Curriculum and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards
An Alignment Review Tool
Rev. 7.20.2021

Purpose and Background: This tool is designed to help your program determine how well a curriculum framework aligns with the domains and performance standards identified in the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. A curricular framework or curriculum can be defined as "**what** the teacher teaches and **how** the teacher teaches".

An early childhood curricular framework consists of many aspects that being the teacher's role, the physical environment, understanding the research on how children learn, goals and objectives of what children learn, and the parent's role.

In YoungStar, programs can earn an indicator when every classroom has their curriculum/programming and assessments aligned with WMELS. This alignment is meant to ensure child care programming is not narrowly focused on certain domains, or that lesser attention is paid to some domains. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards addresses all areas of child development and early learning. Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards are intended to guide decisions on all aspects of program development and implementation, including curriculum and assessment. The WMELS is not a curriculum describing what and how to teach. They describe the developmental building blocks that are important for a child's school and long-term success. Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: Curriculum and Assessment Resources used in WMELS Training are available on the Collaborating Partners website located at:
http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php

Suggestions for Use: The Alignment Review Tool does not yield a score. It is designed to help the program team or provider analyze a curriculum and make informed decisions about its use. This tool can be used in at least two ways. First, a decision-making team or provider will consider how a curriculum reflects **COVERAGE** and **BALANCE** of the various domains and performance standards in the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.
-    **COVERAGE** refers to how the curriculum addresses each of the WMELS domains and performance standards.
-    **BALANCE** refers to a relatively even representation of all the domains and performance standards in the curriculum.

Secondly, a deeper analysis and look at whether the curriculum provides sufficient **DEPTH** and **DIFFICULTY** for the range of skills and developmental levels of the children served.
-    **DEPTH** is the degree to which the curriculum provides a sequence of developmentally important skills that lay the foundation for later development and learning.
-    **DIFFICULTY** is the degree to which the curriculum identified skills and expectations that are intellectually challenging for children at developmentally appropriate levels.

The following is a five step process to use for reviewing and assessing the curriculum tool(s) that are being used by the child care program. Items 1 - 3 are the first steps of the alignment process. Items 4 - 5 are the second steps of the alignment process.

1.   Identify the curriculum to be reviewed and make it available for review. The team can gather other appropriate resources on child development.
2.   For each domain, read and discuss the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards description and rationale of the domain. Read and discuss the domain elements.

a. Do all teachers have a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills included within that domain? If not, use the additional child development resources to understand what is meant by each performance standard. The examples given for each performance standard in the continuum examples can help with this discussion. Remember, these are examples and are not meant to be comprehensive.
3. Review the selected curriculum. Does the review of all domains answer these questions?
   a. Coverage: Does this curriculum cover all or most of the domains (4 of the 5)?
   b. Balance: Does this curriculum provide balanced coverage within and across each of the domains?
4. Review the selected curriculum. Consider:
   a. Does the sequencing of curriculum make sense? Is it ordered developmentally or in a way that makes instructional sense, i.e., from easy to more difficult?
   b. Will the developmental sequences help teachers make good decisions about what a child needs to learn?
   c. Are there enough items, objectives, or activities for the group of children?
   d. Does the curriculum cover an appropriate range of developmental and cognitive challenge? Do items, objectives, or activities represent greater complexity or difficulty for developmentally older children?
5. Does the review of depth and difficulty of all the domains answer these questions?
   a. Depth – Does this curriculum provide a sequence of items? Is it a useful sequence? Does it provide enough items?
   b. Difficulty – Does this curriculum provide appropriate challenge or complexity?

Multiple curriculum materials may be needed. Curriculums can be either an established, research-based model or a self-made curriculum. If the curriculum is self-made, consider the processes, resource and key factors that were used to guide the development of the self-made curriculum. Early childhood programs should have a **comprehensive**, effective curriculum that targets the identified goals, including all those foundational for later learning and school success. It should target the identified goals and teachers should use strong, up-to-date resources from experts to ensure that curriculum content is **robust and comprehensive**. Upon completion of the alignment review, if a program finds that there are areas of concern then the program should consider additional curriculum resources. For example: A curriculum may not be comprehensive and robust for physical development (large motor), so a program recommends the selection of and the purchase of a curriculum that is additionally focused on physical development.

