

Preparing to be a Texas School Ready!™ Program

This document was prepared by the Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development. Implementing the following areas of focus can help programs seeking to become certified through the Texas School Readiness Certification System as a Texas School Ready! Program. It is intended solely to offer support to early childhood education programs and is not to be interpreted as a guarantee that implementation will automatically lead to certification. To learn more about the Texas School Ready! Program and the Texas School Readiness Certification System, please visit our website at <http://www.texaschoolready.com/>.

Professional Development

Consider professional development that includes particular emphasis on the following:

- Providing a minimum of 3 hours of cognitive readiness instruction.
- Using the state-adopted instructional material based on the 2008 Prekindergarten Guidelines (available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/pkgguidelines/PKG_FinalDraft.doc) and/or other equally valid and reliable frameworks.
- Supporting the ability of children to develop social competence, self regulation, and the understanding of their emotions.
- Language building activities where teachers incorporate intentional ways to improve children's understanding of language (i.e., child hears "please get your mat and bring it over to the circle," child walks over gets their mat and carries it to the circle).
- Language building activities where teachers incorporate intentional ways to improve children's spoken language skills (i.e., child asks "may I take this book home with me tonight?").
- Alphabet knowledge activities where teachers expose children in intentional, but playful ways to letters in the alphabet and the sounds associated with those letters (i.e., children play a game where they "find" all the times the letter "S" appears in the room).
- Phonological awareness activities where teachers expose children in intentional ways to play with words by breaking the words into syllables and sentences into words and words into sounds (i.e., the teacher says "say fireman, now say it without man").
- Exposing children to both fiction and nonfiction books by reading aloud to them daily from both types of books.
- Building children's vocabulary and knowledge of the world around them by talking about the characters, objects and places in the books that the teacher reads aloud to the students.
- Building the early writing skills of children by making sure that the children have access to many types of writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, markers, paper) and opportunities to watch the teacher model writing at the board or sitting with individual children or with a group of children.

- Building early math skills and understanding of numbers concepts for children that include counting, grouping, patterns, shapes and early calculation skills using manipulatives such as blocks, etc. and not pencil and paper calculation.
- Focusing on best practices for classroom management that include establishing predictable routines and schedules so that children know when certain activities will happen during the day and having a comprehensive daily plan so that the teacher can present activities and materials in an organized way that keeps the children engaged.

Responsive Style

Consider teachers having a responsive interaction style with children and with instruction:

- Teachers being responsive in their style of interaction with children throughout the day, including: prompt responses to children's questions and needs, use of language that children are able to understand, and support for children to use "their words."
- Teachers having a valid, reliable system for monitoring the progress of children in language, literacy and math, and using the information to plan and guide individual student instruction.
- Intentional and planned instructional activities in language, literacy and math such as those included in the newly revised Texas Pre-kindergarten guidelines available at:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/pkguidelines/PKG_FinalDraft.doc

Exposure Opportunities

Consider structuring the early childhood classroom and schedule to allow for:

- Opportunities throughout the day for children to observe and participate in early writing activities such as: Teacher writes a “morning message” on the board as agreed to by and dictated to her by the children (examples include “I got a new ball yesterday”).
- Opportunities throughout the day for children to have “hands on” experiences with books that are refreshed on a regular basis (for example a classroom library or book corner with quiet space for children to read or listen to books on tape as they follow along with the printed version of the book).
- Classrooms that are organized around learning centers where students have exposure to different topic areas (examples include science center, math center, writing center, alphabet center, etc.).
- Classrooms and learning centers that are rich in print at children’s eye level such as use of letter walls, center management charts, samples of children’s own writing, etc.

Remember that each early childhood education program participating in the Texas School Readiness Certification System is provided with a trained and experienced liaison who is very familiar with the Texas School Ready! Program. The State Center believes and recommends that a strong working partnership with your liaison can facilitate success for your program and for your children.