Introduction

The development of the Kansas Early Learning Standards was an initial step in the development of written guidance toward creating high quality learning experiences for young children. To truly impact program quality, however, early childhood professionals and the agencies they work for must understand how to use the standards. This requires (1) implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is linked to the Standards; (2) monitoring child progress toward achieving the Standards; (3) evaluating the overall effectiveness of the educational program, and making changes if necessary; and (4) aligning developmentally appropriate assessment practices. This process of linking the Standards to a specific curriculum is called "**curriculum alignment**".

The information in this section is based on the guiding principles outlined in the 2003 Joint Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), titled *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8 (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003 p. 5).* (See Appendix C for the specific guiding principles.)

This section will provide a step-by-step guide for the following processes:

- Aligning curriculum to the Standards;
- Developing a scope and sequence, based on the Standards; and
- Linking specially designed individual plans for children with disabilities (Individual Education Plans - IEP/Individual Family Service Plans - IFSP) to the Standards.

For illustrative purposes, each process will be explained using a large center based preschool program as the example. However, adults working with infants and toddlers, and/or in home-based programs should be able to adapt this information to meet their individual needs.

Using the Early Learning Standards in your community

Early childhood community programs will likely need to develop a plan to implement the Early Learning Standards. The task to develop a plan for actual implementation of the Standards is challenging and can best be accomplished through the collaborative efforts of all those with ties to the early childhood program. One way to begin is to created a **curriculum steering committee**. Typically, the main function of the steering committee is to provide general oversight and planning for the entire curriculum alignment process.

The steering committee can help organize and oversee the alignment process, advocate for additional support as needed by the community and district (for school based programs), and keep the larger community informed of the important alignment work that is going on (e.g. report to program board of directors, school board, community newspapers). Including members who are respected within the community as leaders will allow the committee to more easily advocate for the work and the programs.

Steering Committee membership should include:

- administrator(s) from school and community programs,
- early childhood teacher(s),
- parent(s),
- special education personnel, and,
- other early childhood stakeholders who may provide needed information

If there are enough members, the steering committee might appoint a smaller working group or groups to conduct the actual alignment work. Other workgroups can then be identified to work on specific tasks as described on the next pages. Example tasks include comparing the program's current curriculum with the Kansas Early Learning Standards, identifying gaps in the curriculum, and creating a scope and sequence. Timelines will be individual to the community and depend upon resource availability and size of the community and program(s).

Part I: Curriculum Alignment

Purposeful Planning

To benefit from early childhood programs, young children must be involved in learning opportunities that are developmentally and individually appropriate, child centered, actively engaging and challenging. Such involvement requires purposeful planning that is grounded in evidence-based practice and research that is referenced to both child development and the curricular content.

Aligning program curriculum with the Early Learning Standards is the first step in purposeful planning and the starting point for the alignment process. The standards spell out what children should know and be able to do as a result of attending a high quality program. They do not provide information on how, when, where, or under what circumstances the skills might be demonstrated--this is what a curriculum provides.

In addition, standards do not gauge if or how near a child is to mastering a specific standard, benchmark or indicator. Developmentally appropriate assessment practices are needed to monitor child progress and guide instructional planning. Assessments can be thought of as "mile markers" on our map to make sure we are headed in the right direction. The Early Learning Standards provide the destination; the curriculum provides a learning map; and, assessments allow us to stay on course towards meaningful learning.

While the task at hand may sound daunting, most early childhood professionals have already been using a curriculum or providing learning experiences that will help children accomplish many (if not all) of the Early Learning Standards. By carefully comparing their current curriculum with the Early Learning Standards, early childhood professionals can see how well their instructional program matches. In addition, a number of published early childhood curricula have been formally aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards. Go to the Kansas In-Service Training System KITS) website at www.kskits.org to download copies. Even without using one of the published curricula that is aligned with the standards, it is possible to either select one that can be aligned or align a curriculum that is currently being used. The Kansas Inservice Training

System (KITS) project has developed a "Curriculum Alignment Activity" that can be used by early childhood programs as they go through the process (Goosen, 2007a). The process allows teams to look at each individual standard and benchmark and compare it with their current curriculum and assessment practices. The entire curriculum alignment activity worksheet can be found in Appendix B.

