

North Carolina Office of Early Learning
Demonstration Program
Comprehensive Demonstration Site Criteria

1. Classroom receives funds from the Department of Public Instruction
2. Provides a program for a regular school day (6 to 6.5 hours) for 180 instructional days per school calendar year
3. Models the use of *Foundations*, North Carolina's Early Learning Standards for pre-kindergarten or North Carolina Essential Standards for Kindergarten
4. Models the intentional implementation of a pre-kindergarten curriculum or a balanced approach to instruction as described in *The Power of K North Carolina Position Statement on Kindergartens of the 21st Century* both approved by the State Board of Education.
5. Models research-based teaching practices and incorporates a variety of teaching methods as described by:
 - *The Resource Manual for Administrators Supervising and Evaluating Teachers of Young Children*
 - *The North Carolina Guide for the Early Years, Second Edition*
6. Models a process of on-going formative assessment during instruction that provides feedback to inform and adjust teaching and learning
7. Provides and models the use of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive learning environments, both indoors and outdoors
8. Pre-kindergarten classroom maintains a classroom score of 5.0 or above on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)
9. Maintains a maximum class size of 18 in pre-kindergarten and 21 in kindergarten with a full time teacher and full time teacher assistant
10. Demonstrates collaborative partnerships with Exceptional Children personnel to provide appropriate modifications and accommodations to address the individual needs of children with disabilities
11. Implements an intentional written plan to provide inclusive settings for preschoolers with disabilities by maintaining a ratio of typically developing children to children with disabilities of at least 90:10, no more than 50:50, with a goal of 70:30, with adequate staffing and resources
12. Models the intentional implementation of evidence-based practices to support children's emotional and social development
13. Implements an intentional written plan, with administrative support, for family engagement and support, including establishing positive relationships with all families, engaging families in shared decision making, and promoting ongoing family-school partnerships
14. Models appropriate methods for teaching children who are English learners
15. Implements an intentional written plan for facilitating effective transitions into pre-kindergarten, into kindergarten and into first grade
16. Employs a qualified lead teacher with a North Carolina Standard Professional II License appropriate to the program or grade level assigned:
 - The teacher implements and maintains a self-assessment, formal evaluation and reflection process to strengthen teaching practices and child learning outcomes, monitored through a professional growth plan.
 - The teacher participates in research-based professional development activities defined by child learning data and professional teaching practices evaluation data and identified in the professional growth plan.

Learn, model, lead, and empower to effect change for children



Office of Early Learning Demonstration Program

Demonstration Program (2012-2013)

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is offering the Demonstration Site Program with funding from the Division of Exceptional Children and the Title I Program. This program offers the opportunity to visit inclusive preschool and kindergarten classrooms to view effective practices. This professional development opportunity is available for anyone working with young children.

The demonstration classrooms serve preschool and kindergarten children and families that reflect cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity. Children may be supported by multiple funding sources.

Demonstration programs:

- Provide guided observation sessions with opportunities for discussion with teachers and administrators (see request section below for additional information)
- May offer professional development, technical assistance, and resource libraries
- Models the use of *Foundations*, North Carolina's Early Learning Standards for pre-kindergarten or North Carolina Essential Standards for Kindergarten
- Models the intentional implementation of a pre-kindergarten curriculum or a balanced approach to instruction as described in *The Power of K North Carolina Position Statement on Kindergartens of the 21st Century* both approved by the State Board of Education
- Models research-based teaching practices and incorporates a variety of teaching methods as described by:
 - *The Resource Manual for Administrators Supervising and Evaluating Teachers of Young Children*
 - *The North Carolina Guide for the Early Years, Second Edition*
- Demonstrates collaborative partnerships with Exceptional Children personnel to provide appropriate modifications and accommodations to address the individual needs of children with disabilities

For additional information, please contact Carla Garrett at carla.garrett@dpi.nc.gov, Jody Koon at jody.koon@dpi.nc.gov, or Vivian James at vivian.james@dpi.nc.gov.

