

Linking Standards to Lesson Planning

The Learning Standards for Early Childhood provide a framework for classroom implementation. Teachers who use the Standards as a guide for creating appropriate learning experiences build instructional strategies that focus on what children should be able to learn and do. Used together with curriculum content resources, the Standards help teachers provide responsive and intentional opportunities for learning to all children.

The Early Learning Standards provide a foundation, or framework for lesson planning; they are not a curriculum. In addition to listing the content children should learn and do at specific age levels (Standard Statements), the information within each of the Key Learning Areas helps teachers understand how to recognize mastery of specific skills (Exemplars) and ways teachers can design activities and the environment to support learning (Supportive Practices).

Below you will find some helpful steps for using the Early Learning Standards in lesson planning.

1. Compare curriculum resources to the Standards.

Review your current curriculum alongside of the Early Learning Standards. Your curriculum resources should align to each of the Key Learning Areas. Check to see how many of the Key Learning Areas your resource materials include. *Does your curriculum have activities or skill-building ideas in all of the Key Learning Areas provided in the Standards? If the curricula you use are specific to one or two Key Learning Areas - how do you make sure you are reaching all the content that children need to know in all nine of the Key Learning Areas? Do you need to use supplementary curricula resources?*

2. Check for holistic teaching practices.

To understand how the Standards connect to your lesson planning, look back through your recent lesson plans. *Can you document that the activities you provide for children support learning in each of the Key Learning Areas? Did you include experiences that help a child learn about language arts, math, science, social studies, creative arts, social emotional and health/physical development?* Including the Key Learning Areas regularly on your lesson plans helps assure a holistic approach to learning – enhancing children’s growth and development in all areas. *Did you focus on one Key Learning Area too heavily? Did you omit another Key Learning Area altogether?* A weekly or monthly comparison review helps you determine areas that need additional focus or that you’ve overemphasized.

3. Assure appropriateness of experiences.

Use the Standards to assure that your expectations and experiences for children are age-appropriate. For example, you’ve decided that you are going to work on a child’s Social and Emotional Development. Next, you will need to identify a specific standard within the Social and Emotional Key Learning Area that you are going to focus on. *Will you be helping that child learn about self regulation or getting along with others?* Look at the strands (listed vertically) under each Standard. *Using the Standards as your framework, are the activities on your lesson plan appropriate for what you want to accomplish?*

4. Link the Standards and daily activities.

A. Representing the Key Learning Areas:

Review your plans for the day or the week to determine which Key Learning Areas you are planning to address. You can document them in a variety of different ways. Some teachers list the corresponding Key Learning Areas in a separate column within their daily lesson plan. It is important to note that this documenting and linkage between the Standards and lesson plans does take practice but practice makes perfect! Start with the Key Learning Areas and gradually expand to include the Standards.

For example, here’s a very simplistic lesson plan:

Time	Activity	Description	Key Learning Area
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Circle Time/Morning Meeting	Use the morning message to introduce the special activity for the day.	Language and Literacy Development
		Sing Three Little Monkeys.	Mathematical Thinking and Expression

Others use the corresponding Key Learning Area **colors** to underline or highlight the activity on their lesson plan.

Time	Activity	Description written in Key Learning Area color
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Circle Time/Morning Meeting	<p>Use the morning message to introduce the special activity for the day.</p> <p>Sing Three Little Monkeys.</p>

Here is a listing of the nine Key Learning Areas in their corresponding color.

Approaches to Learning; Mathematical Thinking and Expression; Scientific Thinking and Technology; Social Studies Thinking; Health, Wellness and Physical Development; Language and Literacy Development; Partnerships for Learning; Social and Emotional Development

B. Next, Build Intentionality

The key to successful connections between lesson planning and the Standards is the thoughtful process teachers use to decide how specific experiences build individual children’s learning – intentionality. For example, a play dough activity can be used to strengthen children’s fine motor skills, develop language, facilitate children’s interactions with one another and learn about shape and size (math). Before adding an activity to a lesson plan, think about the skills that are going to be emphasized. These skills may be introduced and emphasized to the entire class or to a specific child. With on-going, authentic assessment you will be able pinpoint what children need extra help with what particular skills. *How are you going to introduce this particular activity? How will the activity be used with the children: during large group, small group or free exploration during center time/work time/free play? What is the intended purpose for including this activity on the daily lesson plan?*

This could be noted on a lesson plan accordingly:

Time	Activity	Description	Key Learning Area
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Play dough (Center Time/ Work Time/ Free Play)	<p>During <u>center time/work time/ free play</u> - put out cookie cutters, plastic knives and rolling pins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about different sizes, shapes, colors. • Introduce vocabulary words: smooth, long, flat, short. 	<p>Language and Literacy: Janie, Joe</p> <p>Mathematical Thinking: Jared, Kirsten</p> <p>Health, Wellness & Physical Development: Fine Motor: Justine, Jamal</p>

C. Include Routines in Your Plans

Routines occur so often throughout the day, every day, and are a great way to incorporate learning. Lesson plans that add routines optimize children’s learning. Including meal times, bathrooming, diapering, hand washing on the lesson plan helps teachers consider ways to use these important times of the day for intentional teaching. These times of day can easily be linked to the Standards and noted on your lesson plans.

Time	Activity	Description	Key Learning Area
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Snack Time	<p>Children are to count out 5 crackers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to talk about the shapes they have chosen (circle, square, triangle) and describe the shape’s attributes (how many sides etc.). • Ask Justin and Jamal (at their tables) to pour the juice. • Ask Jared to count out the cups/napkins. 	<p>Language and Literacy: Janie, Joe</p> <p>Mathematical Thinking: Jared</p> <p>Health, Wellness & Physical Development: Eye-hand coordination: Justine, Jamal</p>

D. Integration - Putting it all together

Just as one activity can develop many different skills, the combination of experiences within a day/week all join together to support children’s development. It can be challenging to separate out specific skills and Standards that will be addressed during one activity. Intentional teachers will understand how to use the full day of experiences to support individual children’s needs within the lesson plan.

Identify specific goals for children on the lesson plan and know that children's goals will differ. Again, on-going authentic assessment will help to identify areas that need targeted for specific children and groups of children accordingly. The key is to determine what kinds of questions, activities, materials, scaffolding strategies will be put into place during the day to help every child progress through their identified goals.

E. The final step – Specifying Standards

Teachers that further align their lesson plans to the Standards within each Key Learning Area will create optimal experiences for everyone.

Time	Activity	Description	Key Learning Area Standards
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Play dough (Center Time/ Work Time/ Free Play)	During <u>center time/work time/ free play</u> - put out cookie cutters, plastic knives and rolling pins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about different sizes, shapes, colors. • Introduce vocabulary words: smooth, long, flat, short. 	1.6.1 Discussion: Janie, Joe 2.9.1 Definitions, Properties and Relations: Jared 2.3.6 Measurement and Estimation: Kirsten 10.5.1 Strength, Coordination and Muscle Control: Justine, Jamal

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Congratulations! You have just linked the Early Learning Standards to your lesson planning!