Aligning Current Practice

The alignment worksheet (Appendix B) provides teams with a process for reviewing the learning opportunities and assessment practices their program currently provides to determine how well teachers are addressing specific standards and benchmarks in their classrooms. The alignment worksheet can be used to help the team organize their work. Teams can go about their work in a number of ways. The following steps provide an example alignment process.

Step 1:   Determine how the team will work**.** The team may decide to appoint individuals, or partners to work together to answer the comparison questions by developmental content area, reporting their answers back to the entire team for further discussion. Other teams may decide to go through the process with the entire team step by step.

Step 2:   Answer the questions. No matter what process is utilized by teams to conduct their work, the end result is to answer the following questions:

1. Is this benchmark fully addressed within the context of the daily activities?
2. Does this benchmark require explicit teaching (planned instruction that is not addressed within the context of the daily activities - for example: "letter of the day")?
3. Must this benchmark be accomplished through the use of targeted lessons/activities? If teams answered yes, then specific lessons can be identified.
4. Is this benchmark currently addressed in your curriculum practices? If not, how can your current curriculum be adapted/enriched/ changed to ensure that this benchmark is addressed?
5. How is/will the accomplishment of this benchmark be assessed?

Step 3:   Fine Tune the Indicators. Once the team has identified the extent to which their current curriculum and assessment practices address each benchmark, and determine any changes or enrichment that might be needed to ensure all benchmarks are addressed, the team is ready to take a closer look at the example indicators.

As a reminder, the indicators listed in Section IV represent example behaviors of knowledge or skills children might demonstrate at different levels of development in order to meet the benchmark.

This process will allow each individual staff member to expand or change these indicators or example behaviors and create a better match between:

- ■ the curriculum;
- ■ any curriculum- based assessment tool used;
- ■ specific teaching philosophy or set of beliefs; and,
- ■ the groups of children served.

It is likely that these example indicators will not adequately represent the curriculum and/or the foundational philosophy of individual programs. Therefore teams should look over the indicators and decide if they would like to add, replace or reword any of the indicators to better match their program practice. A worksheet entitled "The KSELD Standards, Benchmarks, & Indicators in List Form" (Goosen, 2007b) provides an easy format for looking over each indicator (Appendix B).

Step 4: <u>Finalize the alignment</u>. The curriculum alignment process is completed once the following activities have been completed by program staff.

- ■ All the alignment questions in Step 2 have been answered;
- ■ The example indicators have been studied and modified if necessary;
- ■ Specific gaps have been identified; and,
- ■ Recommendations have been made to fill those gaps with appropriate curriculum and assessment activities.

Please note that for some programs, formally aligning curriculum and assessments with the Kansas Early Learning Standards may be all that is needed! However, other programs may decide to take additional steps to provide even more guidance to their staff. Developing an early childhood "scope and sequence" is the next step for these programs.

Part 2: Developing a Scope and Sequence

What is a Scope and Sequence?

Scope and sequence are terms generally used in the K-12 system. Scope refers to aligning all the Standards and Benchmarks. Sequence is defined by having Indicators in hierarchical order. Having a scope and sequence ensures that all the required state standards have been addressed with ample opportunities for learning to occur. Program evaluation can then be linked to the scope and sequence. The system then determines if the overall educational plan is working, and, if not, suggests appropriate changes. This process requires programs to place state standards into a logical order and helps determine how much time to devote to each standard.

A scope and sequence process meets the following criteria:

- It outlines curriculum content that is significant enough to teach;
- It determines curriculum content that is able to be accomplished in a given year; and,
- It identifies the order in which the material should be taught.

