



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF

Early Childhood
Education

First Class Pre-K Classroom Guidelines

Updated April 2022





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**First Class Pre-K is a high-quality program of excellence that is continually improving. All suggestions are welcomed, and changes needed to refine processes are ongoing.*

All Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms should use state funding (from the Office of School Readiness) to purchase copies of the *Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELDs)*, the *Objectives for Development and Learning, Birth through Third Grade (ODL)*, and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs - or DAP -* (published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children). The DAP book includes the NAEYC Position Statement as well as a supplementary CD of more than 60 readings and video examples of developmentally appropriate practice in action. Pages 1-50 and pages 111-183 are mandatory reading requirements for all First Class Pre-K lead and auxiliary teachers. This book, along with the other two resources, will serve as valuable supports for you as a professional educator of young children.

High Quality Pre-K

Alabama's state funded First Class Pre-K program has been awarded the highest quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for the past fifteen years. The Office of School Readiness (OSR), which administers the First Class Pre-K program, is dedicated to working with pre-k programs statewide to ensure Alabama's four-year-olds have access to high quality learning experiences that prepare them for future school success. OSR works with classrooms to promote those high quality experiences in Alabama.

The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) works with First Class Pre-K programs ("programs") to ensure the state's plan for expanding access to high quality pre-k is effectively implemented. The ADECE provides professional development trainings for both lead and auxiliary teachers throughout the year. In addition, First Class Pre-K coaching will be provided for continuous improvement of effective teaching practices, opportunities for teacher self-reflection, and joint goal-setting between the teacher(s) and the Region Coach ("Coach"). The Department's expectations are that provided trainings, coaching, and opportunities for professional growth will contribute to a teacher's acquisition of high-quality developmentally appropriate teaching practices. If one year in a grant cycle has transpired without a teacher showing satisfactory progress towards quality instruction based on coaching observations, child assessment results, and adherence to both program/classroom guidelines, the program may be defunded unless said teacher(s) are replaced.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Refer to the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELDs) for environment and material suggestions across domains.

"A preschool learning environment includes outside spaces, indoor places, and everything in between—toys, learning materials, wall displays, and equipment. It also includes the children and adults who interact in these spaces. A well-planned environment reflects the culture, home language, and interests of all children and their families. The learning environment has an important impact on children's efforts to build relationships, play and learn, eat, and rest" (Cairone & Mackrain, 107).

The social environment - schedules, responsibilities, expectations, and routines - works in tandem with the physical environment - materials, displays, learning areas, furniture, and maintenance - to create a positive and supportive learning community.

Displays and Bulletin Boards

1. Should be placed at the children's eye level. Children should be able to see and interact with what is displayed.
2. Should reflect the current theme, study or topic (i.e. projects completed and displayed in December are not appropriate in the spring).
3. Should reflect the children's interest and their creations.
4. Should provide opportunities for children to choose what they display or exhibit.

- Each child should have their own labeled and defined “space” for displayed work. The display of children’s work should not be limited to this area.
- Should be primarily child- or teacher-created materials rather than commercially purchased. Displays and bulletin boards should have a purpose; for instruction, for classroom interaction, or to exhibit children’s current work.
- Displays should include but are not limited to: charts, graphs, experience stories, teacher/child dictation, daily news, questions of the day, etc. These displays should be **meaningful, timely and relevant to current and/or recent themes of study**. These displays should be rotated on a regular basis. Environmental print and symbols such as logos, maps, and photos from the surrounding area and local community are suggested. If a site has the available space and chooses to display a Word Wall, it should be a **VERY** simple version. All words should be accompanied by a picture. The inclusion of “sight words” in a word wall is NOT aligned with developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).
- Display photographs of the children, their families and the community. “Display” can include bulletin boards, class books, digital photo frames, screen savers, etc.
- Model correct spelling, punctuation, print conventions and handwriting.
- Should be replaced as they begin to look faded or worn. Torn posters and art should be removed and replaced with fresh items.
- Use the “less is more” approach when creating displays. Teachers should be cognizant that children with ADHD and children under the autism spectrum may become overwhelmed in a “busy” environment.
- Use pictures and symbols as well as words.
- Use large upper and lower-case block letters and consistent forms and colors of print.

Responsibilities and Jobs

- As part of the process of building a classroom community each child should have an assigned a job.
- Jobs should be rotated daily or weekly to ensure children have the opportunity to participate in all classroom responsibilities.
- A classroom helper/job chart should be displayed near the whole group area and referred to throughout the day.
- Job assignments should be consistent, inclusive and fair.
- Jobs should not be used as a reward or punishment.
- Children should be involved in deciding which jobs are needed to make the classroom community run smoothly.
- Children should understand the responsibilities of each job and their importance to the classroom family.
- Using photographs of children performing the jobs is an appropriate way to create the job chart. Other templates or commercial photographs are acceptable.
- Your coach can provide suggestions for job titles as well as sources for graphics and clip art.
- Explicitly teach jobs at the beginning of the year so children are familiar with the job terms and responsibilities. This process takes time and planning but it is time well spent. After the initial lessons, each child teaches the next child who will serve in that position.

Picture Schedule

- Classrooms are required to have a labeled daily routine picture schedule with words posted near the whole group area.
- Photos of the children in various activities are ideal; commercial or teacher made photos are acceptable.
- Include daily activities and routines; add special events or weekly activities as appropriate.
- Children should consistently participate in monitoring the schedule (such as “moving the clothespin” to the next activity) and discussing the daily plans.
- It is not necessary to include “clock times” in the picture schedule. The purpose of this schedule is to provide the children with a visual chronological reminder of the pre-k day.

Physical Environment

1. Safety practices must meet Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) regulations.
2. Learning materials and furnishings should be well-maintained and cleaned on a regular basis. Worn rugs and furnishings should be replaced. “Well-organized, equipped, and maintained environments support program quality by fostering the learning, comfort, health, and safety of those who use the program” (Cairone & Mackrain, 126).
3. The classroom **MUST** be carefully arranged to allow the appropriate supervision of all students at all times and the First Class Pre-K (FCPK) monitor/coach will assist as needed.
4. The classroom should be clean, organized, and free from noninstructional clutter.
5. Teacher areas should be clutter free and must not intrude on children’s workspace. Teachers must be mindful of their workspace and maintain the area in a way that sets a good example for children. Teacher desks/filing cabinets are not recommended in FCPK to ensure a student-focused environment.

Learning and Free Choice Areas

1. Area arrangement should be thoughtfully planned, clearly defined, identified with some sort of label or sign, and accessible to all children. “Children are less likely to run and get in each others’ way if traffic paths go around interest areas rather than from one end of the room to the other” (Cairone & Mackrain, 125).
2. Quiet and noisy areas should be separated so they do not interfere with or distract from adjacent areas. “Children are more likely to get involved in play and learning if they are not distracted by activities in other areas” (125).
3. Shelves and storage bins should be labeled with words and photographs/pictures to support easy access and independent clean up.
4. Children should be introduced to each center gradually (see *Section II, Classroom Management*).
5. **Routines and procedures for the care, cleaning and use of ALL classroom materials should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced.**
6. Begin the year with the minimum amount of required materials and add more as routines and procedures are established.
7. Rotate and adapt materials as needed for themes, seasons, and/or as children’s interests change. “Remove materials and toys the children are no longer using and offer new items to provide fresh experiences and challenges” (Cairone & Mackrain, 118).

