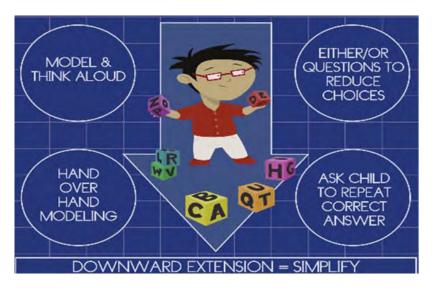
Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a key instructional technique used in all instructional settings. It assists children with successful completion of tasks and helps them reach levels of learning that they are unable to reach on their own. Curriculum lessons and activities include upward and downward scaffolding suggestions to support the learning objective of the activity.

Upward Scaffold: Upward scaffolds are employed when children correctly respond to a question or easily engage in a task. They can be used to increase the cognitive demand of a task, deepen understanding, or extend language by meeting children where they are and building on the information that they already know.



Downward Scaffold: Downward scaffolds are used when children have difficulty answering a question or engaging in a task. Begin by offering the minimal amount of support needed for success, increasing support as needed. Effective downward scaffolds target the particular aspect of the task that is problematic. For example, a child who struggles to successfully engage in a math activity may struggle with the language demands of the activity, rather than with the mathematical concept itself. In this case, the teacher would use a language scaffold to support successful completion of the math task.



Intentional Teaching

Prioritizing intentional teaching to best target children's skill development is crucial. The goal of instruction is to bring children to a new level of understanding. This requires clearly identified learning objectives and knowledge of each child's current level of understanding. Formative assessments, such as the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System, provide information about children's skill levels and instructional needs. The use of high-quality lessons and activities—matched to learning goals and children's needs—are essential to intentional teaching.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum uses high-quality lessons sequenced to ensure comprehensive skill coverage, revisiting skills in repeated cycles to broaden and deepen understanding. Within this structure is flexibility for addressing children's individual needs. Every *Scope and Sequence* includes a "Review, Repeat, Adapt" note to remind teachers to use informal and formal assessment data to identify children in need of additional or more intensive instruction. Using the *Scope and Sequence*, teachers may choose to

- teach any of the week's Target Lessons more than once, as needed.
- select from the Additional Lessons to revisit and reinforce skills from a previous week of instruction.
- adapt lessons, as needed, to tailor them to an individual child's needs.

To provide more advanced or challenging instruction on a target skill, teachers can select lessons and activities from the Step It Up! section of the *Scope and Sequence*. These lessons are more challenging than those indicated in Target Lessons while addressing the same skill.

To further support intentional teaching, the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum uses a gradual release model. Where appropriate, lessons and activities begin with the teacher modeling, demonstrating, and thinking aloud so that children understand the concept. Children then practice the skills or concepts with the teacher's guidance.

Refer to the Assessment section of the *Teacher's Manual* for more detailed information on the critical role of assessment in children's learning and to learn more about the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring system.



English Learners

As language diversity steadily grows in our nation's schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), teachers are almost sure to provide instruction for children whose first language is not English. Instruction that supports the mastery of English while still developing the home language is critical, as this approach offers many short- and long-term benefits (Espinosa, 2013; National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Second language acquisition requires children's active engagement with content, targeted language instruction, and opportunities to interact with peers in meaningful ways within a supportive environment.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum helps teachers provide instruction best suited to the individual learner. Specific English learner supports featured in the curriculum are highlighted in the sections that follow.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Given the individual differences in each child's cultural background, first language, experiences, and background knowledge, there is no singular instructional approach to take with all children (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). There are, however, particular practices that have been shown to effectively support children's second language acquisition. Routine and consistent use of the following practices benefit children acquiring a new language as well as native English speakers.

Create a Safe Environment for Language Learning

Schools that effectively teach English learners incorporate children's home languages and cultures, sending the message that these are assets for learning (Stepanek, Raphael, Autio, Duessen, & Thomps, 2010). This might include providing signs in children's home languages, inviting parents to read to children and to participate in activities, or ensuring that read alouds represent the cultures of the children in the class.

A safe environment for English learners is also one in which teachers provide encouragement and affirmation for children's growing proficiency. Teachers create this type of environment by reassuring children with a smile, warm tone, and positive nonverbal signals. Activities such as singing and choral responses encourage language in a non-threatening manner. It is also important to give children extra time to respond to questions as they process two languages.