A scope and sequence for early childhood programs can provide many of the same assurances as those developed for K-12 systems. However, there are important differences. K-12 systems use a scope and sequence to provide very explicit learning opportunities that lead to student success when taking state standards-based assessments. The scope and sequence is often accompanied by curriculum pacing guides, and is therefore more "lock-step" than would be appropriate for early childhood programs.

An early childhood scope and sequence must be more flexible than the K-12 scope and sequence. It provides early childhood professionals **guidance** for addressing the necessary standards while allowing for **flexible** programming that enables children to be actively engaged and learn according to their own developmental needs. The early childhood scope and sequence is built around what is meaningful in each child's life. Its overall purpose is to help provide structure for planning purposes and provide the necessary framework for program evaluation that can be used to improve overall quality. It is **not** to be used to create an overly structured environment that creates a lock-step program for young children.

Creating a Scope and Sequence based on the Early Learning Standards

Once the curriculum alignment process has been completed, the essential components of a scope (all the aligned learning standards/benchmarks) and a sequence (example indicators in hierarchical order) are in place.

One way to make the scope and sequence attainable within a year is to sort the benchmarks and indicators into quarters within the program calendar year. Such a process will help guide the work of individual teachers and early childhood staff as they plan for instruction and assessment. Keep in mind that the benchmarks and indicators are very broad so a variety of child focused and developmentally appropriate methods can be used, allowing flexibility among classrooms and teachers. Also remember that indicators are only example behaviors, and that individual children may exhibit skills higher or lower than the example levels. The staff should easily be able to use their professional knowledge within the planned sequence to make sure that learning experiences have been provided to all the young children in their classrooms in such a way that any or all of these example behaviors can be accomplished.

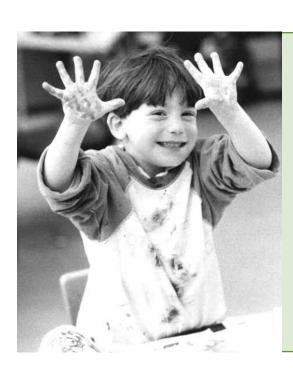### Suggestions for beginning the sorting: Assigning Benchmarks and/or Indicators

Option 1: *Start with the current calendar*: Programs may decide that adding selected benchmarks and/or indicators into the current program calendar quarters will help teachers be more comfortable moving towards standards based teaching. In this scenario, team members (early childhood professionals) work to review the appropriate indicators before the year or the quarter begins. Using professional knowledge and an understanding of their curriculum and the needs of the children in their classroom, they can place each benchmark and indicator into the appropriate quarter. It is very possible that benchmarks may be addressed in one or more quarters, with the corresponding indicators falling into sequential quarters.

The following table provides an example of how a standard, benchmark and indicators can be addressed through the course of a program year.

Standard	Benchmark	Indicator(s) Quarter 1	Indicator(s) Quarter 2	Indicator(s) Quarter 3	Indicator(s) Quarter 4
CL Standard 3: Demonstrates early reading skills *All quarters	3.3: Demonstrates emergent phonemic/ phonological awareness *All quarters	Pre3 1: Recognizes matching sounds and rhymes in familiar words or words in songs	Pre3 2: Recognizes sounds that match	Pre4 1: Produces rhyming words Pre4 2: Discriminates separate syllables in words	Pre4 3: Makes some letter-sound connections Pre4 4: Identifies some beginning and ending sounds in words

Option 2: *Map teaching activities and look back at the year*: Some programs may decide that the best way to sort the benchmarks and/or indicators into program quarters is to go through a curriculum mapping process. Using this process, staff record their teaching activities over the course of a year, mapping out when and how each benchmark/indicator was addressed and assessed. This creates a timeline that describes their teaching over the past year. The results will be shared and discussed at the end of the year to determine gaps. [See the list at the end of this Section for further resources.]

