



# Learning and Development

# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



High-quality early care and education programs implement comprehensive, research-based curricula to give children well-rounded experiences that will benefit them now and in the future. Curriculum design, content, and implementation is one of the most important components of a high-quality early care and education program (Masterson 2022). When there is a well-planned curriculum in place, children are able to learn more and have more meaningful academic experiences (Fuller et al. 2017).

Early care and education professionals use assessments to help them understand children's development and individual needs, and to adjust their instruction and supports to meet children where they are. By customizing a child's instruction and understanding their development, early care and education programs can provide overall support to a child which sets up a strong foundation for learning across the lifespan (Masterson, 2022).

The Learning and Development domain addresses the learning environment, and the experiences children have while in early care and education programs. It has two sub-domains: Curriculum and Assessment and Child Screening.

**Curriculum and Assessment** has two integral components. First, curriculum supports a child's development and learning by providing teachers with a scope and sequence for instruction and skill development. The curriculum scope is the content, or what to teach, and the curriculum sequence describes in what order skills are taught. A comprehensive curriculum addresses a broad range of developmental and learning outcomes across domains and subject matter areas. Second, the assessment process is used to make instructional decisions and to evaluate a child's progress.

**Child Screening** involves evaluating key developmental milestones to identify potential disabilities, delays, or risks. If concerns arise, a referral is made for a detailed assessment to determine if specialized services are needed. For Step Up To Quality (SUTQ), a comprehensive, developmental screening instrument covers the following domains: language, cognitive, motor, and social and emotional skills and behavior. Screening is not required for a child who has an identified delay or disability and is already receiving services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*Note: As with all Step Up To Quality Standards, the information presented in this document does not replace licensing requirements or operating standards that may apply to a program.*



# KEY TERMS

- **Activity Plan:** The detailed written plan of daily activities, experiences and/or opportunities to support children’s development.
- **Assessment:** A tool or process used to identify children’s developmental strengths, instructional needs, and intervention needs, or to document progress over time. Assessment can be informal or formal.
- **Curriculum:** A framework that provides guidance on what and how to teach. Curriculum provides a scope and sequence for teaching and may include other elements.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Practice:** “Methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning” (NAEYC, 2020).
- **Developmental Screening:** A process to identify whether there are any concerns about a child’s development that warrant further assessment or evaluation.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A plan developed to ensure that a child aged 3 to 21 who has a disability identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act receives the required specialized instruction and related services.
- **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** A plan for early intervention services for children under age 3 with developmental delays or disabilities.
- **Instructional Time:** The time the group spends with the lead teacher each day, excluding nap or rest time. See Ohio Administrative Code 5180:2-17-01 for more information.
- **Implement:** To put a decision or plan into effect.
- **Ohio K-12 Standards:** A set of learning standards that explain the knowledge and skills Ohio students should be able to do in kindergarten through grade 12. See [Ohio’s Learning Standards](#) for more information.
- **Ohio’s Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS):** A set of standards that illustrate how children develop critical kindergarten readiness skills, starting in infancy. The ELDS describe the minimum scope in essential areas of learning and development, guide curriculum selection, and support high-quality early learning experiences for young children.
- **Science of Reading:** An interdisciplinary body of scientific evidence that:
  - a. Informs how students learn to read and write proficiently.
  - b. Explains why some students have difficulty with reading and writing.
  - c. Indicates that all students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing to become effective readers.
  - d. Does not rely on any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, including a three-cueing approach.
- **Screening Tool:** A brief standardized, norm referenced tool that compares a child’s development to typical developmental milestones of children the same age and results in a risk determination.

# CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

At all levels, programs must implement a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that is aligned to both Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and the Science of Reading. This applies to infant, toddler, and preschool age groups. DCY reviews and approves curricula that meet the requirements. For school-age groups, activities must be aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards (K-12).



|                                   | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Verification Visit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Tips                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | FAQs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bronze, Silver, &amp; Gold</b> | <p><b>For infant, toddler, and preschool only:</b><br/>Obtain and implement for all infant, toddler, and preschool-aged children a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that is aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and the Science of Reading.</p> <p><b>For School Age:</b> Activities are aligned with the Ohio's Learning Standards (K-12).</p> | <p><b>For infant, toddler, and preschool only:</b><br/>DCY specialists will review and confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The curriculum is on the DCY approved list.</li> <li>• The curriculum materials are available to Teachers or Family Child Care (FCC) Programs.</li> <li>• Documentation of current activity/lesson plans for infant, toddler, and preschool age children that include experiences from the approved curriculum for all hours of instructional time.</li> <li>• There is evidence that curriculum specific indicators identified by the publisher or author of the curriculum are implemented.</li> </ul> <p><b>For School Age:</b> DCY specialists will look for evidence that activity plans include activities and experiences aligned with one or more of Ohio's Learning Standards (K-12). Programs may choose to align with the standards that best match their philosophy and program goals.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available curriculum materials means that Lead Teachers/FCC Providers can easily reference them during the day and may include electronic or paper resources.</li> <li>• The administrator or program owner may periodically review activity plans to ensure that the current plan is readily available, reflects the activities in the room, and is completed appropriately.</li> <li>• The <u>sample plan</u> may be used.</li> <li>• The activity plan may include learning objectives, curriculum codes, or page number references to the curriculum.</li> <li>• Administrators may help prepare teachers for the SUTQ interview by providing them with an opportunity to explain their planning process.</li> </ul> | <p><b>How will I know if a curriculum is aligned to the ELDS and Science of Reading?</b><br/>Lists of curricula that are SUTQ approved are posted on the <a href="#">DCY website</a>. If your curriculum is not on the list, please consult with your DCY specialist.</p> <p><b>If my curriculum is not on the approved list will my specialist review it at the time of the verification visit?</b><br/>No, the alignment process is rigorous and completed by multiple reviewers. It cannot be completed onsite.</p> <p><b>Are programs required to put the ELDS codes on the activity plan to show which standards are being addressed in each activity?</b><br/>No, ELDS standards are not required to be listed on activity plans.</p> |

|                                  | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Verification Visit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Tips                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | FAQs |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <b>Silver<br/>&amp;<br/>Gold</b> | <p><b>For infant, toddler, and preschool only:</b></p> <p>Complete a comprehensive, formal child assessment aligned to Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for all infant, toddler and preschool aged children twice annually.</p> | <p><b>DCY specialists will review and confirm the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessment is on the <u>DCY approved list</u>.</li> <li>• Documentation of the evidence gathered to complete the formal tool.</li> <li>• Documentation that the assessment is completed twice annually.</li> <li>• Documentation that results are shared with families.</li> </ul> <p>DCY specialists will ask Lead Teachers/FCC Programs to explain the child assessment process, including the methods used and how the results are shared with families.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the assessment tool used is on the approved list.</li> <li>• Create a system to ensure that assessment is being conducted twice annually. This could be electronic (like a spreadsheet listing children's names and assessment dates) or a paper system.</li> <li>• Lead Teachers/FCC Program should be able to explain the child assessment process, including methods used and how results are shared with families.</li> <li>• For initial registrations and programs applying for an increase in rating, only one cycle of assessment must be completed and the results shared with families. After the initial rating or increase in rating, the program may complete the tool at least twice annually.</li> </ul> |      |