Providing Academic Support

The instructional choices made by teachers can provide scaffolds that help children succeed with content in English. These supports include the following:

- **Scaffolding:** Provide the "just right" amount of assistance by gradually increasing language support as needed. Move from open-ended questions to closed-ended, depending upon the child's response. For example, if a teacher is showing a picture representing the vocabulary word cave, she might say, "What is this?" After providing wait time, if the child does not respond, the teacher might say, "Is this a cave, or a mountain?" If the child is still unsure, the teacher might give the vocabulary word, asking the child to repeat it.
- Peer Interactions: Children benefit from strategically paired interactions with those who are more proficient in English.
 Opportunities for such pairings are particularly well suited to partner talk, pretend and learn, and outdoor play (Hoisington, Young, Anastasopoulos, & Washburn, 2015). These low-risk interactions facilitate language in situations where the teacher is not immediately present.
- High-Quality Curriculum: A curriculum that intentionally develops connections across content areas is an important component of academic support (University of Texas System/Texas Education Agency, 2015). Curriculum should also support the type of language scaffolding and peer interactions described above. In all components of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum, there is an intentional focus on children's active engagement through playful and purposeful learning activities. *Theme Guides* are filled with opportunities for children to explore high-interest topics through language-rich experiences throughout the prekindergarten day. This design fosters meaningful, lasting connections as children hear and practice new vocabulary across settings and contexts. Many lessons and activities in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum include Scaffolding and Teacher Tips that can be helpful as teachers support English learners. Recommended language scaffolds are often included at different levels (e.g., less support, more support, or most support) to offer the "just right" support needed for success. Teacher Tips suggest ways of adapting or modifying activities to achieve particular goals.

Building Vocabulary and Early Literacy Skills

Building spoken vocabulary is critical for all prekindergarten children, as it is a predictor of later reading comprehension (Hjetland, et al., 2017). Most methods for building vocabulary for English learners can benefit all children. These include:

- Pairing language with gestures (e.g., miming using a water fountain while telling the children it is time to have a drink break)
- Giving visual representations of new vocabulary words (pictures, icons, and real objects)

- Pre-teaching vocabulary before content lessons, using children's home language as needed
- Building background knowledge of concepts that may be unfamiliar
- Pointing out cognates (words that are similar in two different languages) for content vocabulary (e.g., map in English and mapa in Spanish)
- Providing frequent exposure to English in interactive and meaningful contexts (Konishi, Kanero, Freeman, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2014)

Teachers should not attribute differences in vocabulary between a child learning English and a monolingual child to a learning delay. Assessing the words children know in the home language and in English will provide more accurate and useful information (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). It is also important to consider the developmental sequence of language, as receptive language (vocabulary understood by the child) develops before expressive language (vocabulary spoken by the child) (Maier, Bohlmann, & Palacios, 2016).

The Language and Communication component of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum features high-quality lessons and activities designed to engage children in rich language experiences. The curriculum features explicit language instruction, playful rhymes and songs matching movements to words, and small group and partner activities promoting low-risk language exchanges. Language objectives are also a common feature of lessons in other curriculum components, such as Social and Emotional Development, Science, and Phonological Awareness. This ensures language development is a focus across contexts and domains. *Theme Guides* address all components of the prekindergarten day to connect language across settings and contexts, fostering meaningful language connections while also ensuring repeated exposures and practice with new language.



Leveraging Home Language Proficiency

A growing body of research shows that learning in two languages benefits children (Espinosa, 2013) and there is overwhelming agreement that the "home language should serve as the foundation for second language acquisition, as cognitive skills transfer from one language to another" (University of Texas System/Texas Education Agency, 2015, p. 2). Effective teaching for English learners takes this into account and leverages a child's home language to help build English proficiency.

As children are learning the sounds of the English language, parallel skills might be developed in the child's home language and in English. For example, rhyming or syllable blending activities could be done with words in either English or Spanish (though it is not recommended to use two languages in the same task or activity). Vocabulary and classroom instructions can be given in the home language and in English.

The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum includes a Family Engagement component specifically designed to foster critical partnerships between home and school. Two family activities are included in each *Scope and Sequence* to support skills addressed in the classroom that week. Because significant benefits are associated with "ongoing opportunities to learn important concepts in the home language" (Espinosa, 2013, p. 9), parents should be encouraged to engage in these activities in their native languages. Spanish family activities are included in the curriculum and can be provided in this format to families whose native language is Spanish. Teachers also have the option of providing Spanish instruction using Currículo CIRCLE de prekínder for children whose home language is Spanish.

Using evidence-based strategies and principles as part of a developmentally appropriate framework, teachers can help all children build language proficiency in English (Konishi et al., 2014).

Online professional development supporting this content is available through the CLI Engage system to authorized users. The eCIRCLE English Language Learners course is a helpful resource that uses the home language and literacy skills English Language Learners bring to the classroom to help develop their English language and literacy skills. Courses specific to language development are also available, including: Encouraging Students to Talk, Teaching Vocabulary Throughout the Day, and Using Effective Language Building Strategies. Visit CLI's <u>Online</u> Learning and Professional Development offerings at <u>CLIEngage.org</u>.