Additional information and materials can also be found at:

<http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/DemoSites/DemoProgramNEW.asp>

Demonstration Site Observation Request

Thank you for your interest in visiting a demonstration classroom(s). In order to make your visit as beneficial as possible, indicate below the areas of early childhood practice in which you are especially interested in observing and discussing. Please check your top 3 choices for your visit and send in to the demonstration site of your choice. Contacts are listed on the next page.

Focus of Guided Observation (check 3):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> curriculum implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> project approach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> daily schedule/routines | <input type="checkbox"/> oral language development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> learning environments (indoor/outdoor) | <input type="checkbox"/> literacy development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> daily transitions | <input type="checkbox"/> including children with disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> teaching/learning through play | <input type="checkbox"/> working with children with challenging behaviors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing assessment linked to curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> inquiry-based learning |

Other (specify):

Complete Prior to the Visit

Contact information (name, telephone, email, address):

Main reason/questions for observing a demonstration classroom:

Observers will complete a follow-up plan with "Guided Observation Facilitator" following the observation/discussion.

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Demonstration Sites (2012-2013)

Site	Contact	Classroom Teacher(s)
Asheboro City Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Development Center (Randolph County) 	Kimberly Borden kborden@asheboro.k12.nc.us (336) 672-6636	Pre-K: Shari Funkhouser
Asheville City Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Center (Buncombe County) 	Lisa Bruggeman lisa.bruggeman@asheville.k12.nc.us (828) 350-2929	Pre-K: Lisa Bruggeman
Cabarrus County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Frances Wall Center 	Debbie Lewallen deborah.lewallen@cabarrus.k12.nc.us (704) 782-5712 ext.301	Pre-K: Amy Harding Pre-K: Jessica Schaper
Carteret County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bogue Sound Elementary 	Lisa Kittrell Lisa.kittrell@carteretk12.org (252)728-4583	Pre-K: Sarah Hopkins Kindergarten: Gina Troball
Hickory City Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hickory High CDC (Catawba County) 	Kathy Giovannini giovanninika@hickoryschools.net (828) 322-5860 ext 1150	Pre-K: Karla Carpenter
Catawba County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catawba Elementary 	Brenda Sigmon Brenda_Sigmon@catawbaschools.net (828) 327-3689	Pre-K: Wendy Secrest
Edgecombe County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stocks Elementary 	Renee Johnson reneejohnson@ecps.us (252) 641-2635	Pre-K: Connie Wells
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkertown Elementary 	Susan Choplin schoplin@wsfcs.k12.nc.us (336) 595-2311	Kindergarten: Susan Choplin
Haywood County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazelwood Elementary 	Karen Holt karenmholt@hotmail.com (828) 456-2406	Kindergarten: Marylee Sease Kindergarten: Lee Messer
Martin County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East End Elementary 	Debi Rogers drogers@martin.k12.nc.us (252) 809-0356 ext.223 Amy Emerson aemerson@martin.k12.nc.us (252) 795-4775	Pre-K: Amy Emerson Pre-K: Bonita Haywood-Daniels Kindergarten: Juliana Harris
Wake County Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Enlightenment 	Louise Taff ltaff@wcpss.net (919) 856-7809	Pre-K: Kim Jackson

The Power of K

North Carolina Position Statement on Kindergartens of the 21st Century

The Mandate | *The guiding mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century” (N.C. State Board of Education, 2006)*

Kindergarten professionals are charged with the responsibility of leading the journey of learning and growth for N.C. students by providing the social and educational foundations necessary to prepare students for life in the 21st Century. While fostering collaborative connections with families and communities, these educators also must develop positive relationships with each child; provide safe, supportive, and inviting environments; offer differentiated and rigorous curriculum and instruction; and deliver meaningful and authentic assessments of a child’s potential. In order to ensure the success of this charge, kindergarten professionals must be empowered by a supportive and knowledgeable administration that provides the necessary infrastructure, essential resources, and on-going, high quality professional development.

The Power of K | The early childhood years, birth through age 8, are the most powerful years for learning, growth and development in the life of a child (Jensen, 1998). Currently, kindergarten holds a position in education as one of the starting points for attitudes about learning, teachers and schools that children and families will carry throughout the years of schooling and beyond.