Nine features are identified as common characteristics of effective curricula[1] :

- Comprehensive domains of learning
- Specific learning goals
- Well-designed learning experiences
- Intentional teaching
- Culturally and linguistically responsive

- Individualizing instruction
- Ongoing assessment
- Family involvement
- Appropriate for program staff, children and families

[1] The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning: Choosing a Preschool Curriculum. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families.

- Is the curriculum covering (**coverage**) all five of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards domains of learning?   How comprehensive is each domain represented? Give examples for each domain and age group.

    o   Health and Physical Development *(Physical Health and Development, Motor Development, Sensory Organization)*

    o   Social and Emotional Development *(Emotional Development, Self-Concept, Social Competence)*

    o   Language Development and Communication *(Listening and Understanding, Speaking and Communicating, Early Literacy)*

    o   Approaches to Learning *(Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence, Creativity and Imagination, Diversity in Learning)*

    o   Cognition and General Knowledge *(Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking)*

- How does the curriculum identify specific goals and learning objectives that clearly define what to teach?
  _____

  _____

- The curriculum includes well-designed learning experiences. Give examples for each domain with each age group.

    o   Health and Physical Development *(Physical Health and Development, Motor Development, Sensory Organization)*

    o   Social and Emotional Development *(Emotional Development, Self-Concept, Social Competence)*

    o   Language Development and Communication   *(Listening and Understanding, Speaking and Communicating, Early Literacy)*

    o   Approaches to Learning   *(Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence, Creativity and Imagination, Diversity in Learning)*

    o   Cognition and General Knowledge   *(Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking*

- The experiences are linked to specific learning goals and objectives. Give examples for each domain with each age group.

    o Health and Physical Development   *(Physical Health and Development, Motor Development, Sensory Organization)*

    o Social and Emotional Development   *(Emotional Development, Self-Concept, Social Competence)*

    o Language Development and Communication   *(Listening and Understanding, Speaking and Communicating, Early Literacy)*

    o Approaches to Learning   *(Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence, Creativity and Imagination, Diversity in Learning)*

    o Cognition and General Knowledge   *(Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking*

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for planning environments. Give examples for each domain with each age group.

    o Health and Physical Development

    o Social and Emotional Development

    o Language Development and Communication

    o Approaches to Learning

    o Cognition and General Knowledge

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for selecting materials. Give examples for each domain with each age group.

    o Health and Physical Development

    o Social and Emotional Development

- o Language Development and Communication

- o Approaches to Learning

- o Cognition and General Knowledge

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for implementing experiences in the following domains. Give examples.

  - o Health and Physical Development

  - o Social and Emotional Development

  - o Language Development and Communication

  - o Approaches to Learning

  - o Cognition and General Knowledge

- The experiences provide opportunities for children to engage in hands-on active learning. Give examples.

  - o Health and Physical Development

  - o Social and Emotional Development

  - o Language Development and Communication

  - o Approaches to Learning

- o Cognition and General Knowledge

- Does the curriculum provide guidance to teachers in intentionally planning for teaching interactions that are responsive to children and build in what children are interested in and ready to learn? Explain?

- Does the curriculum provide guidance to teachers for individualizing instruction by:
    - o Arranging environments
    - o Adapting materials
    - o Using a variety of child and adult directed teaching strategies

- Does the curriculum provide guidance to teachers in creating a classroom environment that reflects the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children? Explain.

- How does the curriculum provide guidance to teachers in supporting language development in children who are learning English in addition to other languages?

- Does the curriculum provide an assessment system that is directly linked to the curriculum learning goals? Explain.

- Does the curriculum provide guidance for communicating with families and involving them in their child's education? Explain.

- How has the curriculum been implemented with children of similar ages, needs, linguistic backgrounds and cultures?

- How consistent are the curriculum's overall philosophy and practices with those of your program?

- What does it take to successfully implement the curriculum?

    - o Levels of teacher qualification?

    - o Costs for materials and training?

    - o Professional development support and resources are available?