Special Needs

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL NEEDS

Classrooms and children tend to have a great deal in common, but there is no such thing as a normal prekindergarten classroom, or a regular prekindergarten child. Every child is unique, and in almost all classrooms there are children with specific learning differences and instructional needs that require special consideration. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 14 percent of public school students between the ages of 3 and 21 receive special education services.

As children begin their journey through school, teachers or family members may have concerns about children's developmental trajectories. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public school districts are required to identify all children who might qualify for special education services, including those who attend private prekindergarten programs within district boundaries, as well as those who attend no formal schooling at all. Whether you work in a public or independent prekindergarten setting, it is important to be aware of the process through which concerned parents can request an evaluation for their children, so they can be directed to the appropriate resources. If you are unsure of this process, contact the special education department in your area's public school district. Special education departments typically can be found on each school district's website.

When a child has been identified as qualifying for special education services, that child will receive an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is a legally binding document created by a team that includes teachers,

special education providers such as therapists, representatives from the school or district administration, and family members. The IEP outlines the goals for a child's education and the services that will be provided by the public school district. Districts are required to provide the services included in the IEP. Delivery of service may occur in a public preschool program, another publicly funded program (such as Head Start), or an independent preschool.



No matter the setting, the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (2018) recommends the following actions to create inclusive learning environments for children of all abilities. The CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum helps teachers address the diverse and wide range of needs of all the children in their classrooms.

- Observe and note children's interests to provide activities that are inviting for the individuals in your classroom. The curriculum provides teachers with 10 different *Theme Guides*, each divided into different sub-themes that address a particular topic. This variety of themes and topics gives children a chance to explore their passions and interests and gives teachers frequent opportunities to engage children by authentically responding to their natural curiosity.
- Use specific praise, a warm tone, and a positive demeanor to affirm children's engagement and encourage them to continue. Curriculum lessons and activities include frequent opportunities for children's active participation, as well as examples and reminders for teachers to provide children with this type of positive feedback. Models of language that teachers can use themselves are incorporated into each lesson.
- Provide opportunities for children to move their bodies to keep them engaged. Young children are naturally active, and some seem to be almost constantly in motion. The approaches to learning in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum recognize this reality and embrace its potential. Lessons frequently give children opportunities to move, and they nurture kinesthetic engagement by encouraging children to use their bodies as part of learning activities and routines.
- Observe children to identify barriers to participation and engagement. Provide simple adaptations to eliminate or decrease the impact of these barriers. A variety of factors may limit a child's ability to participate. For example, a child who becomes frustrated by coloring with small crayons might be given larger ones as an option. Reminders like this are included regularly in the Teacher Tips section of lessons and activities. Another barrier to participation and engagement is when the cognitive demands of an activity are too high or low for a particular child. Curriculum lessons often include a Scaffolding section to help teachers know how to adjust the difficulty level of an activity. In each week, and across categories, the *Scope and Sequence* also offers more challenging lesson options for the week in the Step It Up! section, and it offers additional opportunities for review and practice in the Additional Lessons section. In the Review, Repeat, Adapt section of the *Scope and Sequence*, a statement reminds teachers to tailor their support based on the specific needs of children.

It is important to remember that these practices support *all* learners, whether they qualify for special education services or not. Given the variation of developmental levels in a prekindergarten classroom, tailoring instruction to individual needs benefits every child.

Online professional development supporting this content is available through the CLI Engage system to authorized users. The eCIRCLE Understanding Special Needs course is a helpful resource for understanding and supporting special needs children who struggle to regulate their behavior and attention, social and emotional responses, and receptive and expressive language. Visit CLI's <u>Online Learning</u> and Professional Development offerings at <u>CLIEngage.org</u>.



Assessment

As young children rapidly expand their knowledge and skills, it's important for teachers and families to understand this growth, how adults can better support individual children, and which new skills children are ready to acquire. Effective use of assessment information can aid teachers in providing a high-quality, individualized education that meets all children where they are (VanDerHeyden & Snyder, 2006).

Assessments can:

- Guide Planning and Instruction: Assessment data allows teachers to be intentional in targeting concepts for additional instruction, choosing effective materials, and planning learning experiences. "Only when teachers are aware of the learning profile and trajectory of students, can they really help them succeed" (Murchan & Shiel, 2017, p. 2).
- Support Family Engagement: Families need to be regularly informed about how their children are progressing and provided with concrete ways they can support learning at home. Sharing assessment data can facilitate opportunities to collaboratively set clear goals and create action plans for making progress on individualized outcomes. A natural opportunity to have these conversations is at parent-teacher conferences, but such talk can, and should, happen often throughout the year.
- **Provide Information for Evaluating Program Quality and Inform Policy:** Highquality programs use ongoing assessment results to guide instructional decisions and monitor how children are progressing throughout the school year. When administrators view overall data, they can pinpoint specific areas of need to inform professional development and instructional coaching.