Required Areas in Each Classroom

**For a comprehensive list of required materials refer to Appendix P of the Program Guidelines*

Safe Place

“Offering safe, relaxing places for children to observe and take a break from noise and activity helps children build a sense of security. Once children feel relaxed and ready, they can return to group play. When children feel tired or overwhelmed, they may benefit from withdrawing from the noise and action for a while” (Cairone & Mackrain, 122). This area is important because it gives the child the power and the opportunity to learn how to self-regulate. This area is focused to support one child at a time. This area is established in a visible, and accessible area of the room. The area should contain soft furnishings, books, writing materials, sensory materials and quiet puzzles or games. This area can be used to support children in times of big feelings. The safe place is not a time out (like some of us have experienced in terms of punishment). It is a safe environment where children go to learn how to handle big emotions. This area of the classroom should be used as a teaching tool that teaches children that big feelings come, and that’s okay. When feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, too much excitement, etc. come, we have tools to help us handle the emotion in an appropriate way with the help of a teacher to co-regulate big feelings. **Use and purpose of the Safe place should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced. Coaches are available to help with specific questions and support of appropriate usage of the Safe Place. This area should not be used as a punitive space.**

Art Area

Refer to the ASELs, pages 171-182, for additional information on Creative Arts.

This area should be near a water source with ample space for exploration. Materials should be stored on open shelves in containers that allow for easy access and clean up by the children. The Art Area is intended for free exploration and to encourage creativity by the children, not for dictated craft activities.

A variety of materials should always be available including 3-5 components from each of the categories below:

1. Books about colors, shapes, art, artists, creativity
2. Drawing materials: crayons, washable markers, pens, pencils, colored pencils, chalk, and various types and sizes of paper
3. Tools: glue or paste, scissors, tape/dispenser, hole punch, stencils, stapler, rollers, stamps and cookie cutters for play dough
4. Paints (minimum of 4 types): finger paint, tempera paint, watercolors, dot paints, roller paints, glitter paint. The area should also include a double-sided easel, paint cups, art aprons, and various size brushes and sponges. The easel should be set up and available for daily use once procedures have been taught at the beginning of the year.
5. Three-dimensional materials: playdough or clay, wood pieces, foam pieces, buttons, cardboard, tubes, small boxes, craft sticks, chenille strips, egg cartons, found objects
6. Collage materials: felt and fabric remnants, yarn/string, cotton balls, pom-poms, sequins, glitter, feathers, ribbon, wallpaper samples, wiggle eyes, lace, stickers

ART	CRAFT
Creative, unique, original	Similar or identical to other children's
Comes from within the child	Directed by an adult
Open-ended, end results unknown	Direction-oriented resulting in end product
Process is valued over end product	Finished product valued over process
Allows for self- expression	Copying and imitating expected

Fine Motor and Manipulatives Area

Refer to the ASELs, pages 188-189, for additional information on Fine Motor Development.

"Fine motor development progresses slowly during the preschool years but can be fostered by providing ample opportunities, appropriate tools, and adult support" (Copple & Bredekamp, 119).

A variety of materials should always be available including 3-5 components from each of categories below:

1. Small building toys: interlocking blocks, Lincoln Logs, small table blocks, unifix cubes, bristle blocks, tinker toys, magnetic blocks
2. Manipulatives: various sizes, shapes and colors of beads and laces, lacing cards, pegs/peg boards, pattern blocks, zip/snap/button toys, gears, snap blocks, links, nuts and bolts, pop beads, Mr. Potato Head, train tracks, tweezer activities
3. Puzzles: puzzles in frames, puzzles with/without knobs, puzzles without frames such as jigsaw puzzles and floor puzzles; puzzles of varying degrees of difficulty should be available

Listening Area

The Listening Area should be in a quiet area of the room and should be conducive to comfortably sitting or reclining. This area should include a CD player/listening device, headphones, and recorded stories/books. Children should be explicitly taught the procedures to independently operate and care for the equipment.

Music and Movement

Refer to the ASELDS, pages 174-177, for additional information on Music, Movement, and Dance.

“Most young children are uninhibited, enthusiastic performers and lovers of music and movement, both of which enrich children’s lives and learning in many ways” (Copple & Bredekamp, 177).

This area should include the following:

1. Home-made or commercial instruments (enough that each child has one for whole group experiences), dance props such as scarves, ribbons, streamers, hats, tutus, shakers
2. A variety of CD’s (minimum of 10) or the equivalent of 100 songs including songs from other countries, languages and cultures
3. Access to a CD player/music source **separate** from the Listening Area

Block Area

The Block Area should have enough floor space for a minimum of 3 children to be able to independently build large structures. The blocks should be plentiful, organized using a minimum of 2 shelves, easy to access, and located in a space that is out of the traffic flow.

This area should include the following:

1. Unit blocks and large hollow or homemade blocks
2. Accessories such as small vehicles, multi-cultural people figures, career people figures, traffic signs, animals
3. Books about architecture, construction, buildings, transportation, etc. and pencils and paper for planning
4. A large rug or carpeted area is required, for many classrooms the whole/large group area is the ideal location for the Block Area

Dramatic Play

Refer to the ASELDS, pages 178-181, for additional information on Drama and Acting.

“Research shows that pretend play strengthens cognitive capacities, including sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, and the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking, inhibit impulses, control one’s behavior, and take another person’s perspective” (Copple & Bredekamp, 132).

The Dramatic Play area should be large enough for at least 3 children to engage in self-created make-believe play and should include the following:

1. Books about families, food, and occupations as well as phone books, catalogs, real estate books, menus, note pads
2. Play kitchen set with dishes, pots, pans, eating and cooking utensils, food containers, plastic food sets, measuring implements, bowls, placemats, and paper napkins, telephones/cell phones
3. Other home props (minimum of 3): broom, mop, vacuum cleaner, ironing board/iron, stroller, shopping cart, etc.
4. Dolls (multicultural), doll clothes, doll furniture, and unbreakable mirror
5. Dress up clothes including community helpers, multicultural attire, generic attire, and costumes

6. Gender specific (male and female) props such as shoes, hats, purses, wallets, scarves, dresses, ties, jackets
7. Occupational props (minimum of 3): toolbox/tools, workbench, safety goggles, luggage, doctor kit, cash register, computer keyboard, receipt books
8. Theme related props for transforming the Dramatic Play area into imaginative play environments such as fantasy (capas, hats, wands, costume jewelry), seasonal (scarves, mittens, raincoats, umbrella), beauty shop, camping, pet store, doctor office, department store, restaurant, etc.
9. The Dramatic Play area can be enhanced with “found” objects such as a real mixer, iron, or hair dryer with the cord removed, keys, phones, purses, baskets, shopping bags, etc.

