



## NAECS-SDE: Listserv Summary

### State Pre-K Approved Curricula

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*This document summarizes responses provided to a query posted to the [National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education](#) (NAECS-SDE) listserv, which is used by members to make announcements, survey states about resources, and gain information on key policy questions. Summaries are not intended for official reports or research, as the information shared is voluntary and not verified as official statements from states. If a member wishes to use summaries for official reports or research, explicit permission must be granted.*

#### **Information Request:**

CEELO posed several questions around state-approved curriculum models to the listserv for consideration in both 2014 and 2015; the responses in this document come from both years and are noted as such. They were:

*“Do any of your states maintain a list of approved pre-K curriculum models for state-funded pre-K? If so, must these curricula meet criteria for being research-based? If your state has an approved (or recommended) list, please provide a URL for this list as well as the criteria used for determining such.” (2014)*

*“Does your state have an approved, research-based pre-K curriculum model or list of models which are required or recommended for use by state-supported pre-K programs? If so, could you:*

- a. list which models are approved or recommended, or*
- b. provide a URL or documentation with the list (if you are unable to attach a file to your email, please send here), and*
- c. provide any supporting material explaining the criteria and/or process used to select approved or recommended curricula (note: some states provide guidance for selection but leave decisions are locally determined)?” (2015)*

#### **Goal of Request**

CEELO wanted to determine which states maintain lists and the processes used in determining what curricula were eligible to be included on the list. Recognizing that some states leave decision-making to the local level, CEELO was also interested in guidance to support local programs in selecting a curriculum model.

## Background & Context

Curriculum is identified as an essential element of a high quality pre-K program.<sup>i</sup> To reach positive child outcomes, experts recommend that the curriculum be one that is “research-based and can show proven results” and is aligned with state early learning standards.<sup>ii</sup> Yet experts note that curriculum for pre-K varies widely<sup>iii</sup> and there is often confusion on what a quality preschool curriculum looks like.<sup>iv</sup> This leaves local programs and districts with a variety of models to choose from without, most likely, the necessary time or information available to determine how to select a high quality curriculum for their program(s). State education agencies can support districts by offering approved lists or guidance tools and resources.<sup>v</sup>

## Responses

CEELO received responses from 20 states to the listserv inquiry. The majority of respondents said the state did not provide an approved curricula list, though many provided some level of guidance around selection. Key findings include:

- Nine states said they had an approved curricula list, though not all indicated whether they were research-based or the criteria used to define research-based. (LA, MD, MI, MO, NC, NJ, PA, TN, WV)
- Two states did not have approved curricula but did require the curricula to be evidence-or research-based. (AK, IA)
- Four of the states without approved lists required the curricula to be aligned or based on the state early learning guidelines and/or assessments. (AL, CT, KS, ME)
- One program provided opportunities for programs to pilot curriculum that could potentially go on the list. (MI)
- Two states provided guidelines for selection criteria rather than an approved list. (IL, ME)
- While many states answered that the curriculum must be research-based, the criteria for *research-based* was not clear.

The table on the following page includes responses from states who participated in the listserv and describes their states requirements. Links to specific state resources and tools are included where applicable.

This information was collected in 2014 and 2015 and, therefore, some resources and links may not be the most up-to-date. Updates can be sent to [info@ceelo.org](mailto:info@ceelo.org).

State	Approved List?	Response to Listserv <sup>1</sup> (Direct quotes are in italics)	Weblinks
AK	No	<i>Alaska requires research based curricula, but we do not maintain or provide a list of endorsed selections. We do share what is being used/selected by grantees.</i> (2014)	
AL	No	<i>A curriculum must promote appropriate instructional practice and enhance learning and development while being consistent with the intent of the OSR [Office of School Readiness] Program Framework. Regional Managers ultimately approve the curriculum. It must be comprehensive, research based and aligned with The Alabama Developmental Standards for Pre-K and Teaching Strategies GOLD.</i> (2015)	
AZ	No	<i>Arizona does not have an approved list of curricula.</i> (2015)	
CT	No	<i>Connecticut requires that state-funded School Readiness programs use a curriculum that is based on the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). [There is a] Guidance document coming - about building a strong a curriculum based on the CT ELDS, stressing that while some will use a more emergent approach and other will use a more clearly articulated set of experiences, all approaches must include specific components and need to be intentional, responsive, and reflective.</i> (2015).  The guidance document that was being drafted at time of the listserv query is now available.	<a href="#">CT Early Learning and Development Standards Page</a> (scroll down to find curriculum and instruction resources)  <a href="#">Supporting All Children Using the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards: Building Meaningful Curriculum</a>
IA	No	<i>Iowa law indicates districts must use a research-based curriculum but does not maintain a list.</i> (2014)	
IL	No	<i>The Illinois State Board of Education does not endorse specific curricula for use in Prekindergarten/Preschool for All. However, we do provide guidelines for the</i>	<a href="#">Guidelines for Selection of Criteria</a>

<sup>1</sup> Any updates can be sent to [info@ceelo.org](mailto:info@ceelo.org)