Two methods of assessment, formal and informal, should be used regularly to gather information about children's progress. Formal assessments document a child's progress at scheduled times throughout the year, with standardized outcomes and administration

protocols. Informal assessments occur anytime—through observations and the collection of anecdotal notes, work samples, pictures, checklists, or other teacher-created assessments. Use of both formal and informal assessment data can help the teacher to form a more complete picture of each child's progress and needs (Copple, Bredenkamp, Koralek, & Charner, 2013).



CIRCLE PROGRESS MONITORING

Users of the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum may select any assessment system to formally assess children's growth. One option is the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System (CPM), available through the CLI Engage system to authorized users. This is a user-friendly, online tool that allows teachers to assess children's progress in all areas addressed in the curriculum. CPM uses both direct, teacher-administered assessments of some areas, and observation-based assessments of those domains that are more difficult to quantify (such as Social and Emotional Development or Physical Health). This tool has demonstrated its reliability and validity in multiple research studies (Landry et al., 2014).

The CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System provides teachers with the tools to identify areas where children need extra supports to reach benchmarks at given points during the school year or where they may benefit from more challenging instruction. No matter where a child falls on the spectrum of growth, the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum provides teachers with resources for adjusting instruction, including:

- Scaffolding: Provided at the end of many lessons, upward and downward scaffolds provide ideas such as prompts, visual cues, or extensions to adjust the level of challenge depending on the child's needs.
- Step It Up!: When data shows that a child is ready to advance beyond skills currently targeted in the *Scope and Sequence*, teachers can turn to Step It Up! lessons, which preview upcoming content.
- Additional Lessons: Each week, the *Scope and Sequence* provides suggestions for previously-taught lessons that can be spiraled into the curriculum for children who need extra practice.

All available CPM measures, along with information on how they link to the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum are included in the chart below.

CPM Measure	How does the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum support growth in this area?
<i>Rapid Letter Naming</i> The child is given 60 seconds to name as many mixed uppercase and lowercase letters as possible.	Each week in the Scope and Sequence, featured letter names (and sounds) are taught during the Letter Introduction Routine/Rutina de presentación de letras, in the Alphabet Knowledge domain, along with additional playful letter activities. In the Learning Centers section of each <i>Theme Guide</i> , ABC Center activities are suggested for practicing the letters children have learned.

Rapid Vocabulary Naming The child is given 60 seconds to look at and name as many images as possible.	Theme Guides suggest weekly vocabulary words to formally introduce and add to the letter wall. The Book and Print category of the Scope and Sequences include routines for teaching vocabulary found in read alouds. Oral language activities in the Language & Communication category also support vocabulary acquisition.
<i>Letter-Sound Correspondence</i> The child names the sounds of letters that appear on the screen.	See above, Rapid Letter Naming.
 Phonological Awareness Syllabication Alliteration Rhyming 1 (identification) Listening Words in a Sentence Rhyming 2 (production) The child responds to a variety of teacher-provided prompts specific to the skill. 	Phonological awareness skills are targeted weekly in the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> . Skills are spiraled throughout the year.
Book and Print Knowledge The child is presented with a book and answers a series of questions about the book. The teacher scores either correct or incorrect.	Lessons in the Book and Print Reading category of the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> support many elements of reading and listening, including print awareness. In the Theme Extenders section of the <i>Theme</i> <i>Guides</i> , theme-related rhymes and songs are suggested to be written on charts for whole group reading experiences, during which teachers model print awareness skills, such as pointing at words and print directionality. Children practice these skills in the Classroom Library/Listening Center.
Story and Retell Comprehension The child retells and answers comprehension questions for a short story read aloud by the teacher.	Book and Print Reading activities in the Scope and Sequence support children's ability to listen to, retell, and comprehend stories. Children practice these skills in the Classroom Library/Listening Center.