Sensory and Discovery Tables or Bins

The Sensory area allows children the opportunity to manually experiment with a variety of materials, including but not limited to sand and water. Children should have the opportunity to dig, scoop, pour, and naturally compare and measure materials of different texture, volume, and weight.

This area should include the following:

1. Plastic tubs or tables with covers are appropriate
2. Examples of materials that can be changed out periodically/seasonally include: sand, water, fake snow, ice, soil, colored water, plastic chips, paper shreds, seasonal/holiday objects
3. Cups, funnels, shovels, scoops, containers, magnifiers should be available

Writing Center

Refer to the ASELs, pages 166-169, for additional information on Emergent Writing.

The writing area is separate from the Art Area. This area should be located in a space that allows for exploration of the following materials:

1. Pencils, markers, crayons, chalk/small chalkboards, dry erase markers/dry erase boards, clipboards, stamps/stamp pads, hole punch, tape, stapler, stencils, scissors, glue, keyboards, rulers, stickers
2. Variety of papers, notepads, order forms, word cards, name cards, environmental print, catalogs, “junk mail”, holiday or greeting cards, thank you cards, invitations, envelopes
3. Writing materials (paper and pencils) should be available in all required areas
4. Alphabet books, picture dictionaries

Reading Area/Library

Refer to the ASELs, pages 158-165, for additional information on Emergent Reading.

The Reading Area should be in a quiet section of the room with comfortable furnishings. It should include the following components:

1. A minimum of 36 books in the classroom library and/or other learning areas, representing the following genres/categories: concept books (ABC, number, shapes, rhymes, alliteration), picture books, wordless picture books, people, predictable books, animals, fantasy, realistic fiction, multicultural, fairy tales, Caldecott winners, pattern books, biography, nature/science, poetry/nursery rhymes, abilities, classics, and theme-related books.
2. Class-made books should be created and displayed on a regular basis.
3. The Reading Area should include comfortable furnishings such as beanbag chairs, small chairs or small sofa, pillows or cushions and a small rug. A minimum of one “face-out” display storage is required for visibility and easy access to books. Additional books should be organized in baskets or bins by themes or genres. Children should be taught the procedure for choosing, enjoying, and returning books. Books should be rotated on a regular basis.

4. The Reading Area should include additional language materials/props: puppets, felt/flannel board story characters and stuffed animals.
5. Related/appropriate books should be available in the following areas: Dramatic Play, Block, Writing, Science, Art, and Math.

Science/Nature Area

Refer to the ASELDs, pages 100-109, for additional information on Science Concepts.

“Recognizing preschoolers’ curiosity about the world around them, teachers focus on the uses and processes of science in children’s everyday lives. They provide interesting experiences and materials that convey key scientific concepts (e.g. weight, light, cause and effect), as well as skills (e.g. predicting, observing, classifying, hypothesizing, experimenting, communicating)” (Copple & Bredekamp, 173).

1. Materials should include examples of life science/nature, physical science, and earth science: at least one living item such as a plant, fish, hermit crab, etc.
2. Materials should be rotated, refreshed, and updated as the children’s interests change.
3. The area should include collections of natural objects: seeds, rocks, seashells, leaves, acorns, etc.
4. The following tools are required: magnifiers, measuring devices, balance scales, linear measuring devices, pipettes, magnets, tubs for sink/float, plastic trays for sorting, graphing charts, pencils and paper for recording data.
5. Minimum of 4 of the following should be rotated: “feely box,” work bench and tools, puzzles, plastic insects/animals, color paddles, maps, prisms, ramps, and balls.
6. A teacher-directed science activity should occur at least once a week.
7. Reference books related to themes or seasons should be available.

Math Area

Refer to the ASELDs, pages 123-144, for additional information on Mathematical Thinking.

“Teachers recognize children’s interest in making sense of their world with mathematics. They build on children’s intuitive, informal notions and encounters relating to math, making a point of supplying mathematical language and procedures. In other words, teachers ‘mathematize’ children’s everyday encounters” (Copple & Bredekamp, 171).

Some classrooms may choose to combine the math and manipulative areas due to space limitations. This is acceptable as long as all the required materials for both areas are in place. A variety of materials should always be available including 3-5 components from each of categories below:

1. Counting/Numbers: counting animals/blocks, bingo game and chips, dominoes, counting games, magnetic numerals, unifix cubes, number/numeral puzzles, clocks, number books, tangrams, etc.
2. Patterns: pattern cards and blocks, unifix cubes, beads and strings, attribute blocks, tangrams, etc.
3. Measuring: unifix cubes, chain links, wooden cubes, 1inch tiles, digital clocks, balance scale, tape measure or ruler, etc.
4. Geometry: pattern card blocks, shape puzzles, lacing shapes, geo-boards, parquetry blocks, magnetic shapes, etc.
5. Data and Graphing: sorting trays and items to sort, measuring devices, variety of laminated graphs, “hula hoops” for Venn diagramming, pencils and paper for data recording, etc.
6. Math theme books (shapes, patterns, numbers, counting, comparison, etc.)

CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Refer to Section 1, pages 37-78, of the ASELDs for additional information on Relationships and Connections.

A well-managed and inclusive classroom supports constructive and positive relationships and discourages inappropriate behaviors. The goal is to help children develop self-regulation and autonomy. Creating this environment is a shared responsibility of the lead and auxiliary teacher, the director, and all staff members (food service, custodial, special area teachers, volunteers, etc.) who work with the pre-k child in the First Class Pre-K classroom.

Families and Communities

“When early care and education providers and families work together to share information, plan together, and support the child’s abilities, needs, interests, and progress, children are more likely to succeed in school and life” (Cairone & Mackrain, B11).

It is powerful for children to see the important adults in their lives working together to support their development. Teachers serve as an important early education resource for the community. Opportunities for volunteering and enrichment workshops should be offered on a monthly basis.

Regular school-home communication (i.e. notebooks/folders, newsletters, emails, conferences, phone calls, etc.) should be provided in family’s preferred communication mode. The family’s and teachers’ educational goals for the child should complement each other. Teachers should be mindful of what is shared with families in the form of daily/weekly notebooks or folders. This is an opportunity to focus on positive accomplishments, encourage review and discussion of daily school activities, and to share parenting resources. It is not best practice nor appropriate to incorporate a daily behavior log for each child. This time-consuming practice is an ineffective tool in the attempt to change undesirable behaviors. Preschoolers are not developmentally capable of making the desired connection between their misbehavior and a behavior chart sent home at the end of the day or the week. There are times this method may be utilized for a child as part of a formal behavior plan put in place after conferencing with the family under the guidance of a local behavioral specialist. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of strategies to connect and encourage all families to participate in their children’s experiences, keeping in mind what works for one family may not be beneficial to another family. “Ongoing communication helps relationships to grow and helps prevent misunderstandings that stem from miscommunication” (Cairone and Mackrain, 181).

