



Guidance for School Districts Operating Pre-K Program for Three Year Olds



New York State Education Department
Office of Early Learning
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Guiding Principles

This guide is intended to assist administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals in differentiating instruction for three year olds versus four year olds while upholding the below-listed principles.

1. All children are capable of learning, achieving and making developmental progress. Learning standards are intended for all children regardless of economic, linguistic, and cultural differences or physical, learning, and emotional challenges.
2. Children develop at different rates and each child is unique in his/her own development, growth, and acquisition of skills. Appropriate and reasonable supports and accommodation must be provided to enable all children to succeed.
3. Children are active learners. A primary approach to learning is through purposeful play. Intentional planning promotes rich learning experiences that invite participation, involve multiple contexts, and engage the senses that help children explore their environment.
4. Early learning and development are multi-dimensional. Children's learning is integrated and occurs simultaneously across all domains, which are interrelated and interactive with one another.
5. Children learn in the context of interactions and relationships with family members, caregivers, teachers, and other children in their immediate environment and in their community.
6. The family is a significant contributor to children's lifelong learning and development. Actively engaging parents in the early education of their children is essential to children's success in the elementary classroom and later learning.
7. Learning standards may be used as tools to empower parents, teachers, and caregivers to better support and enhance young children's learning and development.
8. Learning standards acknowledge, respect, and embrace children's rich backgrounds, their heritage, cultures, and linguistic differences.
9. The content of learning standards is guided by research and effective practice to strengthen instruction and educational experiences across all settings.



Principles of Child Development

Development is a combination of maturation and learning. Substantial research and reflection on good practice suggests that development in young children:

- occurs simultaneously in all areas of the child's development—social, emotional, linguistic, intellectual, and physical
- is interdependent—each area of development affects the others;
- occurs in sequential stages;
- progresses from simple to complex;
- occurs at different rates for different children; and
- is critically impacted by a child's environment and experience.

It is crucial that teachers of three- and four-year olds understand these aspects of development and their implications for teaching and learning. Teachers need to know what to do and how and when to do it. It is equally important that teachers be able to articulate why they have made a particular decision or employed a specific strategy. The initial step in this process is for teachers to have firsthand knowledge of the normative and predictable aspects of child development, as well as behavioral characteristics that are observable during the early years. This knowledge guides teachers as they undertake the second step in the process; to get to know each child as an individual through ongoing interaction and assessment techniques.

In classrooms, teachers' knowledge of how children develop and learn is used to inform practice. Teachers' decisions about how best to support growth and learning during the early years are guided by principles of child development derived from the predictable sequence of human development. The chart below reflects key principles of child development and what is known about the strengths, interests, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of children. Included with each principle are implications for teaching that help ensure that prekindergarten programs are providing meaningful learning experiences for young children.

Child Development Principles	Implications for Teaching
<p>The physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and language domains of child development are interrelated. Development in one domain influences and is influenced by development in other domains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan learning experiences that help students make connections across domains (e.g., language development has an effect on social interaction; physical ability affects cognitive development). For Emergent Bilinguals, ensure that all learning experiences support each child's home language in addition to English.
<p>Development occurs in a relatively orderly sequence, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize the learning environment in accordance with knowledge of child development. Provide materials that children can use alone (puzzles, books), alongside others (sand or water play, painting at an easel), or as part of a group (dramatic play, blocks). Provide materials with varying degree of difficulty, such as simple and complex puzzles, and manipulatives that are both easy and difficult to assemble. For Emergent Bilinguals, ensure that the home language is incorporated into the learning environment.
<p>There are variations in the sequence of development from child to child; individual children may develop more rapidly in one area than in another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualize the curriculum to reflect each child's varied strengths, needs, interests, temperaments, learning styles, cultures, English language abilities, and home language abilities for Emergent Bilinguals. Allow children to work at their own pace and provide multiple points of entry into projects and activities.
<p>Optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for children to work with materials that challenge them at their current level of development, and, for Emergent Bilinguals, in both their home language and the English language.
<p>Development proceeds in predictable directions toward greater complexity, organization, and internalization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classrooms should be equipped with materials at varying skill levels that are rotated to allow for greater complexity of development. Plan activities to allow children to practice simpler skills prior to introducing activities that require more complex skills. For example: allow children to run, jump, hop, and skip prior to introducing activities that require more coordination, such as walking on a balance beam or riding a two- or three-wheel bike. For Emergent Bilinguals, materials and activities should reflect an understanding of first and second language acquisition while providing rich opportunities for both home language and English language development.
<p>Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social, cultural, and linguistic contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a classroom environment that welcomes, respects, and celebrates diversity among students, including language diversity. Plan curriculum opportunities that take into account the increasing diversity of language and cultural contexts of young children and their families. For Emergent Bilinguals, in addition to English, encourage the development of each child's home language.

<p>Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience, as well as culturally transmitted knowledge, to construct their own understanding of the world around them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan curriculum opportunities for children that provide firsthand opportunities for social interaction; physical manipulation of materials; observation of objects, including natural phenomena; questioning; reflecting; drawing conclusions; and the use of multiple languages.
<p>Development and learning result from the interaction between biological maturation and the environment, which includes both the physical and social worlds in which children live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure flexible learning experiences that respond to ongoing changes in the environment and children's growing ability to work cooperatively within the group. For Emergent Bilinguals, plan appropriately, considering the stage of each student's home language and English acquisition processes
<p>Development advances when children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills, as well as when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of their present mastery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the supportive environment that children need to transfer existing knowledge to new situations (including the use of home languages), practice new skills, and try out more complex experiences. Change the environment to reflect the current topic of study or them. Plan activities that challenge children just beyond their skill mastery level, including each Emergent Bilingual's home & English language levels
<p>Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify children's strengths, interests, learning styles, and home languages. Plan a variety of experiences to help them use their preferred modes of learning and language, and represent what they know and are able to do as they paint, draw, build structures, engage in role play, or respond to music. Extend learning experiences beyond the classroom to the outdoor play area.



Developmental Milestones for Three- and Four-Year-Old Children

Developmental milestones are a set of skills that most children accomplish by a certain age. While these milestones typically occur within a certain age range, the development of each child, including the home language and English language development of an Emergent Bilingual child, is unique. By looking at different developmental milestones, teachers are able to understand how children typically develop and plan more appropriately for individual children. The following chart highlights key developmental milestones within each domain of children’s development.