Speech Production & Sentence Skills The teacher completes a checklist indicating to what extent the child demonstrates certain skills based on recent observations and documentation.	Opportunities for practicing language skills are integrated into numerous aspects of the curriculum, including the Language & Communication category of the <i>Scope</i> <i>and Sequence</i> , Theme Extenders section of <i>Theme Guides</i> , and Learning Centers (particularly Pretend and Learn).
<i>Motivation to Read</i> The teacher completes a checklist indicating to what extent the child shows enthusiasm for reading.	See above, Story Retell and Comprehension.
<i>Early Writing</i> The teacher completes a checklist indicating whether children engage in certain writing behaviors, such as drawing pictures, writing letters, and dictating stories.	A variety of writing lessons are provided every week in the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> . <i>Theme Guides</i> suggest ways to connect writing to the week's theme topic, as well as activities for the Writer's Corner center. The Alphabet Knowledge category of the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> also supports children's emerging ability to write letters.
<i>Math</i> Children respond to a variety of prompts, both verbal and onscreen, to measure multiple math skills: rote counting, discriminating between and naming shapes, discriminating between and naming numbers, counting sets, and applying operations. Optional measures include patterns and real-world math applications.	The Mathematics category of the Scope and Sequence provides lessons on focus skills, which are spiraled throughout the year. The Theme Extenders section of <i>Theme Guides</i> suggests ways to connect these focus skills to themes. Children practice and reinforce skills in the Math Center.
<i>Science</i> The child answers science questions related to pictures as they appear on the screen.	Lessons are included in each <i>Scope</i> and Sequence. Additional lessons and activities are suggested in the Whole Group and Small Group Theme Lessons section of <i>Theme Guides</i> . Lessons from the <i>Scope and Sequence</i> typically tie to the current theme. Children practice and reinforce learning in the Science Center.

<i>Social Studies</i> The child answers social studies questions related to pictures as they appear on the screen.	Social Studies lessons and activities are included in the Whole Group and Small Group Theme Lessons section of <i>Theme Guides</i> . The Social and Emotional Development section also addresses Social Studies concepts and skills.
Social and Emotional Development The teacher completes a checklist indicating how often a child displays certain behaviors in the areas of positive social behaviors, classroom community and safety, emotion and behavior regulation, self-care, and approaches to learning.	Lessons are provided every week in the Scope and Sequence. In addition, certain themes (e.g., I'm Me! I'm Special! and I'm Healthy! I'm Safe!) emphasize self-care, safety, and emotional health. Social and emotional well-being are also fostered by a structured environment of strong relationships. Guidance on creating this type of community can be found in this <i>Teacher's Manual</i> .
Approaches to Learning The teacher completes a checklist indicating how often a child displays certain behaviors, in the areas of initiative and curiosity, flexibility, art/creativity, and dramatic play.	The Learning Centers section of <i>Theme</i> <i>Guides</i> suggest activities for the Creativity and Pretend and Learn centers. In addition, these skills are supported by many of the activities listed above for the Social and Emotional Development measure.
<i>Physical Health and Development</i> The teacher completes a checklist indicating how often a child displays certain behaviors in the areas of fine motor, visual motor, gross motor, and health.	The Whole and Small Group Theme Lessons section of <i>Theme Guides</i> provides many weekly center activities for developing these behaviors (e.g., Creativity, Pretend and Learn, Construction). Fine and gross motor activities are also built into a variety of activities in other domains. In addition, the I'm Healthy! I'm Safe! <i>Theme Guide</i> provides three weeks of health lessons and activities.

Visit the Tools and Resources tab at <u>CLIEngage.org</u> for more information on the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring system.



Appendix

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Suggested Theme Sequence

Start the school year with Welcome to Pre-K!—an integrated *Scope and Sequence* and *Theme Guide*. Beginning with week 3, themes can be used in any order or teachers may follow the suggested sequence.

Theme	Торісѕ	Scope and Sequence
I'm Me! I'm Special!	My Home and Family My Amazing Body My Five Senses My Important Feelings	Weeks 3-6
All Around My Community	Places in My Community People and Jobs in My Community Getting Around in My Community Construction in My Community	Weeks 7-10
It's Harvest Time!	Signs of Fall Harvest Harvesting Crops Bringing the Harvest Home	Weeks 11-13
The Sky Above Me	The Cloudy Sky The Sunny Sky The Night Sky The Seasonal Sky	Weeks 14-17
Animals All Around	Animal Bodies and Movements Animal Homes and Habitats Animal Babies and Diets Animal Adaptations and Habits	Weeks 18-21
I'm Healthy! I'm Safe!	My Safe and Active Body My Safe and Healthy Eating Habits My Healthy Body and Teeth	Weeks 22-24
Get Moving!	Moving Through Air Moving on Land Moving on Water	Weeks 25-27
The Earth Around Me	Land All Around Plants All Around Water All Around Caring All Around	Weeks 28-31
Creepy Crawly Critters	Critter Bodies and Movements Critter Homes and Habitats Critter Life Cycle and Diet Critter Adaptations and Habits	Weeks 32-35

Secuencia sugerida de temas

Comience el año escolar con ¡Bienvenidos a prekínder!—un *Alcance y secuencia* y una *Guía temática* integrados. A partir de la semana 3, los temas pueden ser utilizados en cualquier orden o los maestros pueden seguir la secuencia sugerida.