Parents/families are viewed as partners and recognized as their child’s first and most important teacher; this includes opportunities for parental input into education. Staff should show respect for diversity within and among families.

Building a Classroom Family

“Caring relationships are fostered through nurturing practices, and are the basis for building a safe, strong, and caring community in which everyone is accepted, secure, and ready to learn and have fun” (Cairone & Mackrain, B11).

Classroom routines and procedures should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced. Learning Areas and materials should be gradually introduced taking great care to teach all expectations. Routines, procedures, and expectations should be **regularly reviewed and practiced**. Your Coach can support and guide you through this process.

Children should learn to communicate appropriately and work through peer conflicts. Teachers should model desirable behaviors such as negotiating, sharing, and learning from mistakes. Help children practice solving challenging situations by using role-play. Teachers should **always** speak to children in a pleasant tone, using words that convey caring and respect (Cairone & Mackrain, 143-144).

Teachers should be aware of and prevent, if possible, potential conflicts over materials and supplies by regularly observing which toys, materials and books are most popular. “Young children often want to play with the same toy as their friends, but **they are not developmentally ready** to take turns or share. Duplicates of favorite items minimize disagreements and waiting time” (Cairone & Mackrain, 124).

Teachers should be aware of personality and/or family issues in the classroom. “When teachers are aware of families’ stressors, they can provide support, patience, and understanding that can alleviate adults’ anxiety so they can better support their children” (192).

Refer to the ASELs (pgs. 37-44) for additional best practices promoting respectful and reciprocating communication strategies to engage families.

Classroom rules should be developed as a community, not posted before the children enter the classroom. “Children are more likely to follow rules they have helped set. When teachers involve children in the rule development process, children are more likely to understand why the rules are needed. When rules are simple and there are only a few, children can remember what they are supposed to do” (Cairone & Mackrain, 147). The rules should be displayed in the classroom for continual reference throughout the course of the day. “Children often forget what constitutes appropriate behavior from one day to the next and from one situation to another” (147).

Teachers and staff should engage all children in cleanup, transitions, celebrations, and other cooperative and community building activities. Children and/or families are invited to contribute materials to the classroom learning areas (books, nature items, “trash to treasure” for the art area, etc.) Accomplishments should be validated by promoting self-efficacy and confidence in children’s strengths such as, “You figured out that puzzle by yourself”, rather than external adult approval in statements such as, “I like the way you put that puzzle together.” “Children who are recognized for effort will make the connection between effort and improvement and will internalize the value of effort” (140).

“When a child hears a description of the outcome of his behavior he/she is more likely to choose positive behaviors again in the future. Offering specific comments on a child’s words and actions lets him/her know that you are aware of, and in tune to what he/she is saying.” For example, “Anna, you took Addie’s hand and walked her to the swings. Then, you helped her climb up on the swing and gave her a gentle push. What a kind thing to do for a friend” (214).

Lead and Auxiliary teachers share instructional responsibilities, child supervision, and other classroom duties. **Lead and Auxiliary teachers MUST interact with the children during Learning/Free Choice time and Gross Motor time to facilitate children’s play and to collect anecdotal notes for GOLD.** “Language skills thrive when children and adults talk regularly with one another” (168).

Lead and Auxiliary teachers work together to plan for the collection of Teaching Strategies™ GOLD® documentation. Lead and Auxiliary teachers model conversation, cooperation and collaboration throughout the preschool day. Mutual respect and professionalism is expected in the First Class Pre-K classroom at all times. Lead and Auxiliary teachers MUST sit with the children during meals and snacks to facilitate appropriate conversation and to model respect, social skills, manners and healthy nutritional habits. Lead and Auxiliary teachers should engage in at least one extended conversation with each child every day. Create a system to remind yourself to invest in **positive time** with each child. “Young children’s language development progresses most when they are actively engaged in verbal interaction and teachers encourage them to extend their comments” (Copple & Bredekamp, 166).

Transitions

“When transitions are well planned, and children are not expected to wait for long periods of time, **which is something they are not yet developmentally ready to do**, behaviors are more likely to be positive” (Cairone & Mackrain, 96).

Teachers should minimize wait times with thoughtful planning and preparation:

1. Conduct transitions (hand washing, water breaks, bathroom, etc.) in small groups or individually when possible. Continually evaluate transitions to see what works well and what could be improved.

2. Transitions are learning opportunities. Use songs, games, finger plays, and other activities to extend learning.
3. **Model and practice** how you expect a transition to happen. Give children cues. Establish predictable routines and consistent goals.
4. Thoughtful scheduling and preparation minimizes the needs for unnecessary transitions throughout the day.

DISCIPLINE and BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

“Teaching preschoolers is hard work and can quickly become overwhelming when children’s behavioral concerns are a problem. There is no one solution or recipe that will ensure every day runs smoothly; however, there are steps teachers can take to help create a peaceful and inviting classroom, where both children and teachers feel safe and happy. Creating such places and implementing these practices ensures learning is happening in each and every moment, and children are gaining the social and emotional skills they need for a lifetime of success in and beyond the classroom” (Cairone & Mackrain, 5). No form of physical or mental punishment is permitted. Children should always feel safe and valued in the pre-k classroom. All teacher interactions with children should support safety and the child’s development of trusting relationships and sense of security in his/her surroundings. When adults are respectful and nurturing, children can learn the skills necessary to engage positively with others. “Say and do the things you want the children to say and do” (139, 220). Behavior charts, stoplights, and/or other displays of behavior documentation publicly shame children. These displays are not developmentally appropriate and shall not be used in any form in the First Class Pre-K classroom. The child’s development of self-regulation is discouraged by the use of stickers, candy, treasure boxes, and other extrinsic rewards used for the purpose of singling out children to reward good behavior. These are not developmentally appropriate and shall not be used in the First Class Pre-K classroom. It is more effective to reinforce positive behavior by noticing and using immediate, effective verbal acknowledgement that describes a child’s appropriate words and actions. Teachers are encouraged to invest time and effort in establishing the critical routines and procedures for all aspects of the pre-k day, increasing the likelihood of success for all children in the classroom.

For Example:

“Sam, you pushed all the chairs under the table after snack. That was helpful.”

“Mary, you invited Sam to help build a fort with the blocks. You helped her smile.”

“You are standing in line looking ahead with your arms by your side, just like this. Your body is saying you are ready to go to the playground.”

Redirection and Conflict Mediation

Redirection

Redirection shifts a child’s attention from what he/she is currently doing to something safer or something that is preferable, and comes in many forms. Generally, redirection says, “You may not do X, but you can do Y,” or, “You may not do X here, you can do X there or there.” The most important part of redirection is to join your attention with the child first and then redirect. Below are the same situations handled two different ways, with the adult joining with the child and without the adult joining with the child.

Redirection requires face-to-face interaction, joint attention, clarification of the boundaries (exaggerated facial expressions that express “not safe”), and assistance in connecting with the new object. Be certain to use all four of these components when redirecting. Attention is a whole brain activity. When we redirect a child’s attention, we are actually scaffolding their prefrontal lobe development. Helping children develop their prefrontal lobes is labor intensive for adults. We cannot facilitate prefrontal lobe development by hollering from across the room.