Domain Area	Three Year Old	Four Year Old
Social/ Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies actions of adults and friends • Shows affection for friends • Understands “mine,” “his,” and “hers” • Shows wide range of emotions • May be upset by changes in routine • Initially may engage in solitary or parallel play • Starts taking turns when playing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays “mom” and “dad” • Cooperates with other children • Is more creative with make believe play • Enjoys doing new things • Talks about what she likes and what she is interested in • Would rather play with other children than alone
Communication/ Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks well enough for strangers to understand him most of the time • Asks many questions • Can name most things familiar to him • Carries on a conversation, using 2 to 3 sentences • Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps • Answers simple questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tells stories • Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as using pronouns like “he” and “she” • Knows first and last name and can tell you • Sings songs or says a poem from memory (Like “Wheels on the Bus” or “Itsy Bitsy Spider”) • Participates in stories about a variety of topics
Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds towers of 6 or more blocks • Understands what “two” means • Copies a circle with a crayon or pencil • Can work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts • Turns pages of a book one at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays board and/or card games • Understands the idea of counting • Draws a person with some body parts • Starts to copy some shapes and letters • Tells you what is going to happen next in a story or book • Understands the idea of “same” and “different”
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbs well • Runs easily • Walks up and down stairs one foot on each step • Has basic ability to kick and throw a ball • Stacks, sorts, and strings items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds • Catches a bounced ball most of the time • Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food • Eats with utensils • Pedals consistently when riding a tricycle
Approaches to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretends and uses imagination during play • Wants to do favorite activities over and over again • Can remain engaged in an activity for at least 5 minutes • Chooses one activity over another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts multiple ways to solve a problem • Demonstrates willingness to try new experiences • Seeks assistance when something seems unclear • Maintains lengthened focus on a task for up to 10 minutes.

Characteristics of Prekindergarten Learners

Please note that the classroom practices suggested for three-year-old children are also age appropriate in classrooms of four-year-old children.

Characteristics of Prekindergarten Learners	Classroom Practices for Three Year Olds	Classroom Practices for Four Year Olds
<i>Prekindergarten learners are concrete thinkers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities to develop background knowledge • opportunities to learn about objects and how they work through hands-on exploration activities • talk about what comes next in the daily schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities to figure things out for themselves and solve problems • add to whole group circle time age-appropriate calendar activities, such as predicting the day of the week, counting the days of the month, predicting what number comes next and how to write the number as children are developmentally ready for those concepts/skills
<i>Prekindergarten learners use “make-believe” as part of their everyday living.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide open-ended materials (e.g., large boxes, square/rectangular pieces of fabric) • provide both male and female gender-related clothing items in dramatic play • change classroom learning areas to coincide with the classroom theme/topic of study • provide a variety of props that reflect children’s daily lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add puppets or flannel board pieces to extend stories • use books to extend play • provide opportunities for children to re-create life experiences in the dramatic play area (for example, after a trip to the firehouse, let them use recyclable materials to create a fire truck that is based on their observations made during the field trip)
<i>Prekindergarten learners are curious and interested in their surroundings.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a visually appealing learning environment • provide well-stocked learning centers that are labeled with both pictures and words • create a child-centered learning environment, making sure that all materials that are accessible to children are child appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide displays that are interactive/purposeful (e.g., a word wall that focuses on new words for the theme/topic study that are taken down and placed in the writing center at the conclusion of the study)
<i>Prekindergarten learners begin to have an increasing attention span.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set realistic expectations for whole group activities (for example, circle time is interactive and no longer than 10 minutes) • provide small group experiences that are engaging and hands on and that end when there is a lack of interest shown by the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for projects to extend over several days to sustain four-year-old children’s increasing interest in their work • as children become more engaged, extend interactive whole group learning experiences
<i>Prekindergarten learners begin to carry out tasks to completion.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow children opportunities to select the play area in which they are interested, the materials that they want to use, and ample time to use the materials • allow children, through the use of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide learning experiences that span several days • allow children’s ideas to guide instruction (for example, when completing a study when the topic/theme is community helpers,

	<p>a center management system, to change centers when they are no longer interested in the center that they originally selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build extra time into the daily schedule to allow children to successfully put away materials • allow age appropriate wait time when children are completing tasks 	<p>have the children decide what community helpers they want to study, then develop a plan of how to study those that they picked)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide small group activities that are based on skill level and allow the activities to span more than one day
<i>Prekindergarten learners can work independently, at times.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide 1/3 of the daily schedule for choice time • develop a center management system to allow children to choose centers that they are interested in • set up learning experiences during which children can work alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide daily quiet activities that are targeted at a particular skill of an individual child (for example, during a relaxation period, the children may assemble name puzzles) • when children first arrive in the morning, provide an individual activity (e.g., a sequencing activity)
<i>Prekindergarten learners demonstrate originality, creativity, and imagination.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities to use age-appropriate art materials independently to create original works of art • provide open-ended questions to children to expand creativity and imagination • during choice time, move throughout the room, join in with children's play in learning centers, and follow their lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide book-making materials to allow children to create their own stories • provide additional age-appropriate props in all of the learning centers, in order to expand creativity • provide a question-of-the-day and allow children to use their imaginations to answer the question
<i>Prekindergarten learners accept new challenges.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide new materials that are just above their current developmental level in order to present a challenge to the student • provide age-appropriate jobs • recognize the temperaments of individual children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide interactive computer software that allows children to practice skills that they are mastering • add more materials to classroom learning areas to encourage children to incorporate new materials into their play schemas (for example, additional unit blocks to enable children to make larger structures)
<i>Prekindergarten learners develop self-control.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for children to participate in small and whole group activities • set up well-defined learning centers with expectations of how many children each center can accommodate • provide activities during which children have to use self-control, for example, taking turns using equipment on the playgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide social stories during whole group experiences, during which children have to discuss the characters' use of self-control • provide opportunities for the children to make decisions (for example, what game should we play on the playground today?) • encourage children to plan what materials they will use and how they will use them when going to a learning center during choice time
<i>Prekindergarten learners develop pre-reading skills.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide access to age-appropriate books, including board books and books on CD • model book-handling skills • repeat read-aloud sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make opportunities to retell or dramatize stories • ask clarifying open-ended questions during read-aloud sessions to allow children to expand their answers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in conversations after read-aloud sessions to support children's thoughts about the story rotate books to coincide with the theme/topic of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use books to investigate the theme/topic of study
<i>Prekindergarten learners begin to develop control of their bodies.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide planned and spontaneous daily music and movement experiences provide open-ended gross motor experiences daily, indoors and/or outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide activities during which children have to use their bodies at different speeds (for example, running in place versus running on the playground) provide obstacles courses that challenge children to move in many different ways
<i>Prekindergarten children become more confident in the use of written and spoken language.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide opportunities to hear new vocabulary words used in context provide time for children to engage in conversations in order to expand vocabulary provide developmentally appropriate exposure to letters and letter sounds; for example, through the use of individual and peer names allow time to draw or "write" freely, recognizing that scribbling and mark making are an initial stage in the writing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide opportunities to use language in a variety of ways (for example, to explain and seek information) plan opportunities for letter and word learning to take place during shared reading and writing activities create opportunities for children to see letters in many different contexts provide experiences that assist children in connecting word sounds with word names and symbols



Play is Active Learning

Play is a critical part of the growth and development of children ages birth through eight years. Children are learning when they explore, discover, investigate, role play, and use tools and materials in creative ways. Play is closely linked to cognitive, social, emotional, language, and physical development. It is the chief vehicle that children use to express themselves verbally and nonverbally, to draw on past experiences, and to use their perceptual-motor abilities. Through play, children can test ideas, develop self-regulation skills, be creative, and learn about the world. Young children's play may be characterized in many different ways.