Option 3: *Combination*: A third sorting method is to begin the year assigning high priority benchmarks and indicators to be sure that these are taught throughout the year. During the year, teachers will record their activities so that a mapping process can be completed at the end of the year. This method works best for programs that believe their current curriculum is addressing a majority of the benchmarks/indicators. The combination approach also allows programs to look more closely at specific benchmarks/indicators that require more explicit teaching and/or that have been determined as having a higher priority than others. By creating a timeline for addressing these high priority benchmarks/indicators the program can focus their initial efforts while keeping the overall process more manageable.

Coming to Consensus on the Scope and Sequence Timeline

One strategy for building consensus for inserting benchmarks/indicators into a timeline is to organize each program quarter into themes that build on each other in a developmentally appropriate manner. In the following example, themes are being used as an organizational tool, not necessarily to promote theme-based teaching. The Gardner Edgerton School District, in collaboration with the KITS project, has identified four organizational themes by quarter to help with the timeline process.

1st Quarter: "All About Me"

- Back to School
- Home-School Connection
- Self Concept-Likenesses & Differences
- Emotions/Feelings
- Things I Like to Do

2nd Quarter: "My Family"

- Family (General)
- Pets
- Homes
- Family-Activities (Including Thanksgiving)
- Things We Do in the Fall (Foods, Environment)

3rd Quarter: "My Community"

- Community Services (EMT, Dentist)
- Safety & Hygiene
- Transportation
- Winter (Things we do in the winter)
- Appreciation of Others (Valentine's Day, Communication)

4th Quarter: "My World"

Our Earth (Recycling, Earth Day, Gardening, Plants)

Our Water

Our Sky (Weather, Outer Space)

Animals on our Planet (Insects, Baby Animals, Dinosaurs)

Things We Do in The Spring (Mother's Day, Zoo Visit, Farm Visit)

Using broad themes such as described above provides an opportunity for early childhood professionals to reflect on the successful teaching activities conducted by individual teachers. Organizing those activities within a curriculum framework creates an element of continuity across the overall program.

Connecting curriculum, assessment, and instruction to improve learning: Program Evaluation Activities

Once program staff have identified a timeline for addressing specific benchmarks/ indicators, steps can be taken to identify assessment activities that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, and provide information for possible improvement.

Sorting the benchmarks and indicators into quarters also allows the program to identify potential assessment activities that could be used more formally for program evaluation thus promoting a level of continuity across classrooms. Such quarterly assessments also provide a way to monitor child learning and change over the year. The program may already use curriculum based assessments or other methods that could also be organized within a quarterly schedule. Programs using these measures usually do so to assess and monitor individual child progress. Such measures can also be used for program evaluation **if** the team agrees to use pieces of these measures or tools to assess specific benchmarks/indicators at specified times within each quarter. Many published curriculum-based assessments have also been aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards and can be downloaded from the KITS website at www.kskits.org.

Reflection on the Process

Are the teachers providing opportunities for children to learn new information or have they already mastered specific benchmarks/indicators and are therefore not being appropriately challenged? If none of the children are exhibiting the desired skills on specific benchmarks/indicators, the following questions may need to be asked:

- Is there a need to change the order in which the benchmarks/ indicators fall within the program quarters?
- Are there ways in which the curriculum can be enriched to promote improved learning?

It is possible that programs may not use the same curriculum based assessment tool and/or other assessment methods across classrooms. If this is the case, staff may need to identify specific measures to be used as part of their program evaluation. One way to do this would be to use information and suggestions for authentic assessments that were created during the curriculum alignment activities. Staff can identify specific strategies/activities that would be conducted in all classrooms within each quarter to measure group progress toward the specific standards/benchmarks/indicators determined to be appropriate for the program evaluation. These authentic measures can be used in conjunction with other measures such as checklists, teacher observations or other tools created by the programs to measure individual student progress.

In order to use this information to improve child learning and enhance program results, it is important to review the assessment results at the end of each quarter and at the end of the year. This process allows the staff to evaluate how well their program is moving young children toward mastering the standards/benchmarks/indicators they have identified as important.