Situation 1: Maya is trying to take the markers to block area to color the blocks prettier colors.

- Example without joining: Teacher says to Maya, “Don’t take the markers to the blocks, color over here on paper. *This is not effective redirection as Maya will continue on her path to make the blocks prettier.*”
- Example with joining: Teacher says to Maya, “Maya, I see you want to color the wooden block prettier colors. How can we make the blocks prettier but not change them permanently? Can we color paper and tape it to the blocks?” *By joining in in with what Maya wanted, then asking for an alternative solution from Maya and giving a suggestion.*

Situation 2: Aster is visiting Grandma’s house. He’s trying to close a box of tea, diligently working on figuring out the clasp.

- Example Without Joining: Mom says from across the room, “Aster, leave the box alone. Come in here and play with this toy I brought you. Aster, look at the toy! It has a switch! Look at the toy. It’s really fun!”
- Example With Joining: Mom walks over to him, gets down on eye level and notices, “See this little edge of a tea bag hanging out. What could you do with it that might help the latch close?” Aster pushes the tea bag in, shuts the box, snaps the latch and looks right into his mom’s eyes. She celebrates his success and then pulls out a toy she had brought form him to play with. “Come play with this toy in the living room.” He takes it and sits down in the living room to explore the new item.

Situation 3: Amy is 18 months old. She just discovered the electrical outlet covers and is touching and pointing at them.

- Example Without Joining: The home care provider says, “No, no, Amy! That is not safe. You can play with your blocks or stuffed bear. Leave it alone.”
- Example With Joining: The home care provider walks over, points to the outlet and says, “You found the outlet covers and want to pull them off and play with them. That is not safe.” She takes Amy by the hand and walks over to a pile of toys and says, “I am going to find something fun you can pull on and play with using those little fingers.” She stays on the floor with Amy, giving her ample time to shift her attention.

Source: Conscious Discipline – Developing Resilient Classrooms, Dr. Becky Bailey (2015), 141.

Conflict Mediation

Teachers should model and support the “Redirection and Conflict Mediation Process” as children learn to solve their own problems and conflicts by:

1. Acknowledging the conflict and the feelings of the children;
2. Allowing each child to speak and explain his/her perspective; and
3. Helping the children decide on and implement a solution and plan different ways to behave in the future.

Implementation Tip

“Making Amends – The Playdough Conflict”

Scenario 1: Forced Amends

Alec wants some of Tina’s playdough and takes it. Tina tries to grab the playdough back. Alec pinches Tina’s arm. Tina screams. The teacher arrives and comforts Tina. Then she “regains control” by putting Alec in a time-out area. After a few minutes, the teacher lectures Alec on his inappropriate behavior. When done, she tells Alec, “Now you can go say you’re sorry.” Alec does, but he remains upset because he can only see the situation from his own viewpoint: Tina wouldn’t share, Tina got Alec in trouble, the teacher embarrassed Alec by her actions. Alec feels forced into an apology he doesn’t feel. Alec may feel resentment toward Tina, the teacher, and himself.

Scenario 2: Genuine Amends

Alec wants some of Tina’s playdough and takes it. Tina tries to grab the playdough back. Alec pinches Tina’s arm. Tina screams. The teacher arrives and comforts Tina, doing a quick triage to make sure there is no blood. Then she follows this five-finger formula for conflict mediation after acknowledging both children’s feelings. When

children are feeling overwhelmed or facing a challenging moment with the help of the teacher, the 5 steps below can help children regulate their emotions and bring them back to calm.

1. Make sure all parties calm down, **including the teacher**, which may or may not involve separating Alec – not for a time out—but to help him calm down.
2. Help each child say how she or he saw the conflict. Help children agree to each child's version: "You saw it this way? And you saw it this way?" (The teacher leads but remains a neutral mediator, not a judge.)
3. Have the children brainstorm how they can resolve the conflict. Suggest possibilities if needed.
4. Help all parties together agree on a resolution, including what kids can do to resolve immediate conflict and what they can do next time instead.
5. Follow up individually with the child if necessary. Explain to Alec quietly that he hurt Tina and ask him, "How do you think you can help her feel better?"

Note this difference between the two scenarios: Not "Now you go say you're sorry" as a consequence imposed on the child as a result of causing a conflict. But, "How do you think you can help her feel better?" after both children have solved the problem together with the teacher's guidance. When you give the child the power of a choice, he often says "I can tell him I am sorry." But children also come up with other creative ideas: "We could put a wet paper towel on the ow-ee," or "I could blow on the boo-boo so it feels better," or "I could shake her hand and tell her I am sorry." When the method of making amends comes from the child, the teacher can pretty well figure the reconciliation is sincere (Gartrell, 2010).

This implementation tip was written by Dan Gartrell for special inclusion in: Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers A Strategy Guide for Early Childhood Professionals (Cairone & Mackrain, 217-218).

Wait to intervene when a child's inappropriate behavior is not harming others, when you know the child can probably stop the behavior on his/her own without assistance, and when you believe the goal of the behavior is to gain attention from others.

Use these four steps to **ignore inappropriate behavior** (remember to ignore the behavior, not the child):

1. Turn the front of your body away from the child, while keeping the child in your side view.
2. Say nothing to the child.
3. Keep facial expressions neutral.
4. Give immediate positive attention when the child replaces the inappropriate behavior with an acceptable alternative (Cairone & Mackrain, pg. 230).

Teacher-imposed time-out or isolation, threats, closing areas and/or withdrawal of playtime (indoor or outdoor) are **reactive consequences** that lack the reflection and follow up needed to bring about a change in behavior and shall not be used in the First Class Pre-K classroom. A **proactive teacher** provides clear expectations and uses effective methods to prevent and redirect challenging behaviors by fully planning and preparing for the pre-k day with materials readily accessible (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre). Specific consequences for incidents of **aggressive behavior** may be used. In these situations, the teacher should maintain eye contact, use a calm, even, yet firm tone of voice and speak in short sentences with simple words.

For Example:

"Because you hit Sam with a block, you cannot play in the block area the rest of the morning." "No hitting. Hitting hurts. I won't let you hurt anyone, and I won't let anyone hurt you. You can sit in the beanbag chair to calm down and then we will talk about how you can solve this problem."

Provide a space and materials that will help a child regain control of emotions, words, and actions. When the child is calm, discuss feelings and how to handle such situations differently in the future (Cairone & Mackrain, 223).

When chronic behavior problems persist, the following steps are helpful:

1. Teachers should closely review their daily schedule, routines, procedures and lesson plans. Your Coach can assist and support you with this process. “When transitions and routines are planned in advance, teachers are better prepared to effectively guide the learning process, thus allowing the day to run more smoothly and the children to feel more secure and at ease” (92).
2. Teachers should use Teaching Strategies™ GOLD® Social-Emotional Objectives/Dimensions as one way to document concerns in the area of behavior. This information will be valuable when conferencing with families to pinpoint behavioral concerns.
3. Your Coach can provide guidance and support in utilizing Conscious Discipline, Devereux, “FLIP IT,” and/or other appropriate strategies. www.netsmartu.com/FLIPIT
4. To escalate a request for further support, collaborate with your Coach on a CONNECT Team support request as shown.