In the chart below¹, play is described from a social interaction point of view. This framework reflects young children's ability to engage in more than one kind of play activity as they move freely from one activity to the next. At any given time, a group of children may be observed engaging in any of the behaviors described below. It is important to recognize that children in any group will be at various stages in play and social development. Some children will show characteristics of different stages, depending on the context of their play and their cultural background. A child may be observed building an elaborate block apartment building with one or more peers and playing out the arrival of firefighters and the rescue of victims. The same child may later watch from the sidelines as others climb on the jungle gym. It is expected that children will move toward more frequent engagement in cooperative or socio-dramatic play.

Play Behavior	Description
Onlooker behavior	Playing by watching or conversing with other children engaged in play activities.
Solitary, independent play	Playing by oneself.
Parallel play	Playing, even in the middle of a group, while remaining engrossed in one's own activity. Children playing parallel to each other sometimes use each other's toys, but always maintain their independence.
Associative play	Sharing materials and talking to each other, but not coordinating play objectives or interests.
Cooperative play	Organizing themselves into roles with specific goals in mind (e.g., assigning the roles of doctor, nurse, and patient when playing hospital).

¹ Adapted from: *Back-to-Basics: Play in Early Childhood* by Jill Englebright Fox, Ph.D.

The Learner Centered Environment

The classroom is a place where children are actively engaged in creating meaning. The room itself and the spaces or learning centers in the room should invite children to explore, converse, inquire, build, and create individually and as part of the classroom community. Teachers design classrooms so that they serve as extensions of their responsibility to shape and foster learning.

Even before they enter school, children have learned that different environments require different behaviors. For example, a three-year-old child knows that a ride in the car requires climbing into a car seat and buckling up. A visit to grandparents may mean behaving differently from the way that the child behaves at home. Teachers build upon such prior learning when they arrange their classrooms and equip learning centers. They must design the environment so that the arrangement of centers in the room and the array of available materials and supplies help children to understand the kinds of behaviors and interactions expected in each area.

A quality classroom is arranged so that children are able to:

- Establish trust and cooperate with others
- Feel safe and secure enough to take learning and language risks
- Develop independence through making choices and being responsible for cleaning up
- Focus on what they are doing and stay engaged in their work
- Acquire skills and concepts as they select and use materials

Part of the instructional task of teachers is that of manager and decision maker. Among the most important decisions made by the teaching team are those pertaining to the design of the environment. In the role of designer of the environment, the teaching team:

- Sends specific, concrete messages to children about what is expected and valued
- Influences learning by the inclusion of specific materials and equipment
- Supports and extends curriculum and instruction
- Builds a sense of community
- Validates, honors, and nurtures the children's diverse cultures and languages
- Creates an aesthetically pleasing climate
- Attends to the health and safety of the children in the group

Classrooms should allow children to feel that:

- This is a safe and comfortable place.
- I belong here and I am valued.
- I can make friends and share.
- I know what I'm expected to do.
- I can do interesting work here.
- I can find what I need and put things back where they belong.
- I can make choices.
- I am challenged to try new things.
- I can use and share all of my languages.

Basic Classroom Equipment

When providing equipment for an early childhood classroom whether you are serving prekindergarten children ages three or four the following guidelines will ensure equipment is developmentally appropriate for the children being served:

- ✓ The majority of the children’s feet rest on the floor when sitting in a chair at a table.
- ✓ Children’s elbows rest comfortably on the table and the table height is no higher than the child’s chest.
- ✓ Children are able to see over the shelves in the classroom (when children are able to see over shelves, the teacher can adequately supervise learning areas from other parts of the room).
- ✓ Cubbies are at child level to allow them to independently place clothing and other personal items in the cubby.
- ✓ Mats/cots are appropriate for child’s size in programs that provide a nap time.
- ✓ Step stools placed at sinks or toilets are sturdy with handrails if necessary to prevent easy tipping.
- ✓ Evaluate classroom doors for safety- add finger guards if necessary to prevent fingers being closed in the door jam and door stops to prevent heavy doors from closing on children.

Typical Use of Equipment by Preschool Children

The below chart demonstrates how children may use equipment differently when they are three years of age versus four years of age. This is just a sample of materials and is not an exhaustive list of items that should be in a prekindergarten classroom. Always check materials to ensure they are not a choking hazard.

Equipment Type/Purpose	Suggested Type for Three Year Olds	How Three Year Olds May Use Them	Suggested Types for Four Year Olds	How Four Year Olds May Use Them
<p>Blocks: <i>To build structures while practicing balancing and matching skills. To explore sizes and develop concepts such as taller/shorter; big/little; more than/equal to.</i></p>	<p>At the beginning of the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foam unit blocks • cardboard blocks • large interlocking blocks <p>As children are ready introduce hardwood unit blocks.</p> <p>Provide props, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road signs • diverse small figurines • animals • vehicles • books • writing materials 	<p>May play independently and spread out over a large space in the block area.</p> <p>Block structures at first may appear irregular but with repetition will take on more sophisticated forms.</p> <p>Three year olds are beginning to explore the use of the materials in the block area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hardwood unit blocks • large hollow blocks • cardboard blocks • interlocking blocks • diverse small figurines • road signs • animals • houses • vehicles • books • writing materials 	<p>Will begin to make more sophisticated block structures and will incorporate other props into blocks play such as small figurines, animals, signs, and vehicles.</p> <p>Will incorporate peers and more theme related schemas into their constructions and play.</p>

Equipment Type/Purpose	Suggested Type for Three Year Olds	How Three Year Olds May Use Them	Suggested Types for Four Year Olds	How Four Year Olds May Use Them
<p><u>Play Dough/Clay:</u> <i>To use materials to develop eye-hand coordination and to strengthen fine muscle control and skill.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-toxic playdough/clay • rolling pins • craft sticks • props such as: vehicles and animals to move through the playdough 	<p>Three year olds will pound, roll, and flatten the dough as they explore the texture and smell.</p> <p>Add props that they can use for open ended, sensory exploration that allow the development of fine motor skills.</p> <p>At this age, children will engage in solitary or parallel play next to another child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-toxic playdough/clay • rolling Pins • dough cutters including alphabet and number cutters • craft sticks • scissors 	<p>Four year olds begin to make more sophisticated shapes and creations with the materials.</p> <p>Add props such as letter and number dough cutters that allow children to learn letter and number shapes and names.</p> <p>Children will share materials and may work together to build three-dimensional objects.</p>
<p><u>Writing Implements:</u> <i>For children to use a variety of writing implements to build foundational writing skills.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chunky non-toxic crayons • chunky pencils • non-toxic markers • unlined paper 	<p>Recognize that early writing for three year olds will consist of scribbles and unrecognizable figures.</p> <p>As children have more experience using writing implements and materials their drawings will become more sophisticated and recognizable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-toxic crayons • pencils • non-toxic markers • unlined paper • lined paper 	<p>Four year olds will begin to experiment with shapes and symbols to make more recognizable letters.</p> <p>As they become more confident children will string letters together to make words and strings words together to make sentences.</p>
<p><u>Paint:</u> <i>For children to strengthen eye-hand coordination while experimenting with color, shapes, and lines in their paintings.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-toxic finger-paint • chunky paint brushes • non-toxic liquid watercolors • non-toxic tempera paint • sturdy paint cups • easel • variety of paint colors • finger-paint paper • variety of paper types and colors • smocks to protect clothing 	<p>As with initial writing attempts, paintings will include scribbles and unrecognizable figures.</p> <p>As three year olds have more repetition and exposure to materials recognizable forms in their artwork will begin to appear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-toxic finger-paint • paint brushes • non-toxic watercolors • non-toxic tempera paint • sturdy paint cups • easel • variety of paint colors • finger-paint paper • variety of paper types and colors • smocks to protect clothing 	<p>Four year olds will begin to create more sophisticated paintings often combining colors and shapes to add details to their paintings.</p>