It is important to work as a team and share information. Routinely sharing and documenting successful learning and assessment activities can help promote quality.

After reviewing all of the information gained across the year, the staff are in a better position to critically review the Kansas Early Learning Standards, specific benchmarks/ indicators, and their recently designed scope and sequence to determine if they are meeting the learning needs of the children or if more changes need to be made.

Part 3: Linking the Early Learning Standards and IEP's

One of the cornerstones of providing services for children who have disabilities is the actual provision of those services in the least restrictive environment. In order to achieve this, special education professionals must have a sound reference point from which to work: the general early childhood education curriculum and the standards (Kansas Early Learning Standards) on which the curriculum is based.

The individualized education plan (IEP) spells out the specialized instruction and related services that will occur to help the child access and progress in the general curriculum. This process is not new to educators working in the K-12 system. State standards and local curriculum tied to those standards have been around for several years. However, for professionals working with younger children, little information has been provided on how to link the IEP with standards and curriculum. In the previous section of this chapter, descriptions and examples were provided to align the Kansas Early Learning Standards with the local general education curriculum. The next step for those serving young children with disabilities is to make a link between each child's IEP, the Kansas Early Learning Standards, and the curriculum. This linking is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Another education law, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, also requires such a link to be made. NCLB applies to all children with and without disabilities, and was established to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" [20 U.S.C. § 6301 (emphasis added)]. For young children, this again supports the need for a link to be made between the general education standards and curriculum.

IDEA and Access to the General Curriculum

When IDEA was reauthorized in 1997, Congress strengthened the inclusion movement by requiring children with special needs to have access to the general curriculum, as opposed being taught in a separate special education curriculum. The focus of specialized instruction changed from merely placing a child with special needs in a regular classroom, to **ensuring meaningful participation and progress in the general curriculum**.

General Curriculum

IDEA and NCLB often use the term "general curriculum." For school age children, general curriculum means the full range of learning opportunities, activities, lessons, courses and materials routinely used by the general population in local public school. For preschool age children, IDEA identifies the general curriculum as "appropriate activities" which would include early learning standards aligned with developmentally appropriate curriculum [*34 CFR §300.347(1)(2)(ii)*].

Discussion of the general curriculum appears several times in IDEA with regard to required content in the IEP:

The IEP must include a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance including: how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for non-disabled children) **or** for preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities. [*34 CFR §300.320(a)(1)*]

The IEP must also include a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to: 1) meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum. [*34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i)(A)*]; and, 2) meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability. [*34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i)(B)*]

Individualized Education Program: An overview

Just as the standards are the starting point for developing or adopting a curriculum (see alignment process described earlier), the general curriculum is the starting point from which an IEP is developed. During the initial evaluation process, a variety of information is collected. Some of the information is used to determine if there is a disability, other information is used to determine if there is a need for special education. In addition, assessment information is used to establish the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) of the child as referenced to the general education curriculum. Once it is determined that the child has a disability and is need of special education and related services, the IEP team must identify how the disability is impacting the child's ability to participate and progress in the general education curriculum. This information can help the team to further identify the specially designed instruction and related services that may be needed. Annual goals further identify the skills and/or knowledge that a child can reasonably accomplish within one year **as a result of the specially designed instruction**. It is important to note that the goal for academic or developmental progress should be higher than what would occur naturally, through maturation only, yet be reasonable given the individual child's strengths and needs.

Important note:

In Kansas there is no requirement for reporting the link between standards and annual goals on the IEP, nor is there a requirement to use the language of the state standard or benchmark in the goal. The state contends that there are many places where links to standards can be made in the IEP goals, and so does not restrict this activity to annual goals. The concept of linking standards to the IEP is to ensure that children with disabilities have access to the general curriculum in which they can participate and progress.