Challenging Behaviors

In cases where challenging behaviors (tantrums, physical aggression, bullying, biting) are a danger to the student or others, the family and other appropriate professionals (program director, guidance counselor, local LEA, school nurse, mental health professionals) must be involved in developing a behavior intervention plan. If a child has an IEP in place, the IEP team should be consulted to develop a behavior plan.

Teachers should have a plan in place for scenarios involving serious social-emotional and behavioral concerns. This plan could be that other students are removed from the classroom while one teacher remains in the classroom with the child to support the child in areas of self-regulation and determine the next best steps which could be helping the child clean up any mess that was made in anger, talk through issues and other solutions the child could use, or create a scripted story with alternative strategies for the child. The purpose is to develop and build relationship with the child after the conflict. During this time, the other children may be on the playground with the other teacher.

When a child is extremely angry or aggressive, removing the child may cause an increase in aggression. By removing the other children, a child can calm down in a familiar environment thus preventing a power struggle when trying to remove a child. If a child needs a break from the classroom environment due to overstimulation, however, the teacher may walk the child in the hallway as a means to calm the brain. The teacher should teach the child to use a signal either visual or verbal to indicate that a break is needed. Use your professional judgement and knowledge of the child to determine how to use this strategy. Over time, the goal is to shorten the length of time spent on a break as the child learns to self-regulate. Removing the child from the situation can only make it worse because the child can't self-regulate; you have to remove the other children to safety while the teacher works with the child.

The Coach must be notified immediately, and the child's parents must be notified same-day as an incident and a follow-up conference scheduled. During this conference, the teachers need to share effective, positive behavior strategies with the child's parents that could also be used in the classroom to ensure continuity between the classroom and the child's home. The teacher needs to communicate with the parent/family using insight-oriented communication to reflect positive behaviors as well as challenging behaviors. The conversation should be strength-based. This course of action is for serious social-emotional and behavioral concerns.

Teachers should make every effort to connect with parents/families and the child in positive ways. The conference should be utilized to positively connect with the parents/families. Teacher-parent/family connection is integral in approaching a child's behavior from a stance of empathy and understanding, helping children to regulate their emotions, think clearly, and manage complex social environments, such as the classroom.

Intervention will include the appropriate intervention channels outlined below:

Step 1) When challenging behaviors arise in a classroom, the teacher should discuss with the Coach.

The Coach will reflect with the teacher regarding the environment and classroom management to ensure that universal strategies are in place and being implemented consistently. The Coach will complete an observation of the classroom during this time to look at all aspects of the classroom environment and how the child is interacting in that environment. If the Coach helps teacher implement intervention strategies over a 30-day period which are individualized for the child with challenging behaviors. These strategies should be based off of the DECA-P2 assessment completed by the teacher and parent. This assessment can only be completed by the teacher after contact with the child for four weeks; however, the parent can complete at any time. Before asking the parent to complete a DECA-P2, the teacher should have reached out to the parent to discuss the behavior and if behaviors are present at home. This communication should be a positive conversation with the intent to find help for the child and find solutions, not to blame or punish. The parent and the teacher should see each other as a team to support the child in developing skills to be successful in school.

Step 2) If challenging behaviors persist, the Coach requests a referral for IECMHC through the Region Director.

The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education offers Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) to all First Class Pre-K programs at no cost to schools or families. The IECMHC service is provided in partnership with the Alabama Department of Mental Health. The IECMH Consultant works within a collaborative relationship with parents/guardians and the First Class Pre-K team with a focus on strengthening the healthy social and emotional development of children through problem-solving and capacity building interventions. When challenging behaviors persist, the coach notifies the Region Director who may then request that an IECMH Consultant visit the classroom. Within seven (7) business days of receiving the referral, the Consultant gathers information from the First Class Pre-K team and parents/caregivers prior to scheduling a classroom environment observation. Once the observation is complete, the Consultant meets with the First Class Pre-K team to collaboratively explore strategies. The Consultant will then schedule visits to the classroom with a frequency determined by the First Class Pre-K team. Consultants continuously evaluate the identified needs through reflective practices with the parents/caregivers and teachers, with the intent that strategies will be implemented at home and in the classroom. If the child has an IEP in place, or requires an IEP, it is recommended that the Consultant be included in those meetings to ensure that behavior strategies listed are developmentally appropriate and focus on the emotional wellness of the child. Research indicates that support should remain in place no less than 30 days.

Step 3) Only after Steps 1 and 2 have been addressed will a modified attendance plan be considered.

If challenging behaviors continue to persist (after a minimum of 60 days), after both steps and appropriate assessments are given and reviewed for patterns (DECA-P2, ASQ-3, and a review of GOLD documentation up to this point), modified attendance can be considered with a plan of family engagement to build the missing skills and remove the modified attendance plan quickly to ensure the child returns to full day as soon as possible.

PLANNING, TEACHING, and LEARNING

Planning for instruction includes creating a daily schedule, daily lesson plans, short term lesson plans, (weekly/monthly themes and lessons), and long-term lesson plans (themes or studies for the year). The interests, curiosity, and needs of the children should be taken into consideration when developing classroom plans. Developing lessons and free choice activities around themes or studies, maximizes learning in a meaningful context based on the NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

Weekly lesson plans are required to be posted in all First Class Pre-K classrooms. The lesson planning format that is chosen will be supported by the Coach. **All plans will be based on the ASELs. Teaching Strategies™ GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions will be used to assess student outcomes. Teachers are required to reference these resources in all lesson plans.**

Lesson Planning

When planning for instruction, a theme or study topic to be investigated in depth should be identified. The length of time dedicated to this study depends on the topic and the interests of the children. Plans to incorporate the theme in the free choice areas should be noted.

Plans should include the ASELs and GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions that will be documented after lessons. Documentation should be entered daily by both teachers. Potential materials, books, music, activities, and resources should be identified.

Lesson Plan Format Checklist

Checklist	Lesson Plan
	Identifies a Theme or Study Topic
	Whole Group activities are planned to include Music and Movement and Shared Writing
	Small Group Activities are planned with specific skills identified
	2 Read-alouds planned daily
	Indications of how the theme will be incorporated in Room Areas
	Weekly Science Lesson planned
	Evidence of planned Gross Motor Activities
	Teaching Strategies GOLD/ASELs documented in plans
	Resources are identified (Books, Websites, Songs, etc.)
	Lesson Plans are posted and accessible, up to date, and organized
	Lesson Plan Format Submitted to the Coach (coaching support is available to reflect on lesson plan format and content)

Establishing a Daily Schedule

A written schedule, including times, should be posted outside the classroom door for Directors, Coaches, Monitors, Administrators and visitors to view. The daily schedule should be flexible to allow for children's interests and needs. "Challenging behavior is more likely to occur when children are asked or expected to do things that are not appropriate for their age, stage of development, or individual characteristics. When expectations are realistic, children can achieve and grow" (Cairone & Mackrain, 141).