Equipment Type/Purpose	Suggested Type for Three Year Olds	How Three Year Olds May Use Them	Suggested Types for Four Year Olds	How Four Year Olds May Use Them
<p>Dramatic Play: <i>For children to develop social-emotional skills while experimenting with roles and imaginative play scenarios by combing props and other age appropriate materials.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender related clothing items with Velcro multi-cultural dolls play food doll accessories play utensils, pots, pans prop boxes to switch out the center shopping cart and/or strollers for pushing 	<p>Three year olds will enjoy pushing dolls in strollers and items in shopping carts.</p> <p>Initially three year olds will engage in solitary or parallel play next to another child.</p> <p>As they mature they will begin to play cooperatively with another child.</p> <p>Often roles at this age are exploratory, repeating actions they have seen at home or in other environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender related clothing items with a variety of closures (buttons, snaps, etc.) multi-cultural dolls play food doll accessories play utensils, pots, pans prop boxes to switch out the center cash register, play money 	<p>Play is more sophisticated at four.</p> <p>Children will work together to assign roles in specific play schemas.</p> <p>Props related to specific themes or units of study will extend opportunities for children to try out new vocabulary words, to extend imaginations skills, and to practice social skills.</p>
<p>Sand/Water: <i>For children to develop cooperative play and sharing skills as they refine fine motor and eye-hand coordination skills by dumping, pouring, scooping, and sifting materials.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensory tables that are at age-appropriate height for the children in the class props to extend learning in each table a variety of non-toxic materials are provided throughout the year for sensory exploration theme related props 	<p>Three year olds will enjoy dumping and filling containers.</p> <p>They will engage in solitary or parallel play next to other children.</p> <p>They will define their own space to play within the table.</p> <p>Duplicate or like materials are essential to reduce conflicts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensory tables that are at age-appropriate height for the children in the class props to extend learning in each table a variety of non-toxic materials are provided throughout the year for sensory exploration theme related props 	<p>Fours will begin to share the entire table area with peers as they create more sophisticated play experiences using provided materials within the sand or water table.</p>
<p>Books: <i>For children to develop book handling skills including how to locate the front/back of the book and how to turn pages while learning that print carries meaning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> board books- non-fiction and fiction (at least 2 per child) felt boards with characters for story re-telling listening station soft animals 	<p>Three year olds are developing book handling skills. Board books will allow the children to turn pages without ripping the book.</p> <p>As children are ready provide non-board books to this area.</p> <p>Provide duplicates of favorite books to reduce conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> books – fiction and non-fiction felt boards with numbers, shapes, letters, and characters for story re-telling listening station soft animals 	<p>Four year olds will continue to develop book handling skills and will begin to understand the role of an author and illustrator.</p> <p>They will use props when provided and felt boards to retell stories.</p> <p>Providing felt letters and numbers allows them to experiment with these materials.</p>

Resources:

- Bredenkamp, S. (2014). *Effective practices in early childhood education building a foundation (2nd ed.)*. Boston: Pearson.
- Jackman, H.L. (2009). *Early education curriculum a child's connection to the world (4th ed)*. Belmont, CA: Delmar Publishing.

Setting Up Classroom Learning Centers

As prekindergarten teachers design learning centers, it is important that they:

- Are mindful of the varying strengths, skills and abilities, languages, and developmental levels of individual students
- Are intentional and purposeful in the selection of materials and activities that they provide
- Plan concrete, hands-on activities for student-directed learning in each learning center
- Eliminate worksheet and rote activities
- Plan for meaningful interactions and opportunities for extended conversations with students in all languages
- Allow sufficient time for students to self-select learning center activities, become engaged, and to explore and experiment with the materials and activities that they choose (approximately one-third of the daily schedule)
- Provide space for displays of children's work



The below photos are examples of learning center arrangement and are followed by tips to help teachers as they design their classrooms. Teachers should tailor center set-up to the materials and equipment available in individual classrooms while making the learning center developmentally appropriate for the children in their classroom. If there are various languages spoken in the classroom, families can help label the center areas in the languages spoken at home. For many languages, there can be a rotation throughout the year.

Block Center



Teachers ensure that the blocks and building center offers:

- Adequate space, perhaps with a carpet or rug, located away from foot traffic, with enough space for building substantial structures
- Shelving to hold sets of several different types of blocks and building materials (e.g., wooden blocks, connecting blocks, foam unit blocks, multiple shapes of blocks), labeled to facilitate clean up when done
- Props, materials, and accessories that extend block and building play (e.g., figurines, vehicles, road signs, ramps)
- Selections of books and texts about building and landscapes, rotated to link to specific themes and/or learning goals
- Art and craft materials and supplies for children to plan and create additional structures and accessories

Dramatic Play



Teachers ensure that the dramatic play center offers:

- Space for up to four children in a noisy area of the room
- Variety of props for dramatic expression that reflect diversity in gender, culture, and occupations
- Play equipment and furniture that can be moved and converted (e.g., table and chairs, shelving, kitchen, safety mirror, benches, storage bins etc.)
- Play props and materials that promote dramatic play and role playing (e.g., office equipment, workshop items, puppets, pretend food, dress-up clothes, dolls and figurines, cash register, pretend money, stuffed animals etc.)
- Authentic props and materials (e.g., calculators, writing materials, clipboards, arts/craft materials for making signs and props, coupons, newspapers, etc.)
- Props to extend book experiences, such as flannel boards and pieces, puppets, and other story character figurines to recreate stories or represent experiences
- Multiple text types, including narrative, informational, and other kinds of texts; books with diverse characters and topics; and books at varying levels

Literacy



Teachers ensure that the literacy center offers:

- A quiet, comfortable, cozy area of the classroom
- Books and texts (about 20) that are on display, forward facing and rotated often according to current interests, topic, and/or theme
- Additional books in labeled bins, at child's eye level, organized by theme or genre
- Multiple text types, including narrative, informational, and other kinds of texts; books with diverse characters, topics and languages; and books at varying levels
- Props to extend book experiences, such as flannel boards and pieces, puppets, and other story character figurines
- Books in multiple formats (e.g., listening on CD, digital books, interactive books, bilingual books)
- Writing materials, such as pencils, markers, crayons, and pens, and materials to write on, such as paper and book making materials; alphabet and numeral strips and stamps
- Word wall depicting topic/theme-based words; common words and rare words with illustrations or depictions, and translations
- Computers/devices with developmentally appropriate games and activities linked to learning goals; scheduled to ensure equity

Creative Arts



Teachers ensure that the creative arts center offers:

- Dedicated space near a clean-up area
- Multiple work surfaces for individuals and groups (e.g., tables, easels, floor areas)
- Illustrated books and sample art work, at child's eye level, organized by theme or genre, inclusive of multiple art forms, and reflective of the students' home cultures and languages
- Displays of children's art work and storage for ongoing projects
- Variety of drawing, painting, and natural materials for exploring color, form, and texture (e.g., brushes, straws, paint, crayons, different sizes of paper)
- Three-dimensional and tactile objects for sensory exploration and experimentation (e.g., beads, string, modeling clay, rocks, pine cones)
- Props to extend book experiences, such as flannel boards and pieces, puppets, and other story character figurines to recreate stories or represent experiences
- Audio station for listening to different styles of music, including those from students' home cultures and in students' home languages
- Musical props and instruments for exploring dance, music, and sound
- Materials for creating instruments (e.g., boxes, rubber bands, strings)

Math & Manipulatives



Teachers ensure that the math and manipulatives center offers:

- Work spaces for children to work with materials, including tables and floor areas
- Shelving to hold sets of several different types of objects, sorting bins, graph paper, materials for making patterns
- Manipulatives, such as pegs, sorting materials, Cuisenaire rods, nesting and linking cubes, shape patterns, counting beads, measuring tools, scales etc.
- Posted math visual aids, such as number lines (including flat number lines), number lists and representations, calendars, simple graphs, height measurement stick, etc.
- Games and activities: games that rely on counting, puzzles, pattern games, games with dice or number spinners, matching games, math computer games and apps
- Selections of books and texts that feature counting, themes with shape patterns, comparisons

Science & Discovery



Teachers ensure that the science and discovery center offers:

- A location near sunlight for growing plants
- Work spaces and tables for individuals and groups to conduct experiments and make observations (e.g., wall space, tables, floor areas)
- Displays and collections of natural objects (e.g., rocks, leaves, sand, dirt, roots) and depictions of science-related topics (e.g., posters, models, graphics, digital displays, videos)
- Variety of tools and materials for using senses, observing, and experimenting (e.g., natural materials, magnifiers, art supplies for recording, measuring devices, trays, droppers etc.)
- Selections of books and texts about science; rotated to link to specific themes and/or learning goals (e.g., earth and space, living things, physical properties)
- Selections of games and puzzles that are related to science areas, such as healthy bodies, animals, weather, living things, space, movement, etc.
- Paper and writing materials to draw or record observations

Writing Center



Teachers ensure that the writing center offers:

- A table and chairs to accommodate at least two children
- Variety of writing implements that include markers, crayons, colored pencils, elementary pencils, and regular pencils
- Variety of sizes of lined and unlined paper
- Upper-case and lower-case alphabet stamps and ink pads
- Word wall depicting topic/theme-based words; common words and rare words with illustrations or depictions, and translations reflected by children in the classroom
- A variety of ABC books that allow children to expand vocabulary while identifying upper- and lower-case letters
- Environmental print, such as fronts of cereal boxes or snack boxes, that are gathered together in a book for students to use
- Word strips with a picture and a word that coincide with the current or previous themes, bound together for children to use as a sample
- Materials for making simple books, including a stapler or paper fasteners
- Clipboards with paper and pencils attached or white boards with dry erase markers and an eraser so children can take the clipboards to write around the room
- Letter tiles or magnetic letters for sorting letters

Resources:

Cryer, D., Harms, T., & Riley, C. (2003). All about the ECERS-R. New York, New York: Teachers College Press

Jackman, H. (2009). Early education curriculum a child's connections to the world, 4th (Ed). Belmont, CA: Delmar Cengage Learning

Considerations for Planning Checklist

CONSIDERATION		
Each day includes a large block of time for children to work individually and/or in self-selected groups in learning centers: Approximately one-third of the daily schedule is designated for children to engage in self-initiated activities.		
Work in learning centers is complemented by time in brief adult directed large group meetings and small group activities.		
There is planned time for adults to interact with individual children.		
There is a good balance of active play and quiet time.		
There is time to consolidate skills in various learning centers, complemented by the introduction of new materials, language, and or concepts by an adult.		
The classroom is divided into clearly defined, well-equipped learning centers including, but not limited to: dramatic play; blocks and construction; library, language arts, technology/media; science and nature; mathematics and manipulative materials; writing; creative arts; sand and water play and music.		
Time for outdoor activities and learning experiences are scheduled.		
Thoughtful transitions are planned throughout the day.		
The district uses <u>written</u> curricula or curricula frameworks that are evidenced-based (meaning research has been conducted regarding the relationship between the curriculum and children's learning), as well as developmentally appropriate (addresses the key domains of child development), and aligns with the age-appropriate learning standards.		
The district implements appropriate modifications and provides additional supports to enable children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) more effective inclusion in the full range of the program's activities.		
The district implements appropriate modifications and provides additional supports to ensure that Emergent Bilinguals, or children who speak languages other than English at home, are provided equal access to the program and opportunities to achieve the same program goals and standards as other participating children.		
There is enough time set aside for teachers to plan lessons effectively		
Opportunities are provided for families to engage in their child's learning both inside and outside of the classroom.		

Articles, Tools, & Web-Based Resources

Play Based Instruction

Sussman, K. S. (2012). The importance of play in the preschool classroom. *Texas Child Care Quarterly*, 36(3). Retrieved from: [University of Cyprus website](#).

- *This article discusses the importance of play to a child's development. The author reviews the types of play for the reader and the teacher's role in facilitating and supporting play is provided.*

Grossman, S. (2014). The worksheet dilemma: Benefits of play-based curricula. *Early Childhood News*, Retrieved from: [Early Childhood News website](#).

- *This article discusses the impact worksheets can have children's development. Alternate age appropriate methods are suggested for demonstrating how children learn through hands on, concrete experiences.*



This website gives an overview of play and its role in prekindergarten classrooms. There are links to articles that discuss the impact play has on a child's learning and the importance of learning areas in the prekindergarten classroom.

Visit the [NAEYC website](#).

Transition Time Tricks

10 Tips for Terrific Transitions retrieved from the [Positive Classroom website](#).

- *This article gives teachers strategies for engaging students during transition times.*

Matthews, S. (2012). Singing Soothes Classroom Transitions. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 40(1), 13-18. Retrieved from the [Southern Early Childhood website](#).

- *This article discusses why transitions can be challenging for children and why singing can be an engaging experience to assist students. The article gives an example of how to use a children's book during transitions.*

Classroom Environments

Vogel, N. (2012). Arranging the active learning environment setting up the preschool classroom. *Resource Spring*, retrieved from [HighScope's website](#).

- *This article gives teachers and administrators tips for setting up the prekindergarten space which includes making it inviting, storage accommodations for extra materials and supplies and how to support students with special needs.*

Wardle, F. (2011) Creating indoor environments for young children. *Early Childhood News*, retrieved from the [Early Childhood News website](#).

- *This article demonstrates how a well-planned environment can implement and supports the schools philosophy and curriculum for prekindergarten children. There are suggestions for creating environments that stimulate learning, how to make the environment functional for both the teacher and student, and some tips for overcoming obstacles when planning the environment.*

Supporting Challenging Behavior

Price, C. L. & Steed, E. A. Culturally responsive strategies to support young children with challenging behavior. *Young Children*, 71(5). Retrieved from the [NAEYC website](#).