|             | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Verification Visit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Tips                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | FAQs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gold</b> | <p><b>For infant, toddler, and preschool only:</b><br/>Provide intentional and purposeful activities as determined from child assessments.</p> <p>Utilize assessment results to adjust and refine instruction.</p> | <p>DCY specialists will review and confirm documentation of intentional and purposeful activities and experiences determined from the child assessment results.</p> <p>DCY specialists will ask Lead Teachers/FCC Programs to explain how they use the results of child assessments to modify their instruction and plan activities for groups and individual children.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the children’s assessment results, their interests, and their progress toward learning objectives during activity planning.</li> <li>It is a best practice to note individualization on the activity plan. For example, noting the child’s initials next to a specific activity, noting a reflection or observation on the plan, and/or color coding or adding a letter/number code for various learning objectives or standards.</li> <li>Lead Teachers/FCC Program should be able to explain how assessment results are used to plan, adjust, or refine instructional strategies.</li> <li>Documentation may include class summary reports, or notations on the activity plans such as children’s initials or specific teaching strategies.</li> <li>Group activity plans may meet the standard if teachers can demonstrate how instructional activities are adjusted or refined for individual children and the group based on what they have learned about each child's skills through the assessment process.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Is there a specific way the activity/lesson plan should look to show assessment data was used?</b></p> <p>No, there is no specific format required. DCY specialists will ask for evidence which may include coding activity plans with assessment objectives or notes about individualizing an activity for a specific child.</p> |

# CHILD SCREENING



At all levels, programs must ensure a comprehensive screening tool is completed within 60 days of enrolling a new child and annually thereafter. The program can administer the screening tool themselves or confirm the screening was completed by someone else, such as the child's parent. After the screening tool is scored the results must be shared or confirmed with families within 30 days of completion. School-age children and children with a current Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) are exempt from the child screening requirement.

|                                   | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Verification Visit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tips                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | FAQs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bronze, Silver, &amp; Gold</b> | <p>Administer or confirm completion of a comprehensive screening tool within 60 days of enrollment for newly enrolled children and annually for all infant, toddler, and preschool aged children.</p> <p>Share or confirm results with families within 30 days following the completion of the screening.</p> | <p>Specialist will review children's files for documentation that screenings are completed, and results were shared or confirmed within the required timeframes.</p> <p>Specialist will review and confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Screening tool used is comprehensive.</li> <li>Documentation of completed screening tool within 60 days of enrollment for each child or documentation that a child has a current IFSP or IEP.</li> <li>Documentation that screening results were shared with families within 30 days following completion of the screening.</li> </ul> <p>Programs that use the Sparkler app may print a copy of the results or show their DCY specialist the dashboard during their visit for verification.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive, developmentally appropriate screening instrument addresses the following domains: language, cognitive, motor, social /emotional skills and behavior. Programs may choose to use a combination of screening tools that address a single domain, or they may select a tool that addresses all domains.</li> <li>Create a tracking system to ensure that screenings are completed and scored within 60 days. It may be helpful to include the screening process with enrollment.</li> <li>Plan how results will be shared with families.</li> <li>Consider how the tracking system will ensure screenings are completed annually. An example is to include administration of the screening tool as part of the transition to next age group.</li> <li>Check to see the administration date, child's name, and score(s) were recorded on the tool.</li> <li>Examples of how programs could document that results were shared within 30 days of completion include score sheets, letters, electronic communication or the program's written policy.</li> </ul> | <p><b>If a child is on an IEP or IFSP, is any screening required?</b><br/>No, if a child has a current IEP or IFSP, they do not need to have a screening completed.</p> <p><b>Can programs use the free ASQ online to meet the child screening requirement?</b><br/>Yes, programs can become Sparkler Program Partners and access ASQ results on a provider dashboard. Additional information about the ASQ Online and Sparkler can be found at the end of this document and online at <a href="http://www.helpmeginow.org">www.helpmeginow.org</a>.</p> |

