



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida

SUBJECT: Developmentally Appropriate Curricula and Character Development		
Policy #: ELCSWF-SR0028-08	Category: SR - Program Quality and Standards	Reference #: OEL-SR-420
Approval: 9-27-08	Effective Date: 9-27-08	Replaces (policy # and date): Section of ELCSWF-SR008A-07 9-25-07

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish Coalition approved curricula and character development programs.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** This policy replaces previous sections previously placed in Policy #ELCSWF-0008A-07.
- III. **CONTACT:** Chief Executive Officer.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** All School Readiness child care providers, Coalition and Contractor staff.
- V. **POLICY:** This policy establishes the Coalition approved curricula and the process for obtaining approval if the child care provider wishes to utilize a different curriculum than those approved by Coalition.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** Section 411.01 F.S. requires that all School Readiness providers utilize a developmentally appropriate curriculum and character development program. Providers sign the Provider Agreement for School Readiness Services with the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida and agree to abide by those requirements.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Cite: 45CFR98, Chapters 402.301 – 402.319 and Chapter 411.01 of the Florida Statutes; Rule 60BB-4 and 60BB-8 of the Florida Administrative Code, and all relevant policies issued by the Agency for Workforce Innovations.
- VIII. **DEFINITIONS:**

“Coalition” refers to the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc. (ELC-SWF) which is responsible for Collier, Hendry, Glades and Lee counties.

“Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment” refers to the Assessment tool adopted by the Coalition to evaluate the children’s learning development. (CCDCAS).

“DAP” refers to Developmentally Appropriate Practices

“**Provider**” means the individual or facility responsible for the provision of School Readiness services.

“**Contractor**” means an entity performing the duties of the Coalition and is defined in Rule 60BB-8.100 (13), F.A.C. Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C) is the entity contracted by the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, to carry out the daily responsibilities for School Readiness families and providers.

“**SR**” refers to School Readiness Program pursuant to Chapter 411.01, Florida Statutes.

IX. **PROCEDURES:**

1. **General Requirements and Procedures**

Teaching Curriculum

- a. Each School Readiness child care provider is required to use a developmentally appropriate curriculum to support the cognitive, physical, character and social- emotional development of the whole child. (Section 411.01(5)(c)2.a.,F.S.).
- b. The School Readiness provider attests in the SR Provider Application and annual Provider Agreement that their selected curriculum is developmentally appropriate and aligned with the appropriate School Readiness/VPK standards.
- c. Ongoing mentoring and monitoring visits are conducted by the Coalition or Contractor to ensure that providers are utilizing developmentally appropriate practices.
- d. If questions arise concerning a curriculum, the technical assistance specialist will consult with the provider to provide appropriate guidance and/or resources.
- e. Parents, providers or monitoring staff who question the developmental appropriateness of observed classroom teaching or activities may also request a review by the Coalition to determine whether the curriculum used by the provider follows the approved curriculum criteria.

Character Development

- f. In addition, [Section 411.01](#) (5)(c)2.b., F.S requires that Developmentally appropriate curricula must contain several elements, including “a character development program to develop basic values.
- g. Each SR applicant is asked to identify, on their School Readiness application, if they have a character development plan integrated in their curriculum.
- h. If the provider indicates that a character development component is not included, the Coalition or Contractor will help provide the necessary resources to assist the provider in adopting one.

2. Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Overview

- a) Curriculum is an organized framework that defines the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children reach the identified educational goals, what teachers do to help children reach these goals and the environment in which teaching and learning occur.
- b) A well-designed curriculum, combined with teachers' knowledge of children, guides instruction so teachers can provide experiences that promote children's growth and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive.
- c) The curriculum places as much emphasis on the process of learning as on the content and capitalizes on children's natural curiosity to promote their growth as language users, thinkers, and problem solvers. It provides a wide variety of planned experiences that enable children to learn through interaction, exploration, manipulation, and self-discovery.
- d) Early Childhood Professionals are encouraged to use *The Florida Birth to Three Learning and Development Standards* and the *Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Standards* as they plan activities and interact with young children. Providing rich experiences, supportive learning environments and positive relationships with children in the years before they start kindergarten will give them the foundations for later school success.