- *This article describes five culturally responsive strategies to promote positive teacher relationships with young children in preschool to assist in minimizing challenging behavior. These strategies include: learning about children and families, developing teaching expectations, taking the child's perspective, teaching and modeling empathy, and using group times to discuss conflict.*



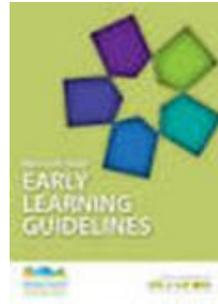
This website gives programs practical strategies for teachers, coaches, administrators and families for supporting social and emotional development in young children. There are scripted stories for social situations, tools for working on “building relationships”, a book list and activities with books for supporting social emotional development, and ideas for teaching social emotional skills. Visit the [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning website](#).

Valid & Reliable Tools

- ECERS-R- this tool is used to measure program quality and includes environmental and interaction measures).
- The CLASS for Pre-K (3 to 5 years)- this tool measures the quality of interactions in prekindergarten classrooms.
- The ELLCO Pre-K is used to improve literacy practices and supports in preschool classrooms.
- HighScope's Preschool Program Quality Assessment (Preschool PQA), includes measures in interactions, environmental quality, and curriculum practices.

Additional Resources

Web Link: [New York State Early Learning Guidelines: A Resource for You](#)



The *New York State Early Learning Guidelines* are a daily reference and resource, to support the development of those responsible for the education of children from birth through age five years. These guidelines are a resource to which early childhood educators can refer for information about how children develop and learn, as well as for strategies for fostering children’s development. The guidelines are designed to complement and coordinate with the New York State prekindergarten learning standards.

designed to be used as professional

Web Link: [Best Practice in Early Childhood Education Webinar:](#)

In collaboration with Head Start and the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children, the New York State Education Department’s Office of Early Learning has developed a webinar to provide guidance to school leaders on promoting best practice in early childhood education. In this 35 minute webinar, listeners hear from two veteran principals about how to lead and support high-quality learning experiences for young students.



Web Link: [QUALITYstarsNY](#)

QUALITYstarsNY is New York State’s Quality Improvement and Rating System (QRIS); a voluntary system that is available to all regulated programs serving young children in a variety of settings. QUALITYstarsNY serves early childhood center-based programs, family-home providers, and public schools serving children ages six weeks to five years in targeted communities who apply and are selected to participate. These programs have access to a wide range of resources, support, and services to help them systematically and intentionally improve upon the quality of services that they provide to young children and their families.



Web Link: [NYSAEYC](#)

The NYSAEYC is the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC is the world’s largest organization working on behalf of young children. NAEYC’s mission is to serve and act on behalf of the needs, rights, and well-being of all young children, with the primary focus on the provision of educational and developmental services, and resources. The NYSEAYC mission is for “all children in New York State to have access to high quality early care and education programs with sufficient resources to meet children’s physical, educational, and social/emotional needs in environments that support diversity.” The organization offers professional development resources to early childhood teachers, and provides current information for the field of early childhood.



NYS Education Department Office of Early Learning

Guidance Memos

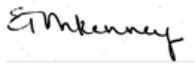




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Date: January 20, 2016

To: Superintendents of Schools with Prekindergarten Programs
Prekindergarten Program Contacts

From: Betsy Kenney, Supervisor of Education Programs 

Subject: Guidelines for determining if mealtime may be included when calculating a prekindergarten program's instructional time

This memorandum responds to the many questions our office receives in regard to whether or not mealtime can be included when calculating the instructional hours of prekindergarten programs for three and four year old students.

Historically, the practice of the Office of Early Learning has been to define the length of the school day for prekindergarten programs in the same manner as K-Grade 6, which excludes mealtime. As full-day prekindergarten programs have become more prevalent throughout the state, the Office of Early Learning has received questions more regularly and has been asked to consider what are, if any, circumstances in which mealtime can be counted as part of a daily instructional schedule.

Mealtime in a prekindergarten classroom is an important part of a young child's development and learning. There are many learning opportunities to be planned for when including mealtime in the instructional day. These may include experiences with food, encouraging self-help skills, language and vocabulary development and mealtime behavioral expectations. Mealtime can also provide a natural environment for young learners to share in conversations that build relationships with peers and adults. If your program chooses to include mealtime as part of the instructional day, it should be a positive experience for each child and must include meaningful adult-child interactions and opportunities for learning.

Listed below are specific guidelines offered to help districts determine whether their prekindergarten mealtimes qualify to be included as part of the instructional day. It is the expectation of the Office of Early Learning that these guidelines be closely adhered to when choosing to define meals as instructional time. Therefore, the below examples should be either followed as described or have a comparable level of adult-child interaction, consideration, and learning elements that are met during the entire mealtime, including set-up and cleanup, and are incorporated into each daily meal.

Mealtime that can be counted as instructional time should include, but not be limited to:

1. Teachers and paraprofessionals participating in mealtime by:
 - a. Maintaining required staff to student ratios and qualifications; and
 - b. Being seated among the children at the meal tables; and
 - c. Participating, facilitating and guiding in meaningful extended conversations; modeling appropriate mealtime behavior with supportive guidance; and facilitating problem solving and turn taking.
2. Mealtime setting should allow for:
 - a. Reciprocal conversations between adult/child as well as child/child in guided topics that are of interest to and relevant to children;
 - b. Comfortable and relaxing conversations that facilitate literacy development by encouraging new vocabulary; and
 - c. Accommodations for learning opportunities for students who finish mealtime before their peers (e.g., engaging in conversations; additional activities appropriate for mealtime setting).
3. Daily mealtime instructional planning should give thoughtful consideration to the five domains of the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core ([File is available on NYSED's website.](#))
 - a. Approaches to Learning (e.g., gaining independence, problem solving, asking questions, making connections to prior knowledge);
 - b. Physical Development and Health (e.g., handwashing; healthy eating habits; setting a table, pouring liquids);
 - c. Social and Emotional Development (e.g., mealtime manners: please, thank you, you're welcome, excuse me; utensil usage; sitting at a table to eat; chewing with mouth closed; enjoying mealtime routines);
 - d. Communication, Language, and Literacy (e.g., engage in small talk; listen while others are talking; name and discuss foods; discuss likes and dislikes); and
 - e. Cognition and Knowledge of the World (e.g., discussions about customs, foods and family traditions; distinguishing left from right; applying one-to one correspondence; using positions words; shapes, size and texture).

For additional information, here is a helpful link for purposeful mealtime planning on [NAEYC's website](#).

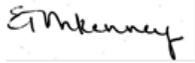
Please be advised that when SED staff from the Office of Early Learning conduct monitoring visits, they will be looking carefully to see that these guidelines and expectations are met in order to justify that the classroom mealtime be included as part of daily instructional time. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Early Learning at (518) 474-5807, or email OEL@nysed.gov.



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March 11, 2016

To: Superintendents of Schools with Prekindergarten Programs
Prekindergarten Program Contacts

From: Betsy Kenney, Supervisor of Education Programs 

Subject: Guidelines for Supporting Toilet Learning

This memorandum responds to the many questions our office receives in regard to whether or not children must be toilet trained to attend a New York State-funded prekindergarten (Pre-K) or kindergarten program.

Must children be “toilet trained” to attend Pre-K or Kindergarten?

Children who are not toilet trained cannot be excluded from either Pre-K or kindergarten enrollment. The definitions of an “eligible child for New York State-funded Pre-K programs and for public school kindergarten are established in state law.