State	Approved List?	Response to Listserv <sup>1</sup> (Direct quotes are in italics)	Weblinks
		<p><i>selection of criteria.</i> (2014)</p> <p>The state also refers programs to a policy brief from the National Institute for Early Education Research - <a href="#">Preschool Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider</a></p>	
KS	No	<p><i>The Kansas State Pre-Kindergarten Program (at-risk four year olds) are required to select a curriculum that is aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards.</i> (2014)<sup>2</sup></p>	
LA <sup>3</sup>	Yes	<p>Louisiana provides guidance to districts on instructional materials that are aligned with state content standards. There are three tiers: 1) exemplifies quality, 2) approaching quality, and 3) not representing quality.</p>	<p><a href="#">Curricular Resources Annotated Reviews</a></p>
MD	Yes	<p>Maryland lists recommended curricula on its website. (2015)</p> <p>Programs are not required to use a curriculum on the list “but must certify that the local curriculum is aligned with the <a href="#">Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards.</a>” Programs may choose between a state-recommended curricula, an individually developed curriculum (must be reviewed and accepted by MSDE), or a curriculum developed by a local school system.</p>	<p><a href="#">Early Childhood Curriculum Project</a> (scroll down for approved list)</p> <p><a href="#">Curriculum Alignment Table</a></p> <p><a href="#">Early Childhood Curriculum Project Q &amp; A</a></p>
ME	No	<p>Maine does not maintain a list, but does feature questions to ask when considering curriculum with a link to the preschool curriculum research studies on the IES-What Works Website. (2014)</p> <p>Per Preschool Program Standards, the curriculum must be aligned with the</p>	<p><a href="#">Questions to Ask When Considering Curriculum</a> (See Curriculum Section)</p>

<sup>2</sup> Kansas Part C (Infant-Toddler) and Part B(Preschool) programs have a list of 8 curriculum-based assessments that are used as part of the Early Childhood Outcomes data collection. They must pick one of the approved assessments. While most of these tools are evidence-based, they are not all evidence-based.

<sup>3</sup> This information was not received through the listserv. CEELO staff who worked with Louisiana was aware of the tools and recommended the tools be shared.

State	Approved List?	Response to Listserv <sup>1</sup> (Direct quotes are in italics)	Weblinks
		Maine’s Early Learning and Development Standards.	
MI	Yes	<p>The curriculum section of the Great Start Readiness Program Implementation Manual offers guidance and examples of curricula that may be used.</p> <p><i>Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) serve as GSRP grantees per legislative requirement. Most ISDs narrow the choices for their program providers to one or two of the approvable curricula so that the ISD can provide the level of professional development and coaching needed to support high quality implementation.</i></p> <p><i>A new process for having a curriculum added to the list approvable for use will begin in the summer of 2016. The curriculum must align with the <a href="#">MI Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten</a> and applicants must document evidence across several criteria. (2014, 2015)</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Curriculum – Great Start Readiness Program Implementation Manual</a> (guidance and examples)</p>
MO	Yes	<p><i>Missouri Preschool Program (our state PreK) is required to use one of the approved curriculums. Title I and Early Childhood Special Education are recommended to use one of the approved curriculums. If a program braids funding from any two of the three funding sources they are to use one of the approved curriculums. (2014, 2015)</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Approved Early Childhood Curriculums</a> (includes evaluation process, criteria, and rubrics)</p>
MT	No	<p><i>Montana does not have an approved, research-based pre-K curriculum model or list of models which are required or recommended for use by state-supported pre-K programs. However, the grantees in the Montana Preschool Development Grant are using either Opening the World of Learning (OWL) or Creative Curriculum. (2015)</i></p>	

State	Approved List?	Response to Listserv <sup>1</sup> (Direct quotes are in italics)	Weblinks
NC	Yes	<p>There is an initially approved list of research-based curricula in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements, which align with NC's ELS (Foundations for Early Learning and Development Standards).<sup>4</sup></p> <p><i>There is another "approved" list of curricula that expands the list required for use in 4-year old classrooms located in NC's 4/5 star rated programs, including NC Pre-K, due to a legislative mandate (passed upon transfer of the Pre-K program from public instruction to HHS). This current mandate requires the NC Child Care Commission (rule-making authority for HHS-division of child development and early education, which includes NC Pre-K rules) to approve curricula for use in 4/5 star-rated programs.</i></p> <p><i>The review criteria adopted by the NC Child Care Commission follows the legislative mandate (2 indicators - "comprehensive, evidenced-based early childhood curricula with a reading component." These criteria have not been further delineated/defined by the Commission).<sup>5</sup> (2014, 2015)</i></p>	<p><a href="#">North Carolina Pre-K Program Requirements</a> (See Standards &amp; Curricula Section – Section 5.C)</p> <p><a href="#">Approved Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Curricula 2014</a> (QRIS) – This includes the curricula in the above Pre-K Program Requirements.</p>
NH	No (*no state-funded pre-K program)	<p><i>New Hampshire has no state-supported (general funds) public pre-K and there are no required pre-K curricula.</i></p> <p><i>Federal standards require Head Start to use a research-based curriculum. NH Head Start grantees use either TS Gold/Creative Curriculum (three grantees) or Work Sampling (two grantees). Preschool SPED programs must also use a research-based curriculum. (2015)</i></p>	
NJ	Yes	<p>In addition to the list, there is also a rubric for reviewing curricula. (2014 &amp; 2015)</p>	<p><a href="#">Recommended Curricula List</a></p>

<sup>4</sup> Note: 2015-2016 Program Requirements are under revision (clarifications/formatting only, no policy changes) and will include this list approved list of curricula found in Section 5.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of the listserv query, the NC Child Care Commission had submitted to the legislature a revision to this law that may change the provisions noted in SL 2011-0145.