|                          | Standard                                                                                                                       | Verification Visit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Tips                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | FAQs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Silver &amp; Gold</b> | Refer families, whose child had an identified need, within 60 days from the date of the completed screening.                   | <p>Specialist will review and confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of the referral process, and the referrals made to families;</li> <li>A sample referral form can be reviewed if no referrals were needed.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a system for tracking referrals.</li> <li>A referral example is assisting the family with navigating the community directory on the <a href="#">Ohio Help Me Grow website</a> to search for resources or service providers near them that can evaluate or work with their child.</li> <li>Follow the screening tool author's or publisher's instructions for interpreting the screening results.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Do I need parent permission to refer a child for services?</b></p> <p>If the program is making a direct referral, parent permission is necessary before the program can provide a child's information to another entity. Alternatively, the program can provide the family with the name and contact information for an individual, agency, or other entity that provides appropriate services. The parent may choose to accept and utilize the information but is not required to do so.</p> <p><b>How should I share screening results with families?</b></p> <p>Programs may choose to do this through a letter, conversation and/or conference. If results are shared verbally, the conversation must be documented such as a dated note.</p> |
| <b>Gold</b>              | Follow up with families within 30 days from the date of referral to determine if the child's needs are being met for services. | <p>DCY specialist will review and confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of the follow-up process.</li> <li>Documentation of follow-up with families to determine if needs were met.</li> </ul>                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>What is required for follow up if the child has been referred for services or evaluation and that process is not yet complete?</b></p> <p>The follow up must be completed within 30 days of the referral, even if the process is not yet complete. The program must reach out to the family and check in to see if they have any additional needs, concerns, or questions.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



# EXAMPLE SCREENING TOOLS

This is a list of screeners that could be used to meet the comprehensive screening requirement. It is not an exhaustive list. Any other published, norm-referenced developmental screener that addresses all of the following domains may be used: language, cognitive, motor, social /emotional skills, and behavior. Programs may also choose to use multiple domain-specific screeners that when combined address all required areas of development. The notes column includes information about specific target age groups, settings, or other specifications that may help a program determine if the tool would be appropriate for a specific group.

| Comprehensive Screener Name                          | Publisher             | Notes<br>(target age groups and setting) |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Ages and Stages Questionnaires, Third Ed.<br>(ASQ-3) | Brookes Publishing    | Ages 1 to 60 months                      |
| BDI-3 Screening Test                                 | Riverside Insights    | Birth to 7 years, 11 months              |
| Brigance Early Childhood Screens III                 | Curriculum Associates | Birth to 6 years                         |

The ASQ-3 is available at no cost to Ohio programs through the Sparkler app. Programs may choose to sign up to be Sparkler Program Partners to take advantage of this resource. Please see <https://www.helpmegrow.org/ASQProviders.aspx> for additional information. Also, the Sparkler: Play for Parenting app is available for families. This optional free resource is available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. It helps families support their children's early growth and development. It also helps families check in on their children's development and spark healthy early learning. Parents can:

- **Know**- Parents can use the app to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaires to understand their child's development.
- **Play**- Get inspired to learn together through play. Access a library of off-screen activities to grow children's hearts, words, minds, and bodies.
- **Grow**- Parents can follow their child's progress and see all the things that they accomplish together.
- **Connect**- Parents receive handy nudges, plus answers to questions about child development and parenting.

When completing screening through the Sparkler app, if a referral is indicated by the results, it will be made automatically by Ohio's Central Intake provider.

Programs that are not using the Sparkler app will need to make the referral themselves if indicated by the screening results. Programs can make a referral by calling (800) 755-GROW or online at <https://www.helpmegrow.org/Refer.aspx>.

## References

Fuller, B., E. Bein, M. Bridges, Y. Kim, & S. Rabe-Hesketh. 2017. "Do Academic Preschools Yield Stronger Benefits? Cognitive Emphasis, Dosage, and Early Learning." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 52: 1–11.

Masterson, M. 2022. "Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning." In *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8*, 4th ed., NAEYC, 181-214. NAEYC.

Masterson, M. 2022. "Planning and Implementing and Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals" In *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8*, 4th ed., NAEYC, 215-253. NAEYC.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. 2020. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children*. NAEYC.