- The definition of an “eligible child for New York State-funded prekindergarten for four-year-olds requires that school districts must accept for enrollment any child who resides in the district and is four years of age on or before December 1st or otherwise first eligible to attend kindergarten the following school year.
- Similarly, an “eligible child” for State-funded prekindergarten for three-year-olds is defined as a child who is three years of age on or before December 1st or will otherwise be first eligible to attend a four-year old State-funded prekindergarten program the following school year.
- A child who is five years of age on or before December 1st is entitled to enrollment in the public school district in which he resides.
- The district does not have the authority to apply additional criteria, such as being toilet trained, as a condition of enrollment or attendance.

Toilet Learning

Toileting is a skill that must be learned by the child. It is not a skill that can be developed overnight. The district should include the family in development of a plan that supports the child using the toilet independently. Work with the family to establish vocabulary words and a routine that can be used consistently at both home and school.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Build bathroom times into the classroom schedule so a consistent routine is established while still allowing children to use the bathroom on an as needed basis, especially those who are being toilet trained.
- Check in with children who are being toilet trained frequently rather than depending on them to tell the adult. This will remind the child to use the toilet facilities before an accident occurs.
- Read books and have them available on the book shelf about toilet learning.
- Be encouraging to the child. When there is an accident talk to the child about what happened in a non-shameful way.
- Decide who will change the child when there is an accident so as not to disrupt the classroom routine.
- Provide praise and support for the child's efforts.

Sanitation and Safety:

- Child size toilets or modified toilet seats with step stools are recommended. Potty chairs are not recommended for use in a preschool classroom setting because sanitary handling of bodily fluids is difficult.
- For guidance on appropriate diapering and handwashing procedures, please refer to the local county health department or the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) if the prekindergarten program is provided in an OCFS licensed agency; or the school medical director/school nurse if the program is provided by a school.
- Equipment used for diaper changing needs to be appropriate to the size of the child. Diaper changing equipment (e.g. table or pad) should be cleaned after each use with approved green cleaners in accordance with school policy; or per OCFS guidance.
- Wet or dirty clothes should be placed in a plastic bag that can be sealed tightly and stored out of reach of children until sent home to be laundered. Rinsing children's clothing or laundering soiled clothing at school is discouraged because it provides an opportunity to contaminate hands and other surfaces.
- Each child should have one or more sets of extra clothes available. Parents may need to be reminded to send in a replacement set of clothing each time that the child has a toileting accident.

Web-site Resources:

Caring for Our Children Nationally Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education located at [CFOC's website](#).

- [New York State Office of Children and Family Services Child Care Regulations website](#)
- [New York State Education Department Office of Facilities Planning web page](#)
- [New York State Department of Health Handwashing Guidelines web page](#)

Books for Adults:

Stress-Free Potty Training: A Commonsense Guide to Finding the Right Approach for Your Child by: Sara Au

On Becoming Pottywise for Toddlers: A Developmental Readiness Approach to Potty Training by: Gary Ezzo & Robert Bucknam

Potty Training 1-2-3: What Works, How it Works, Why it Works by: Gary Ezzo & Anne Marie Ezzo

Books for Children:

Diapers Are Not Forever/Los Panales no son para siempre by: Elizabeth Verdick

The Potty Book for Boys by: [Alyssa Satin Capucilli](#) (*Link redirects to Amazon*)

The Potty Book for Girls by: [Alyssa Satin Capucilli](#) (*Link redirects to Amazon*)

Once Upon a Potty – Boy by: Alona Frankel

Once Upon a Potty- Girl by: Alona Frankel

Everyone Poops (My Body Science Series) by: Taro Gomi



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Date: March 29, 2017

To: Superintendents of Schools with Prekindergarten Programs
Prekindergarten Program Contacts

From: Office of Early Learning

Subject: Guidelines for Nap Time for Prekindergarten Students

This memorandum responds to questions our office has received in regard to whether a nap time is required for prekindergarten students who are in attendance for a full-day (five or more hours per day) and other practices associated with the provision of a nap time.

Is a nap time required for children attending a full-day prekindergarten program?

No, it is not required; however, the New York State Education Department's Office of Early Learning (OEL) suggests that all programs serving prekindergarten students provide a regularly scheduled nap or rest time for students who will attend a full-day program. During this time, students are encouraged to rest, relax, and nap. Quiet activities should be provided for students who do not nap.

What length of time is appropriate for nap time?

The length of nap time may vary depending on the ages and changing needs of students over the course of the school year. If most students do not nap and are not tired during the program day, a shorter rest period may be appropriate. However, if most students are not ready to wake up at the end of nap time, this period may need to be extended. In general, we suggest starting out with a 20-30 minute nap time and adjusting as necessary.

How does nap time impact on the calculation of instructional hours for three and four year old students?

In state funded prekindergarten classrooms scheduled nap times (where children use sleeping mats or cots for the purpose of going to sleep for a period of time) may not be counted as instructional time. Intentionally planned and routinely scheduled quiet activities where children

may choose to look at books in the reading area, work quietly on small group projects at a table, or engage in other low-key activities where quality teacher-child interactions are occurring may be included in the calculation of instructional time even if some children are napping.

What is the required staffing for a prekindergarten classroom during nap time?

As with all other times of the day it is imperative that at nap time, classrooms remain in compliance with the staffing requirements set forth in 8NYCRR, Section 151-1.3(e). These regulations specify that:

- *The program must ensure that the maximum class size is twenty students.*
- *For classes up to eighteen students, there must be at least one teacher and at least one paraprofessional assigned to each class. For classes of nineteen or twenty students, there must be at least one teacher and at least two paraprofessionals assigned to each class.*

It is never appropriate for a prekindergarten classroom to be scheduled with only one staff person present. We recognize that districts have a contractual obligation to provide planning time and lunch breaks for the prekindergarten staff. However, this must be done in a manner that ensures that appropriate coverage is maintained for the classroom. Some districts accomplish this by including the prekindergarten classes in the schedule for “specials.” Others employ one or more “floating” teacher aides who rotate classrooms to assure that there are two adults in each classroom while the teacher or other paraprofessional are on scheduled breaks. Please note that certified teacher and supplementary school personnel staff to student ratio must be maintained in 4410 special class and SCIS classrooms.

Nap Time Guidelines

This may be the first classroom experience for many prekindergarten students and as with any new classroom activity, clear expectations of what happens during nap time needs to be established. This includes:

- ✓ introducing the cot/mat the child will sleep or rest on
- ✓ demonstrating how children place their bodies on the cot/mat
- ✓ practicing getting blankets/napping friends (stuffed animal) out of cubbies and returning their supplies after nap is over
- ✓ discussing expected behavior while lying on the cot/mat (i.e. not disturbing friends who are resting, staying on top of the cot/mat, etc.)
- ✓ showing children what the room will look like during nap time (lights dimmed, music playing, etc.)