State	Approved List?	Response to Listserv <sup>1</sup> (Direct quotes are in italics)	Weblinks
OK	No	<i>OK does not require or recommend curriculum. That is a district decision.</i> (2015)	
PA	Yes	The state reviews curriculum for alignment to the state standards, but does not endorse a specific curriculum. The state has templates and rubrics to verify curriculum alignment to Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood. (2014; 2015)	<a href="#">Currently Aligned Curricula</a>
TN	Yes	<p><i>The Voluntary Pre-K Programs (VPK) are required to use a comprehensive early childhood curriculum which is both developmentally appropriate, is aligned to the TN Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN-ELDS), and covers all areas of development, thereby meeting the needs of the whole child. We review submitted curriculum as time permits to determine if the curriculum meets these criteria.</i></p> <p>Vendors interested in submitting a curriculum for review must send the State Pre-K Director the following information: 1. A set of the curriculum complete with teacher guides 2. Copies of any research or white papers regarding the curriculum 3. An alignment of the outcomes or goals of the lessons with the TN-ELDS for each age group that the curriculum is intended. The alignment should link the standards with lessons found in the curriculum. 4. Information on professional development and costs 5. Any additional material you feel necessary to show that the curriculum is research based, reliable and valid for meeting the needs of the whole child.</p> <p>A review is conducted and the curriculum will be added to the list of approved curricula (if approved). (2015)</p>	<a href="#">List of Approved Pre-Kindergarten Curricula 2014-2015</a>
WV	Yes	The state provides a list and the criteria for adoption. (2015)	<a href="#">Approved List for Universal Pre-K Programs</a>  <a href="#">Criteria for Adoption</a>

## Conclusion

From the responses received, approaches to support to programs in curriculum selection vary in states - ranging from a formalized list of approved curriculum to no guidance provided. For states that provided guidance but not an approved list, the level of guidance varied. Some offered structured guidance through tools (e.g., rubrics, questions to consider) while others offered general guidance.

The responses provided by states in this listerv summary offer an opportunity for peer learning and development around tools and resources states can use to support local programs in selection of a high quality curriculum.

## Resources

[Boosting School Readiness with Preschool Curricula.](#) [2015]. This article examines data from the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Initiative Study and looks at effects of the type of curricula on child outcomes (social-emotional and academic). The four types of curricula were: literacy-focused, math-focused, whole-child, and locally developed.

[Effects of Preschool Curriculum Programs on School Readiness: Report from the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Initiative.](#) [2008]. This report from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) presents findings from the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Initiative, which evaluated the efficacy of preschool curricula.

[Research-Based Curricula and Teaching Practices \(Head Start\).](#) [2015]. This page offers advice and resources on choosing a preschool curriculum.

[NAEYC Curriculum Standards.](#) [2008]. This document states the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program standard for curriculum and a rationale for the standard.

[Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8. \(Brief | Expanded\).](#) [2003]. This position statement from NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) describes trends and issues, offers guiding principles and values, and details recommendations to support effective early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation.

[Preschool Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider.](#) [2007]. This report provides a framework for decision-makers to use in evaluating which curriculum might be most appropriate for their specific preschool education program. [author abstract]

[Cognitive/Academic Emphasis Versus the Whole Child.](#) [2011]. *The pre-K debates: Current controversies and issues* (edited by Edward Zigler, Walter S. Gilliam & W. Steven Barnett, 2011) addresses the 50 year old debate on the focus of pre-K curriculum and pedagogy with six chapters by multiple experts describing complexities associated with effective approaches to early learning.

**ABOUT CEELO:**

One of 22 Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) will strengthen the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes. CEELO will work in partnership with SEAs, state and local early childhood leaders, and other federal and national technical assistance (TA) providers to promote innovation and accountability.

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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>i</sup> Minervo, J. (2014). *Lessons from research and the classroom: Implementing high-quality pre-K that makes a difference for young children*. Retrieved from <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/28844>

<sup>ii</sup> Minervo, 2014

<sup>iii</sup> Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M.R., Espinosa, L.M., Gormley, W.T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K.A., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M.J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. Retrieved from <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20on%20Preschool%20Education%20FINAL.pdf>; Frede, E. & Ackerman, D.J. (2007). *Preschool curriculum design-making: Dimensions to consider*. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/12.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Frede & Ackerman, 2007, 1.

<sup>v</sup> Though this listserv summary focused on approved list and guidance, another important component to consider is professional development to support implementation of curriculum.