Tema	Subtema	Alcance y secuencia
¡Soy yo! ¡Soy especial!	Mi hogar y mi familia Mi cuerpo increíble Mis cinco sentidos Mis sentimientos importantes	Semanas 3-6
En mi comunidad	Lugares en mi comunidad Gente y trabajos en mi comunidad Paseando por mi comunidad Construcción en mi comunidad	Semanas 7-10
¡Es tiempo de la cosecha!	Indicaciones de la cosecha del otoño Cosecha de los cultivos Trayendo la cosecha a la casa	Semanas 11-13
El cielo sobre mi	El cielo nublado El cielo soleado El cielo en la noche El cielo durante las distintas estaciones	Semanas 14-17
Animales en todas partes	Cuerpos y movimientos de los animales Hábitats y hogares de los animales Crías y dieta de los animales Adaptación y hábitos de los animales	Semanas 18-21
;Soy saludable! ;Estoy seguro!	Mi cuerpo seguro y activo Hábitos seguros y saludables de comida Mi cuerpo y dientes saludables	Semanas 22-24
¡Estamos en movimiento!	Moviendo por el aire Moviendo sobre la tierra Moviendo en el agua	Semanas 25-27
La Tierra a mi alrededor	La tierra a nuestro alrededor Las plantas a nuestro alrededor El agua a nuestro alrededor El cuidado de nuestro planeta	Semanas 28-31
Bichitos a nuestro alrededor	Cuerpos y movimientos de los bichos Hogares y hábitats de los bichos Ciclo de vida y dieta de los bichos Adaptaciones y hábitos de los bichos	Semanas 32-35

MAKING THE MOST OF THE LETTER WALL

What is a letter wall?

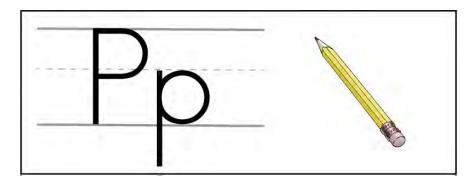
The letter wall is an interactive tool used to expose children to the full spectrum of letterbased concepts. It shows all the letters of the alphabet, as well as children's names and words.

Why is the letter wall important?

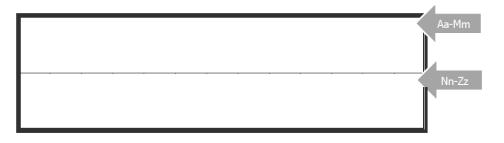
The letter wall helps transform the early childhood classroom into a print-rich environment. It can support learning across a range of literacy skills and concepts. When used to its potential, the letter wall raises children's awareness of letter forms and names, basic letter/sound relationships, the concept of letters as the building blocks of words, the first letters of familiar words, and the fact that spoken words can be written down. Research shows that teaching students to recognize and manipulate the segments of sounds in words and linking those sounds to letters is necessary to prepare children to read words and comprehend text (Foorman et al., 2016).

How is the letter wall constructed?

The letter wall is comprised of header cards—one for every letter of the alphabet. Each shows the printed upper- and lowercase letter pair, followed by an image to serve as the letter's anchor word (e.g., pencil image for the letter P).



Select a space large enough to accommodate the entire alphabet, with room for 4-6 word cards below each header. Construct the letter wall close to the ground to ensure all cards are within children's reach. In classrooms where wall space is limited, the letter wall may be constructed on the backs of shelves, below white boards, or on portable boards (e.g., display board or shower board). The diagram below shows a recommended layout that allows children to easily reach and interact with all parts of the letter wall.



Use hook-and-loop fasteners below the header cards so words can be easily added and removed throughout the year. Write words in all lowercase print, except for names, and always include a corresponding image after the word.

When and how is the letter wall used?

The letter wall must be more than a display of letters and words to be a tool for learning. It requires frequent use to maximize its potential. A variety of letter wall lessons and activities are included in the CIRCLE Pre-K Curriculum. In addition to these, the letter wall can be incorporated into many other whole group, small group, and one-on-one experiences to support a range of literacy skills and concepts. Examples are highlighted in the chart below.

Learning Focus	Description	Sample Scenario
Name recognition	Recognizing one's own name (and classmates' names) in print	"As I call each of your names to line up for lunch, tap your name on the letter wall, then join the line."
Letter features	Shapes that make up the letter—line, curve, and circle	"Look closely at the letter you picked. Does it have straight lines or curved lines? Can you match it to the card on the letter wall that has curved lines just like this one? That's right! You matched your letter C to the C on the letter wall."
Letter forms	Motions used to write the letter	"Caleb is adding the word <i>dentist</i> to the letter wall under the letter <i>d</i> because <i>dentist</i> begins with <i>d</i> . Let's skywrite the lowercase <i>d</i> . Start at the top. Long line down. Up to the middle. Small curve to the bottom."
Letter names	Attaching a letter name to the letter form	"Lincoln, go to the letter wall and find the letter <i>L</i> . That's right. <i>L</i> is the first letter in your name."
Letter-sound correspondences	Common sound associated with each letter	(Point to the L in Lincoln's name) "Let's say Lincoln's name. What is the first sound we hear in <i>Lincoln</i> ? That's right. /l/."