Schedules should reflect a balance of groupings: multiple whole groups, small groups, free choice, and gross motor activities. The daily schedule should be adhered to as closely as possible and must be submitted to the coach who will provide support in developing an appropriate schedule at the beginning of the school year. The Coach must be notified of any permanent schedule changes.

1. Whole groups may last **up to** 20 minutes and should occur throughout the day.
2. Small group instruction should occur at least once per day and may last **up to** 20 minutes.

3. Free choice must be **uninterrupted** and should last for at least 1 hour 10 minutes **NOT** including time used to clean up. “One’s ability to make choices is not only a desirable skill but also creates a pattern of social competence. When children are taught how to identify, select, and initiate choice-making opportunities, they can become adults who independently make choices. Research has demonstrated that providing choices can reduce problem behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors and thus social competence of the individual” (Cairone & Mackrain, 124). **Both teachers are expected to move around the classroom interacting and engaging with the children during free choice time.** This time is a valuable opportunity to collect anecdotal GOLD® documentation. Children **may not** be pulled from free choice for teacher led small group instruction.
4. At least two planned, developmentally appropriate Read-alouds must be scheduled each day. **A read aloud should be a book the teachers read to the children and not one the children listen to on the SmartBoard or with the CD books.** Teachers should consider this to be a time to introduce vocabulary, encourage discussion, and foster an appreciation for quality children’s literature. Intentional planning also allows teachers to create opportunities to enhance Concept Development and Quality of Feedback (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre). Research indicates that best results come from interactive and engaging routines and repeated read-alouds.
5. Music and Movement should be thoughtfully planned and occur daily. **It is important that teachers do not solely rely on a smart board or similar technology to meet this daily requirement.** Teachers should learn a repertoire of songs, chants, and finger plays for enjoyment and mastering recall of both melody and lyrics. This type of quality music and movement encourages appropriate social interaction, teaches underlying literacy and math skills, and improves spatial awareness (crossing the midline). A variety of resources should be utilized to guarantee exposure to multiple musical genres. Both teachers should actively engage in Music and Movement with the children, encouraging participation and enjoyment.
6. A science activity should be planned and occur weekly. This activity should be used as an opportunity to enter documentation for GOLD® Science and Technology Objectives.

The daily schedule should include time for children to nap or relax quietly. Generally speaking, 45 to 60 minutes of the pre-k day should be set aside for napping/resting. Provisions should be made for children that indicate a need to rest during any time of the day. Provisions should be made for early risers and non-nappers. Cots are required in the First Class Pre-K classroom. Cots should be covered with a sheet or towel that is regularly laundered and sanitized. All children must be within sight and sound of the teacher during rest time.

Daily Schedule Checklist

Checklist	Daily Schedule
	Schedule reflects a 6 1/2 hour day
	Whole Groups are scheduled multiple times daily and do not exceed 20 minutes
	Two planned and purposeful read-alouds are scheduled daily
	Music and Movement is scheduled and occurring daily
	Small Group is scheduled daily and does not exceed 20 minutes
	Free Choice is scheduled daily for a minimum of 1 hour 10 minutes (uninterrupted and not including time to clean up)
	Gross Motor is scheduled for 60 minutes daily (this time may be divided into segments)
	A Picture Schedule with words is posted near the Whole Group Area - Children should participate in monitoring the schedule
	A Science activity is planned and occurring weekly
	Daily Schedule submitted to the Coach (coaching support is available to develop and maintain an appropriate daily schedule)

Small Group Instruction

Small group instruction should take place at least once daily and may last **up to 20 minutes**. During this time a small group of ideally 6 to 8 children meet with a teacher to explore and experiment with materials and discuss and solve problems. Small group instruction must be included on Lesson Plans.

Teachers may choose to divide the children into 3 groups with both teachers conducting a small group lesson simultaneously with 2 of the groups while an independent group of children work on fine motor activities, self-correcting games, etc. **The independent group MUST BE in full view and supervision of both teachers at all times. Small groups MAY NOT be taught as a part of free choice time.** The Coach will assist with planning for small group instruction as needed.

1. Lessons should be planned and purposeful resulting in the documentation of targeted GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions.
2. **Worksheets/workbooks, coloring sheets, or craft activities are NOT appropriate for small group instruction and are NOT allowed as part of the lesson or assessment of learning. Lined paper should not be used to teach handwriting.**
3. The composition of the groups should be flexible and dynamic based on the needs of the children.
4. The amount of time spent in small group should also be flexible. Time devoted to small group instruction may increase as the year progresses. It is reasonable that a small group may last 5 to 8 minutes at the beginning of the year and increase up to 20 minutes by the end of the year. Small group time **should not exceed 20 minutes.**

Whole Group Instruction

Whole group instruction can occur multiple times daily for **up to 20 minutes** each occurrence. This is an ideal time to focus on building a connected classroom community. It is reasonable that a whole group may last 5 to 8 minutes at the beginning of the year and increase up to 20 minutes by the end of the year. **Teachers should always be mindful of the amount of time they are expecting children to sit and engage as part of a large group.** Flash cards of any kind (including, but not limited to, sight words) are not appropriate.

1. One whole group meeting should include a shared writing experience such as Daily News or Morning Message.
2. Whole groups should include opportunities for children to share, discuss, and learn respect for others.
3. Teachers should develop strategies to capture valuable GOLD® documentation during this time.
4. Whole groups should include music, movement, and finger plays.
5. Whole groups should include discussion of the Picture Schedule and the Job Chart.

Technology

Refer to the ASELDS, pages 110-117, and Appendix Six, pages 302-308, for additional information on Technology in Early Learning Programs.

Technology may be used for a total of 30 minutes per day in the FCPK classroom. This includes the independent use of electronic devices. Screen time should be limited to 15 minutes per day for each child, and supplemental use of technology to enhance group times should not exceed 15 minutes per day.

Technology and media must not replace activities such as, but not limited to, creative play, shared reading experiences, real-life exploration, physical activity, music and movement, outdoor experiences, conversation, and social interactions. These are important for children's development. Technology and media should be used to support learning - not an isolated activity and to expand young children's access to new content (Guernsey 2010a, 2011b).

Technology is a supplement to the learning content; not a replacement for the teacher. Children benefit when adults participate in children’s use of technology. Adults should facilitate and have meaningful interactions alongside children.

1. Opportunities for using computer labs (located away from the classroom) should be limited to one time per week for no more than 30 minutes.
2. Children should be redirected to other activities rather than waiting for electronics to be available. Teachers should develop a system to ensure that all children have a turn to use technology.
3. All videos, applications of technology, hardware (computers, iPads, iPods, Smartboards, etc.), and software should be carefully selected to support the ASELs and GOLD® Objectives and Dimensions.
4. Teachers should monitor the use of electronic devices and ensure children are using them appropriately and purposefully.
5. Program mandated technology programs (i.e., Hatch, Waterford, Lexia, etc.) must be included in the student’s 15-minute independent use of technology.