> "The purpose of specially designed instruction is to address the unique needs of the child that result from the disability and to ensure access of the child in the general curriculum so that he or she can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children" (*34 C.F.R. * 300.26 (b)(3)*].

While the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) is the formal starting point for the linking process, in reality the evaluation is where the general curriculum should first be addressed. Curriculum-based assessments and other tools used to collect curricular and functional information help establish the present levels. When the curriculum has been aligned with the standards, linking IEP goals to the curriculum becomes an easy process, especially when a curriculum-based assessment has already been aligned. For curriculum-based assessments aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards, go to www.kskits.org.

Using the Kansas Early Learning Standards to Help Prioritize Goals

Review the information provided in the PLAAFP and find corresponding standards, benchmarks, and indicators in the Kansas Early Learning Standards. To illustrate this process the following example has been provided.

Meet Katie:

Katie is an outgoing 4-year old girl with cerebral palsy who has a motor disability affecting primarily the right side of her body. She is above average intellectually and is very verbal.

Katie has many friends at home and at school, and is described by her teachers as very motivated to learn new things. Katie enjoys preschool and spends time in all of the learning centers. Katie's parents are concerned about Katie's writing ability and how that might impact her ability to be successful in kindergarten. During classroom observations in the writing and art center and work sample analysis, Katie was observed holding crayons, markers, and other writing utensils in her fists, rather than in an appropriate grasp.

Katie holds onto writing and other utensils in this manner due to excessive muscle tone, which also limits her ability to rotate her wrists. During a painting activity Katie painted using down strokes with her paintbrush in her fist. When asked to draw a picture of herself, Katie was able to scribble on her paper using back and forth motions. Typically, children of the same age hold writing utensils between their thumb and forefingers and can copy lines, circles and simple figures. They are able to make up and down strokes as well as circular patterns with a paintbrush. Katie's fine motor disability keeps her from being able to participate in prewriting activities and create representational artwork like that of other children her own age.

The above description of Katie's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) provides information regarding Katie's strengths (outgoing, verbal, above average intellectually, motivated to learn new things, many friends) and areas of need. Clearly, lack of understanding or motivation is not what is causing Katie's delay in fine motor activities! A physical disability is restricting her fine motor movement which impacts her ability to create representational artwork (draw) and practice writing like other children her age. Katie's parents are worried that this may keep Katie from being successful in kindergarten. The PLAAFP also provided baseline information (the behaviors that were observed) and the method of assessment (classroom observations and work sample analysis), all of which will be used when writing annual goals.

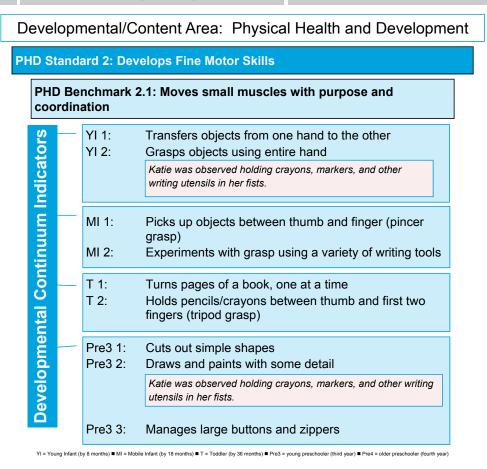**Making the connection: How Katie's Goals/Benchmarks are linked to the Kansas Early Learning Standards**

In the example, Katie's present skill levels (PLAAFP) provide information regarding where Katie's skills fell within the general curriculum. This information (PLAAFP) was then compared to or cross-walked with the Kansas Early Learning Standards helped staff understand how Katie's disability was impacting her ability to participate. This comparison with the early learning standards, benchmarks and indicators provided two kinds of information to help develop goals: first, a reference point showing where Katie's skills fall when compared with other children her same age; and second, suggestions leading to future skill requirements. In order for Katie to fully access the classroom curriculum, Katie must be able to gain control of her wrists and fingers. Specially designed instruction, related services, and the use of adapted equipment will help Katie be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum (as stated in the annual goal). This is clearly a direct link between the Kansas Early Learning Standards and the IEP goal.