3. Character Development Program Overview

- a) There is no single script for effective character education, but there are some important basic principles.
- b) The following ten principles serve as best practices that providers can use to plan effective character education program:
 - Principle 1 – Promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character
 - Principle 2 – Defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and behavior.
 - Principle 3 - Uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach to character development.
 - Principle 4 - Creates a caring school community.
 - Principle 5 - Provides students with opportunities for moral action.
 - Principle 6 - Includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.
 - Principle 7 - Strives to foster students self motivation.
 - Principle 8 - Engages the school staff as a learning and moral community that shares responsibility for character education and attempts to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
 - Principle 9 - Engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

Principle 10 – Evaluates the character of the school, the school staff’s functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

4. Curricula Approved By the Coalition

A. The following list of curricula has been accepted by the Early Learning Coalition as appropriate curricula for school readiness providers:

1. Serving children 3 to 5 years of age:
 - Beyond Centers and Circle Time
 - Creative Curriculum
 - High Scope
 - Montessori
 - Wee Learn
2. Serving infant and toddlers:
 - Beyond Cribs and Rattles
 - Creative Curriculum for Infants/Toddlers
 - High Scope Infant/Toddler

B. The Early Learning Coalition will provide support, professional development, and resources only for the Creative Curriculum as it aligns with the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System required for School Readiness providers to be implementing with all 3, 4 and 5 year old School Readiness funded children who have not entered school yet.

C. Self-Assessment Option

Should a provider choose to use an alternative curriculum not on the Coalition’s approved list, the provider will self-assess the quality of the curriculum in relation to national and state standards in the field. Additionally, the provider is encouraged to use these performance standards as reference through the process.

- *Florida Birth to Three Learning and Developmental Standards*
- *Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for Three-, Four-, and Five Year-Old Children*
- *Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Standards (revised 4-year-old standards)*

5. Provider Options

A. Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum - Providers may choose one of two options to meet the developmentally appropriate curriculum requirements:

1. Use a curriculum on the approved list.
2. Choose a different curriculum from those that are on the approved list and complete the self-assessment study to verify implementation of the curriculum as developmentally appropriate. The provider is then directed to request approval by the Coalition following the steps identified in this policy.

B. Character Development Compliance - Providers may choose one of two options:

1. Providers may choose to use the *Commitment to Character* program.

OR

2. They may choose to incorporate character development throughout the instructional day. For example, teaching conflict resolution would be incorporated when two children are arguing over a toy or responsibility during clean-up time.

6. Requests For Approval of DAP Curriculum and/or Character Development Component

A. To obtain approval for an alternative curriculum from the Coalition's approved list, a child care provider will need to complete the following steps:

1. Make a request in writing explaining their rationale for utilizing the desired curriculum. Include along with the request the following:
 - a. Supporting documentation such as a curriculum book or other materials related to the curriculum.
 - b. A Self-Assessment Study for each age group served (Infant, Toddler, Two's and/or Preschool)
2. The Request and all supporting documentation must be submitted to: the Director of School Readiness.
3. Submit all materials to the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida
5256 Summerlin Commons Blvd. Suite 201
Fort Myers, Fl. 33907
Attn: Director of School Readiness
4. Within 5 business days, the Director of School Readiness Services will complete a review, using the criteria identified below, and provide the Coalition CEO with a recommendation.

Criteria for Evaluating and Approving DAP

For programs serving a population of 0-5 year olds, the curriculum must clearly include the domains addressed in required in Florida Birth to Three Learning and Developmental Standards for infants and toddlers; The VPK Standards for preschool children; and the Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for 3, 4 and 5 year old children. The domains are as follows:

- *Physical Health*
- *Approaches to Learning*
- *Social and Emotional*
- *Language and Communication*
- *Cognitive Development and General Knowledge*
- *Motor Development*
- *Emergent Literacy (VPK only)*

These domains, adopted by the State of Florida, are consistent with the preschool standards. The domains are a useful way to look at the developmental progression of related skills and abilities. Each domain begins with a description and overview. The domain is divided into four benchmark age periods for infants and toddlers: birth to 8 months, 8 to 18 months, 18 to 24 months, and 24 to 36 months. Each domain is further divided into themes, indicators, and examples.

- *Themes are the organizing concepts of each domain and represent the major accomplishments to be achieved in the infant and toddler years.*
- *Indicators are examples of behaviors that parents, caregivers, and teachers might observe as a reflection of the achievement of the indicator.*
- *The examples are not inclusive, but are illustrative of some of the many ways in which the accomplishment of the indicator may be observed. The examples provided are representative*

In addition to the Florida School Readiness Standards, curricula will be evaluated according to the guidelines outlined in the NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

5. The Director of School Readiness will make a recommendation for approval or disapproval to the Chief Executive Officer of the Coalition. Upon receipt of the Director's recommendation, the Chief Executive Officer will, within 3 business days, advise the Provider of the Coalition's decision.
6. If the decision denies the requested approval, the Provider has a right to appeal the decision within 10 business days as outlined in Policy # ELCSWF-EL0015-06 Appeals and Hearings.

7. ENFORCEMENT - DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM AND CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Failure to provide adequate written and observable developmentally appropriate curricula will result in a notation on the Child Care Resource and Referral Listing indicating the program does not provide a Coalition approved Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum.
- No new School Readiness funded children will be referred to programs with this designation until they have reached compliance.