It is critical that kindergarten programs:

- Utilize evidence-based practices.
- Help children achieve the knowledge, skills and dispositions that promote ongoing success.
- Provide indoor and outdoor environments and experiences that reflect appropriate practices for children of varying abilities.
- Represent a community of learners.
- Include families in meaningful ways.
- Value diverse cultures.

Kindergarten Today | In the 21st Century, educators must meet multiple demands from national, state and local levels. These expectations are based on federal No Child Left Behind regulations, guidelines from state and local boards of education and district mandates and expectations. Teachers at all grade levels feel the pressure of this increased accountability and stringent expectations for their students.

Kindergarten teachers are caught between what research supports as effective environments and experiences based on knowledge of how young children learn and develop, and the promotion of scripted programs and practices that typically do not respond to children’s individual needs nor take into account the view of the whole child as a learner. Based on kindergarten’s unique position in education, this critical grade level “suffers from the middle-child syndrome [and]

straddles the worlds of preschool and elementary school” (Graue, 2006). Because of this precarious place in education, many kindergarten teachers struggle with implementing federal, state and local standards while attempting to remain true to the learning styles and developmental needs of their increasingly diverse 5 year olds...a delicate balancing act for these dedicated educators.

Kindergarten Children Today

Kindergarten programs of the 21st Century must reflect both the experiences of 5 year olds and changes to society. Many young children today:

- Live in a fast-paced world.
- Are technologically savvy.
- Use television and the Internet as a primary means of communication.
- Are exposed to more dangers and threats than their parents were at their age.
- Spend more time inside than outside.
- Are more overweight than the generation before.
- Spend less time with their families than they do in child-care.
- Live in increasingly diverse communities.

Although the 21st Century brings many new experiences for young children in a technologically based world, their developmental patterns, rates and ways of learning have not changed. Recent brain research shows that children in their kindergarten year are still in a very sensitive period for brain development. As young children actively interact with the environment, “the synaptic connections of stimulated neurons become increasingly elaborate” and “the brain is especially responsive to stimulation” (Berk, 2006). Experts in neuroscience and child development agree that “young children need a wide variety of ordinary experiences during this phase” with opportunities to explore their world through their senses (Gullo, 2006; Jensen, 1998). Kindergarten children must be appropriately challenged to progress academically and socially; however, “when classroom experiences are not attuned to children’s developmental needs and individual characteristics, they undermine rather than foster children’s learning” (Berk, 2006).

Kindergarten classrooms of the 21st century must be places where children of all circumstances and all learning abilities can thrive. North Carolina must continue to prepare students for the future while honoring the original kindergarten program objectives of providing both “a garden *for* children, a location where they can observe and interact with nature, and also a garden *of* children, where they themselves can grow and develop” (www.froebelweb.org, 2006). Educators of young children must ask, How do the kindergartens of the 21st Century support the developmental needs of all children while providing challenging and meaningful educational experiences?

Kindergarten Programs of the 21st Century: Intentional Teaching and Learning

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Birth Through Kindergarten Higher Education Consortium support kindergarten programs in our state that respond to the complex needs of children by linking instructional practices, the physical environment, and learning opportunities to the unique characteristics of 5 year olds. In this age of accountability, kindergartens must be designed to address the academic, physical and social/

emotional domains of education for young children. According to Elizabeth Graue, former kindergarten teacher and professor of early childhood education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, “It is absolutely reasonable to expect that kindergarten is about playful learning and learningful play, and about academic socialization and social academics. To make the most of the kindergarten experience, a teacher must be a master of knowledge about specific curriculum content, about children in general, and about her students in particular” (Graue, 2006).