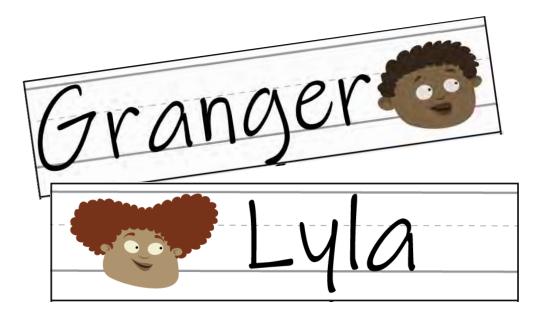
Learning Focus	Description	Sample Scenario
Spoken words can be written	Understanding spoken words can be represented by print	"You can take your note to the letter wall and write Manu's name on the envelope."
Concept of word	Understanding that a word is a group of letters (separated by space in sentences)	"Sofia, you found your name on the letter wall. Let's say the other words that begin with <i>S—sail, sea</i> , and <i>submarine</i> ."
Beginning letters in familiar words	Use of familiar words (e.g., children's names) to anchor understanding of initial letters	"We learned so many great facts about <i>wind</i> in this book. We need to put our new <i>wind</i> card on the letter wall. It should go with the other words that begin with /w/, like <i>William</i> . Hmm. Where is that?"
Vocabulary development	Knowledge and use of new words	"This word card says <i>safe</i> and the picture shows a person wearing a helmet to be safe while riding a bike. When we are <i>safe</i> , we take care of ourselves so we won't get hurt. Say, ' <i>safe</i> .' I want you to pretend to buckle your bicycle helmet to be <i>safe</i> and tell your partner, "I'm wearing my helmet to be <i>safe</i> ." Perfect! This week we'll learn things we can do to be <i>safe</i> . I'm going to place the word <i>safe</i> on the letter wall under the letter <i>S</i> so we can see it when we talk about being <i>safe</i> ."

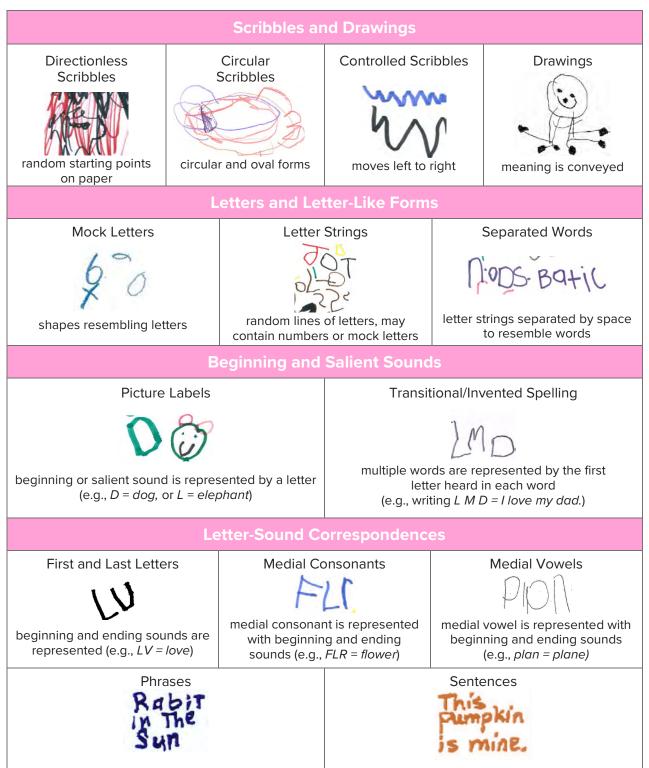
In addition to teacher-led interactions like those described above, center time is an ideal opportunity for children to interact with the letter wall more independently. When located next to the ABC Center, it becomes an extension of the center. Include a basket of items to encourage interactions with the letter wall, such as fun pointers, silly glasses, magnifying glasses, alphabet books, paper on clipboards, and writing utensils. A second set of theme word cards can be included for matching to the words on the letter wall. Plastic letters attached to craft sticks also make a great addition.