To develop goals using this kind of information, the team must ask themselves the following questions:

- what skills can Katie reasonably achieve in a year, with specially designed instruction and related services, and

- what specially designed instruction, related services or other supports are necessary for Katie to be involved and should progress in the general education curriculum?

Other adaptations could be made to the environment. For example, Katie could be provided other means or materials to use in a painting activity such as sponge painting, spray painting, etc. Such information could be included in the IEP, but is not necessary in terms of making an additional goal.

Developmental/Content Area: Physical Health and Development

PHD Standard 2: Develops Fine Motor Skills

PHD Benchmark 2.1: Moves small muscles with purpose and coordination

Developmental Continuum Indicators

YI 1:   Transfers objects from one hand to the other
YI 2:   Grasps objects using entire hand

Katie was observed holding crayons, markers, and other writing utensils in her fists.

MI 1:   Picks up objects between thumb and finger (pincer grasp)
MI 2:   Experiments with grasp using a variety of writing tools

T 1:   Turns pages of a book, one at a time
T 2:   Holds pencils/crayons between thumb and first two fingers (tripod grasp)

Pre3 1:   Cuts out simple shapes
Pre3 2:   Draws and paints with some detail

Katie was observed holding crayons, markers, and other writing utensils in her fists.

Pre3 3:   Manages large buttons and zippers

YI = Young Infant (by 8 months) ■ MI = Mobile Infant (by 18 months) ■ T = Toddler (by 36 months) ■ Pre3 = young preschooler (third year) ■ Pre4 = older preschooler (fourth year)

Example Goals Linked to KSELD Standards

Annual Goal

By November 5, 200X, during center time and art activities, Katie will hold adapted writing utensils between her thumb and fingers (tripod grip) to copy complex shapes with angular contours (e.g. rectangle, square, triangle) 4 out of 5 opportunities as measured during structured observations and work sample analysis.

*Benchmarks/Objectives

1. In nine weeks during center time and free play activities, Katie will use her wrists to completely open partially opened objects (e.g. faucets, door-knobs, jars with lids, toys that can be turned or cranked, etc).

2. In 18 weeks during center time and free play activities, Katie will use her wrists to open objects (e.g. faucets, door-knobs, jars with lids, toys that can be turned or cranked, etc).

3. In 27 weeks during center time and art activities; Katie will hold adapted writing utensils between her thumb on one side and fingers on the other side (palm facing down) to copy simple shapes (e.g. circle, cross, T).

*   IDEA does not require that short-term objectives or benchmarks be written for children who will not be taking alternative state assessments. State assessments are not given in the preschool years. However, writing benchmarks or short-term objectives are considered best practice when writing IEP goals for young children, and therefore examples were provided.

Kansas Early Learning Standards and Early Primary Grades

Kindergarten teachers, special educators, and others in the early primary grades may also find the Kansas Early Learning Standards useful when individualizing for their students with special needs. The Early Learning Standards were developed using the Kansas K-12 Standards as a reference point, and therefore provide a wider range of skills for children who may not be functioning at the same level as their typical peers. Adaptations or modifications to classroom lessons or activities may be easier to develop when using the Kansas Early Learning Standards as a reference and in combination with the kindergarten curriculum.

Conclusion

The development and distribution of the Kansas Early Learning Document – Early Learning Standards provides a starting point from which educators and other professionals working with young children with disabilities can truly begin to improve access to the general curriculum. Until now, there has been little information or guidance regarding the general curriculum for young children. The Kansas Early Learning Document provides common language and expectations of what young children in Kansas should know and be able to do as a result of attending high quality programs. By cross-walking assessment information used in the IEP process (PLAAFP) with the Early Learning Standards, early childhood professionals are well on their way to developing high priority IEP goals, thus promoting access to the general curriculum and meaningful inclusion for all young children.

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