Kindergarten classrooms in North Carolina must be appropriate places for young children to learn through engaging and interactive experiences guided by trusted and nurturing adults. These adults also must provide challenging, yet achievable learning experiences for each individual child. This is no easy task. It requires:

- A dedicated and knowledgeable teacher.
- A dedicated and knowledgeable full-time teacher’s assistant.
- Support of the school administrator, who is knowledgeable about the education of young children.
- Purposeful planning based on the N.C. Standard Course of Study and children’s interests and needs, all of which build upon a child’s previous knowledge and experiences.
- Support for children with special needs.
- Intentional child and teacher interactions.
- A broad repertoire of instructional practices that strike a delicate balance across a continuum of child-initiated experiences and teacher-directed instruction;
- Child-initiated and teacher-supported play.
- A variety of learning contexts within an integrated day, including whole group, small groups, learning centers, outdoor experiences and daily routines.
- Partnerships with families and the community.
- Culturally relevant curriculum that is designed with learners’ cultural values, knowledge, and ways of learning taken into account (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).
- Ongoing, authentic assessments that drive instruction.
- An inquiry approach to ongoing professional development for teachers.

The debate around the definition of play and its benefit to a young child’s education remains ongoing and unresolved. Some say that play is compatible with and necessary to the young child’s education. Others believe play is at odds with education. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction believes that play is at the core of a kindergartner’s learning and development and that it is an essential element of a child’s education in the 21st Century.

Play is “a dynamic, active and constructive behavior. It is an essential and integral part of all children’s healthy growth, development and learning across all ages, domains, and cultures. . . . The absence of play is an obstacle to the development of healthy and creative individuals” (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). Through an interactive, play-based curriculum, children develop cognitive skills as they “explore, imagine, imitate, construct, discuss, plan, manipulate, problem-solve,

dramatize, create, and experiment” (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001). All the while, teachers intentionally weave goals and objectives from the N.C. Standard Course of Study for kindergarten into each experience. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Play is integral to the academic environment; . . . it has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children’s learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem-solving skills” (AAP, 2006). Numerous studies have shown a direct link between play in young children and “memory, school adjustment, oral language development, improved social skills, and self-regulation” (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). Researchers believe that play provides a strong foundation for intellectual growth, problem solving and creativity. These are necessary skills for the 21st Century where “creative problem solvers, independent thinkers, and people with expert social acumen will inevitably surpass those who have simply learned to be efficient at getting the right answers” (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003).

**North Carolina’s
Charge**

The N.C. State Board of Education has charged that “all students will graduate from a rigorous, relevant academic program that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to succeed in both postsecondary education and 21st Century careers and to be participating, engaged citizens. Instruction and learning must include commitment to a knowledge core and the application of that knowledge core to solve complex, real-world problems. Schools must ensure rigor and relevance and guarantee supportive relationships for each student in the public school setting” (North Carolina School Board policy HSP-F-016).

Kindergarten students are innately curious and natural problem solvers. Recognizing these qualities, effective kindergarten teachers provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum. They intentionally create opportunities for:

- Interactive, challenging, and relevant learning experiences.
- Inquiry-based learning.
- Construction of knowledge.
- Solving of real life problems.
- Emotional/social growth and development.
- Physical growth and development.
- Language growth and development
- Collaboration.
- Creativity, imagination and innovation.
- Decision-making.

It is through these types of experiences that kindergarten students develop and demonstrate the 21st Century life skills of critical thinking, communication, leadership, collaboration, contextual learning, global awareness, information and media literacy and citizenship.

Recognizing that experiences in the early childhood years can have a powerful impact on the children of North Carolina, the importance of high quality kindergarten programs and practices becomes apparent. North Carolina has been a leading proponent of public school reform for many years, especially in the field of early childhood education. Continuing this tradition of innovation, North

Carolina has the opportunity to once again take the lead in supporting excellence in the kindergarten programs for the young children of our state. Through a culturally respectful, inclusive and appropriately challenging curriculum, coupled with a broad repertoire of instructional approaches, kindergarten children will grow and develop into independent, critical thinkers empowered to succeed in their future school endeavors and to become productive citizens in the global world of the 21st Century.

References

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- Trumbull, E., and M. Pacheco. (2005) *The Teacher's Guide to Diversity: Building a Knowledge Base*. Providence, R.I.: The Education Alliance at Brown University.