Reminders and Tips for Success

When used as a tool to support instruction, letter walls can be a planned, purposeful, and playful way to facilitate letter knowledge and vocabulary development in the prekindergarten classroom. To make the most of the letter wall, remember the following:

- Locate the letter wall in the whole group (circle time) area.
- Locate the ABC Center in close proximity to the letter wall.
- Introduce the letter wall using Introducing Children to the Letter Wall/Introducir el muro de letras a los niños in *Scope and Sequence* Week 1.
- Use the letter wall every day. Include daily letter wall activities in lesson plans, including whole and small group, center, and transition activities.
- Capitalize on spontaneous opportunities to reference letters and words on the letter wall.
- Introduce new letter wall games and activities periodically.
- Keep children's names up all year.
- Add words to the wall as they are taught.
- Keep words up for several weeks to allow adequate time to interact with them.
- As words are removed, add them to a word file in the writing center or use them to make a class theme book.





Writing Developmental Continuum

Adapted from Children's Learning Institute (2010), developed from work of Temple, Nathan, Temple, & Burris (1992), and Cabell, Tortorelli & Gerde (2013)

Scaffolding Children's Writing

If the child currently writes	The next goal for the child is to	You could scaffold by
scribbles and drawings	see writing letters as separate from drawing, and to attempt to write the first letter of his own name	recording the child's dictation: "Tell me about your drawing, and I am going to write your words." or encouraging name writing: "Let's write your name on your paper."
letters and letter-like forms fill fill fill b. Batic	represent salient beginning sounds in words	helping the child hear the beginning sounds in words: "What word could you write to label your picture? Let's say that word together and listen for the beginning sound."
the beginning salient sound for a word	represent beginning and ending sounds	asking the child what she hears as you say the word, emphasizing the beginning and ending sounds or pointing out the sounds the child recorded, then listening for additional sounds as you stretch the word: "Great job writing the sounds heard in that word. Let's listen for other sounds."
more than the most salient consonant sounds $\bigcup V$ FU	represent medial vowel sounds (which are harder to hear), then individual phonemes	 helping the child choose the correct vowel sound: "I see you wrote the first and last sounds in 'ran.' Let's listen for the middle sound." or encouraging the child to identify each sound as you slowly say the word to draw out the individual phonemes



Dear parents and caregivers,

Throughout the school year, I will share two weekly activities for you and your child to do at home. These activities will focus on specific skills we are learning in class. The first two activities are included with this letter. These learning activities are fun and playful for the whole family. Research has shown that young children learn best while playing. Play allows children to use their imagination and helps them to develop important skills like decision-making, creativity, memory, motor skills, learning new words, and controlling their behavior and emotions. In other words, play helps lead to healthy brain development.

There are also other important benefits of play. When you play with your child, it helps them feel secure and more attached to you. Playing together lets them know they are safe and loved and that their ideas are important to you.

Please partner with me in supporting your child's learning by engaging in these weekly home activities. I will be checking in to see how they are going and if you need any help getting started. If something isn't working or you need materials, please let me know. I want this to be a positive experience for you and your child.

If you are interested in finding more of these activities to do on your own with your child or with younger siblings, please visit the CIRCLE Family Activity Collection: Family at cliengagefamily.org. There are many free, research-based, playful learning activities on this website for children ages 0-6.

Please let me know of any questions or concerns you might have. Thank you for your support!

Colección de actividades CIRCLE: Familia



Estimados padres y cuidadores:

A lo largo del año escolar, estaré enviando dos actividades semanales para que las hagan ustedes con sus niños. Estas actividades educativas se enfocan en habilidades que estamos aprendiendo en el salón de clases. Las primeras dos actividades se incluyen en esta carta. Estas actividades educativas son divertidas y entretenidas para toda la familia. Los estudios de investigación han demostrado que los niños pequeños aprenden mejor cuando están jugando. El juego les permite a los niños usar su imaginación y los ayuda a desarrollar habilidades importantes como solucionar problemas, tomar decisiones, la creatividad, la memoria, la motricidad fina y gruesa, el aprendizaje de palabras nuevas y el control de su comportamiento y sus emociones. En otras palabras, el juego ayuda al desarrollo cerebral saludable.

El juego también tiene otros beneficios importantes. Cuando juega con su hijo/a, le está ayudando a sentirse protegido y más apegado a usted. Al jugar juntos su hijo/a sabe que está a salvo, que es querido y que sus ideas son importantes.

Le pido que colabore conmigo y me apoye en el proceso de aprendizaje de su hijo/a a través de la participación en estas actividades semanales para la casa. Me comunicaré con usted para ver cómo les va y saber si necesitan ayuda. Si algo no está funcionando o necesita materiales, no dude en informarme. Quiero que esta sea una experiencia positiva para usted y para su hijo/a.

Si está interesado en buscar más actividades como estas para hacer por su propia cuenta con su hijo/a u otros niños pequeños, visite la colección CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family en el sitio web cliengagefamily.org. Ahí encontrará una variedad de actividades educativas para niños de 0-6 años que son gratis, divertidas y que han sido basadas en estudios de investigación.

No dude en comunicarse conmigo si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud. ¡Gracias por su apoyo!

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