- ✓ telling children where the adults will be during rest time (this will help them feel reassured that someone is in the room with them)
- ✓ developing a nap time routine which includes keeping shoes on in case of an evacuation during nap time
- ✓ sending sleeping supplies home weekly for cleaning
- ✓ cleaning nap time surfaces daily
- ✓ labeling mats/cots with children's name to ensure use of the same one daily

Nap Time Expectations

- Children need an adjustment period to get acclimated to nap time. They need to adjust to the background noises, the light level, and sleeping on a new surface. Teachers need to be aware that for some children it may take several weeks for a child's body to adjust to the different sleeping atmosphere before they fall asleep in the classroom.
- Not all children will nap every day. Plan quiet activities for children on their cots or mats in designated areas of the classroom (at a table or quiet activity areas). Consider shortening time on cots for children who do not fall asleep.
- Plan on rubbing backs or sitting next to a child who may need to feel reassured while falling asleep.
- When children wake up from napping it is important to give them time to get reacclimated to the routine.

Setting the Classroom Tone for Napping

- put on lullabies, nap time music, a book on cd, or nature recordings
- use calming voices
- read a comforting story
- give the child a book to look at on their cot
- allow children to bring a favorite stuffed animal from home (a nap time buddy)

Napping Time Resources

Cryer, Debby, Thelma Harms, and Cathy Riley. All About the ECERS-R. Chapel Hill: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, 2003.



Nap Time Is for Letting Go [available online](#).



Student Support Services
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Date: March 29, 2017

To: Superintendents of Schools with Prekindergarten Programs Prekindergarten Program Contacts

From: The Office of Early Learning and the Office of Educational Management Services

Subject: Information on Transportation of Prekindergarten Students under Four Years of Age

This memorandum responds to questions our office receives in regard to the provision of transportation to prekindergarten students who are under four years of age.

What is the law regarding seat belt use on school buses?

New York State's school bus seat belt law requires all school buses manufactured after July 1, 1987 to be equipped with seat belts. New York State does not currently mandate seat belt use on school buses, but their use is recommended. If you are unsure whether or not the use of seat belts on school buses is mandated by your locality, check with you school board.

Are children under the age of four required to be restrained in a car seat while riding on a school bus?

Yes. The law states that children under the age of four must be restrained in a federally approved car seat while riding on a school bus [Section 1229-c (1-2), NYS Vehicle & Traffic Law].

See section 1229-c (13) for children riding in other school type vehicles. Vehicles of these types include school cars, vans, suburbans and SUVs.

Different Types of Car Seats

The appropriate type of car seat depends on the weight and height of the child. Always read the manufacturer's instructions for installation and use to ensure the child's safety. There are three car seat types to consider when transporting students under the age of four years, each appropriate for a certain age, weight, or height.

- 1) A rear-facing car seat is the best option for young children between the ages of birth and two years. This type of seat moves with the child during a crash to reduce stress on the child's neck and spinal cord. The rear facing car seat may still be appropriate for children over the age of 2 years until they reach the height and weight requirement for a forward facing car seat as recommended by the manufacturer.

- 2) Generally, a forward facing car seat is appropriate for children between the ages of 2 and 3 years. This type of seat reduces the child's forward movement during a crash.
- 3) When a child outgrows the forward facing car seat, a booster seat is the next appropriate restraining system. This is usually reached between the ages of 4 and 7. A booster seat positions the seat belt to fit over the stronger parts of the child's body. There are two types of booster seats including backless or low-back and high-back seats. Backless or low-back booster seats are best for vehicles with high seat back. The child's head will be fully supported from the head restraint or the vehicle seat back. The high-back booster seats can be used for vehicles with low seat back, no seat back, or no head restraint to support the child's head and neck.

Utilization of School Bus Monitors

Increased transportation of children who are 4-years old or younger leads to an increased need for school bus monitors to assist in loading and managing younger students. Targeted training is conducted to ensure such staff is prepared for the needs of the younger children.

Driver/Attendant Training on Prekindergarten Student Needs

Drivers and attendants receive specialized training in dealing with and safely transporting prekindergarten students.

Safety Drills for Prekindergarten Students

Currently, all students (even those who do not normally ride the bus and non-public students as well) are required to have three safety drills every year. The content and scope are outlined in NYS Education Department regulation, and drivers are instructed on the conduct of the drills. Considerable thought will have to be given to the content and extent of the drills for three and four year old children, especially those components that deal with evacuation, emergencies or related incidents. Consideration also will need to be given to instructing other children on the school bus about their interaction with the prekindergarten students in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

Questions?

Questions regarding the transportation of prekindergarten students should be directed to Mary Sansaricq in Pupil Transportation Services in the Office of Educational Management Services by e-mail at Mary.Sansaricq@nysed.gov or by calling (518) 474-6541.

New York State Education Department Office of Early Learning
Health & Safety Checklist for Prekindergarten Program

Name of District: _____ Date: _____

Name of Community Based Organization: _____

Address: _____

Printed Name of Person Completing Form

Title

Records and Permits: The following records and permits should be on file in the community based organization.

Item	Yes	No	Comments
Sketch of indoor instructional space with dimensions, showing interest/activity			
Sketch of outdoor space with dimensions showing placement of equipment, types of ground cover, fencing, etc.			
Outside New York City – NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) license or letter of exemption (from OCFS) (required if children are in attendance 3 hours or more a day) If licensed, omit E, F, and G. License #: _____ Expiration Date: _____			
New York City Schools only – New York City Day Care Permit required (omit E, F, and G) License #: _____ Expiration Date: _____			
Fire Inspection Report within the last 12 months Date: _____			
Certificate of Occupancy Date: _____			
Health Inspection Report (required if meals are prepared on site) Date: _____			
Staff Development Plan (postsecondary and in-service training including health and safety training)			
Current physical and optional dental examination record for each child. <i>Vision and hearing screening completed in accordance with Education Law if not included on the physical examination.</i> The district medical director to complete physical examinations if one not provided by the parent/guardian in accordance with Education Law.			
Proof of immunization status of each child as required by Public Health Law. An immunization survey is completed annually by the site as required by Public Health Law			
Child Nutrition Funding Source: CACFP _____ Vended through School _____ Other _____			

Indoor Facility Checklist:

Item	Yes	No	Comments
Classrooms and facilities used by children are well-maintained and clean.			
The classroom space allows for safe movement and activity for the number of children enrolled.			
The bathroom is immediately accessible and barrier free.			
Adequate supplies are available in the bathroom for handwashing to include individual paper towels, a pump dispenser for soap and warm running water.			
There are no hazards apparent in the classroom such as dangling electrical/phone cords, space heaters, tripping hazards, worn equipment or peeling paint.			
All classroom learning areas can be adequately supervised by staff.			
Hazardous materials such as cleaning supplies are stored in a locked cabinet or out of the reach of children.			
There is appropriate staffing in each classroom; minimally 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional for classes up to 18 students or 1 teacher and 2 paraprofessionals for classes of 19 or 20 students.			

Outdoor Facility Checklist:

Item	Yes	No	Comments
Outdoor play area provides adequate space for children to play safely.			
Outdoor play area provides age- appropriate equipment for different abilities.			
Materials and play equipment used by the children must be sturdy, free from rough edges and sharp corners.			
There must be a cushioned surface under all outside play equipment that present a fall hazard. Surfacing may not include concrete, asphalt, grass or other hard compacted dirt.			
Equipment must be in good repair and be placed in a safe location.			

Item in Need of Action	Action Plan for Compliance	Target Date	Date Completed