Handwriting

Formal, rote handwriting instruction and letter formation in large or small groups (tracing or copying) is not developmentally appropriate in the pre-k classroom. Lined paper can be available in the Writing Area and throughout the room **for exploration** but it MAY NOT be used for instructional purposes.

1. Explicit instruction should be provided to children on an individual basis in response to expressed interest.
2. Signing-in should be a daily part of the arrival process. The process should be a progression of skills: from recognition of the child’s picture, to recognizing his/her written name, to tracing his/her name, to copying his/her name, to ultimately writing his/her name independently by the end of the school year.
3. Child-created stories, writing, and dictation should be exhibited to encourage writing.
4. The classroom should be a print-rich environment with alphabet charts, writing models, morning messages, daily news, letters, labels, etc. to demonstrate the purposes of writing.

Worksheets

Coloring sheets and worksheets are not developmentally appropriate and **MUST NOT** be available in the First Class Pre-K classroom. The development of fine motor skills is better accomplished through experimentation with more suitable materials such as playdough, puzzles, manipulatives, various drawing and writing instruments, paper and scissors, beads and laces, etc.

1. Photocopied worksheets which require a child to match items (i.e. upper-lower case letters, rhymes, etc.), fill-in-the-blanks, trace or write repeated shapes, letters or numerals, use lines for handwriting, or any similar activity that demands one correct answer, are NOT to be used.
2. Open-ended worksheets for data collection, graphing, or recording where children can document their own ideas and solve problems ARE appropriate.

The Difference Between “Writing” and “Handwriting”	
Writing (Appropriate)	Handwriting (Inappropriate)
Developmental spelling refers to children being encouraged to write through their own way while moving through progressive stages of learning how to spell. It is encouraging young children’s attempt to use what they already know about letters and sounds to write words. Research indicates that encouraging developmental spelling is highly effective in promoting children’s understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds. Example: “ct” for the word cat This can be modeled and encouraged by engaging children in dictating stories, letters, messages, and charts while also assisting children in their own efforts to write.	Tracing letters, words and sentences in order to improve penmanship. Using lined paper. Stressing the importance of correct letter formation.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment is critical to supporting children's development and learning in the classroom. It is essential in "making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions" (NAEYC Position Statement).

1. Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information.
2. Teaching and assessment go hand in hand. For First Class Pre-K, we believe that Teaching Strategies™ GOLD® will serve as the roadmap for guiding children's experiences toward development and learning.

We expect full implementation of GOLD®. *MyTeachingStrategies™* Assessment System supports the daily collection of information about a child's knowledge, skills, and abilities in all areas of development. Coaches will assist teachers with meeting the Department's expectation of establishing an assessment cycle. This includes entering daily observations, setting preliminary levels of documentation daily as well as using reports for planning. Alabama First Class Pre-K suggests that most objectives need at least two pieces of quality documentation for accurate assessment rating at checkpoint.

For further reading:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/assessing-development>

<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/pscape.pdf>

GROSS MOTOR and OUTDOOR PLAY

Refer to Section 4 of the ASELs for additional information on Physical Health and Development.

Daily activities should include many opportunities for young children to develop competence and confidence in their gross motor skills. While children develop many of their physical capabilities through play they also need planned movement activities with verbal and modeled instruction and structured physical skill development opportunities. The First Class Pre-K classroom schedule is required to include 60 minutes of gross motor activity which may be broken into smaller segments of time within the day.

Playgrounds

Based on the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines, NAEYC and DHR safety standards:

1. The play environment should include equipment that is age- and developmentally-appropriate.
2. The play environment should provide a minimum of 60 square feet for each child. This shall be for all 18 children at one time (DHR).
3. The play environment should be enclosed by a fence or wall at least four feet in height. When measuring the four-foot height, take into consideration areas where a fall zone is next to a fence, where erosion has caused soil to pack around the base of the fence or has caused large gaps at the base of the fence, or the location of a border next to the fence. Any of these instances can detract from the actual height of the fence. The fence or wall shall be free from sharp protruding edges. Gates to the area shall be secured.
4. The play area should be well drained.
5. There should be semiprivate areas where children can play alone or with a friend. Semiprivate areas should be visible at all times. For example, teachers should have clear vision into tunnels while children are at play.
6. Opportunities and materials for activities such as dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, art, and music should be provided.

7. The environment should include a variety of natural and manufactured surfaces for children to explore. Natural areas should include elements such as nonpoisonous plants, shrubs, and trees.
8. Children with disabilities should be able to participate in the outdoor curriculum and activities (NAEYC).
9. The outdoor play area should be arranged so children can be supervised by sight and sound at all times. Staff should practice active supervision, meaning they are moving around supervising and monitoring all play.
10. There should be an area for children to have large motor experiences such as running, climbing, balancing, riding, jumping, crawling, scooting, and swinging.
11. OSR has one certified Early Childhood Playground Safety inspector per region to provide guidance and resources for safe environments and playground quality enhancement.
12. Sandboxes should allow for drainage, if necessary by type and location. Sandboxes should be covered when not in use and cleaned of all foreign matter on a regular basis. Staff must replace sand as often as is necessary to keep sand clean and free of debris.
13. Concrete or asphalt shall not be used under outdoor playground equipment except wheeled toys.
14. Playground equipment which is not designed to be portable should be securely anchored so that it cannot be tipped over by an adult or child.
15. Tripping hazards should be addressed.
16. Wooden equipment should be regularly checked and maintained in reference to sharp areas and splintering wood that could cause cuts or splinters. Metal equipment should be regularly checked for rust. Rust should be removed immediately. Equipment should be treated with paint to prevent rust and paint from flaking.
17. All broken toys and equipment should be removed and replaced immediately. All missing pieces should be replaced on equipment.
18. Playground shall not be shared with younger or older children at time of play.
19. Equipment needed to meet Developmental Skills: Climbing and sliding structures, tricycles with helmets and paths to ride on, water and sand play equipment, art materials, structural materials (loose parts) for imaginative play, natural features to experience the seasons, various sizes of balls, wheeled vehicles to push or pull, walking board, crawl through equipment, toys for digging. Lockable storage units may be necessary to store equipment and materials.
20. Shaded areas should be available to provide a break from the sun or heat. NAEYC recommends 1/3 of the playground be shaded to prevent equipment from becoming too hot.
21. Fall surfacing is strongly recommended.

RESOURCES

Works Cited

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<https://children.alabama.gov/for-educators/aseld/>

www.netsmartu.com/FLIPIT

<https://gold.teachingstrategies.com>

<https://consciousdiscipline.com>

<https://www.naeyc.org>

Developmentally Appropriate Practice - https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/dap-statement_0.pdf

Adjustments or modifications to Office of School Readiness Classroom Guidelines may be made at the discretion of the Secretary of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education.