

FAQ: The Preschool Sequence Answers

I'm interested in having my preschool consider implementing the Preschool Sequence. What's next?

Watch the Preschool video. Then, share copies of the [Preschool Sequence](#) with other members of your school—administrators, teachers, and parents—and set aside time to compare the Preschool Sequence with what you're already doing, as well as with existing state or local guidelines for preschoolers.

It's important to take time to answer questions and build understanding among members of your school community, so that there can be a shared effort to support Core Knowledge. [Successful implementation](#) requires a genuine commitment of time and interest. If your conversations lead to a consensus—"We want to implement the Preschool Sequence"—then it's time to move on to more in-depth planning.

We recommend that schools interested in implementing the Preschool Sequence study the preschool section of the Core Knowledge Sequence Resource Implementation Guide. This guide includes turnkey professional development that you may download for free, along with recommended useful resources. Onsite training is also available through Core Knowledge Licensed Professionals.

For more information on putting the Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence into practice, check out [Implementation](#).

Our preschool already has a program. Why would we want to change what we are already doing?

Many preschools following a "program" do not in fact have [a coherent, sequenced curriculum](#). In some cases, they're following a general set of beliefs about how children learn but have no specific goals for what they need to learn. In other cases, pulling from many different sources, schools end up with a hodgepodge that lacks coherence.

Some preschool curricula provide developmentally appropriate goals and competencies without any indication of the skills required to master each goal or competency. In contrast, the [Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence](#) specifies goals and objectives from each domain, which allows for clearer definitions of the skills that comprise a competency and more accurate assessment of a child's progress.

The Preschool Sequence identifies skill and knowledge competencies in physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, knowledge acquisition, and cognitive development. By specifying definite expectations, the Preschool Sequence provides everyone—teachers, parents, and children—with a clear vision of where they are going. These definite goals allow teachers to provide experiences that will lead children toward achieving the goals. Setting clear expectations and standards helps ensure that all young children gain the knowledge and skills they need for future learning in school.

Is the Preschool Sequence a compensatory program only for disadvantaged or "at risk" children?

The Preschool Sequence provides a solid foundation for future learning for all young children. While disadvantaged children have historically been subjected to watered-down curricula, the specific standards and expectations spelled out in the Preschool Sequence help prepare all children for success in later schooling. Research clearly documents the positive benefits of a preschool education guided by standards for all children, regardless of socioeconomic level and family background.

What about children whose native language is not standard English?

The [Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence and Teacher Handbook](#) emphasize the development of everyday and academic language skills. There is increasing research-based evidence about [the importance of oral language development](#) during the preschool years, particularly on having an extensive, rich vocabulary. Research indicates strong oral language development results in future academic success in school. The Preschool Sequence offers a unique guide to the “language of instruction” for young children. This strong emphasis on language is consistent with the importance of early language development for future learning.

It is especially important that those children who come to preschool with a native language other than standard English be offered the opportunity to learn and master the language competencies emphasized in the Preschool Sequence. Rich language experiences at the preschool level can significantly enhance a young child’s chances for success in kindergarten and more formal schooling. We also know that children are most capable of easily learning a second language when they are young. Of course, preschool teachers should recognize that children for whom English is not a native language may need even more attention in developing strong English language skills.

For more information, see the “English Language Learners” chapter of the [Preschool Sequence](#).

How does the Preschool Sequence correlate with my own state’s preschool standards?

When the Preschool Sequence was first released, few states had any preschool standards. Some states have since begun to identify early childhood standards. A comparison of these state standards with the Preschool Sequence reveals that the goals and objectives of the Preschool Sequence are generally more comprehensive and specific than the state standards. By implementing the Preschool Sequence, you will most likely cover any standards your state has set forth and more.

Does the Preschool Sequence specify that all preschoolers be able to identify all the letters of the alphabet by name?

The consensus among most reliable reading researchers is clear: Early reading facility is enhanced by competency in a number of skills, one of which is recognition of the alphabetic code, that is, the identification of letters. Learning letter names is indeed an important prerequisite to reading readiness.

In addition to knowing letter names, other skills are important to reading readiness. These include phonological awareness, the ability to listen to spoken language and discriminate sounds in words, and breaking words into separate sounds and then putting them back together. Print awareness is also important—knowing how and why print is used, what a letter or word is, and so on. Developing an understanding of story schema—understanding that a story has different characters, a setting, and a beginning, middle and end—also plays a role in early reading development.

For more information, we recommend the following research studies:

- [Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print](#) by Marilyn Jager Adams (1990)
- [Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children](#) by the National Research Council (1998)
- [Eager to Learn](#) by the National Research Council (2001).

What kind of preschool settings can use the Preschool Sequence? What about half day programs?

The Preschool Sequence may be used to guide experiences and activities for young children in a variety of settings, including public and private pre-kindergarten programs, center-based or home-based daycare programs, Head Start, etc. The single most important factor to consider in deciding whether to **implement the Preschool Sequence** is whether there is a commitment by those who will use and oversee the program. They'll need to be willing to study, support, and integrate it fully into the daily classroom activities. In many instances, this requires a commitment of two to three years before the program is fully implemented.

The Preschool Sequence has been used effectively in both full and half day programs. When one adds up the time for lunch, nap, and so on, full day programs often do not provide significantly greater instructional time than many half day programs. It is important that, regardless of the hours of operation, a minimum of two and a half hours daily be dedicated to productive instructional interaction with the children.

The Preschool Sequence is divided into two levels: Level I for 3 and 4 year olds and Level II for 4 and 5 year olds. What should we do if our school has only one year of preschool?

Given the **Core Knowledge premise** that each subsequent year's skills and knowledge build upon those acquired previously, the ideal situation is one in which 4–5 year olds have already acquired the knowledge and competencies specified in Level I of the Preschool Sequence. If you have a single-year preschool program serving only 4–5 year old children, we suggest you start with the Level II competencies in the Preschool Sequence. Carefully monitor the children's progress. If individuals or groups of children have difficulty, check the related competencies in Level I of the Preschool Sequence and recognize that you may need to back up and provide missing prior experiences.

For example, perhaps you are playing a game that involves catching a large ball, a Level II competency from the "Movement and Coordination" section of the Preschool Sequence. If some children experience difficulty, frequently dropping the ball, you may want to look at the analogous Level I competency in Movement & Coordination and then give these children the opportunity to play their own game using a beanbag instead of a ball.

This does not necessarily mean that these same children will always need to drop back to the Level I competencies in all areas of the Preschool Sequence. For example, some of these same children may have had rich experiences with nursery rhymes and poems and thus be ready to start with the Level II competencies in that area.

In summary, the Preschool Sequence remains an effective guide for instruction in a single-year preschool program when implemented with attention to the varying competencies of individual children.

What role does assessment play in a Core Knowledge preschool program? How can I assess the progress of my students relative to the competencies and knowledge specified in the Preschool Sequence?

Assessment of each student's progress is an indispensable part of effective teaching. Such assessment is an ongoing process, often conducted within the context of daily experiences and activities. Ongoing assessment may be carried out using such teacher tools as directed observation, checklists, work samplings, portfolios, and selected activity probes.

Always ask: What is being assessed in terms of children's work, and what are the criteria used to determine satisfactory performance? The specificity of the competencies described in the Preschool Sequence facilitates

systematic and deliberate use of assessment devices to monitor each child's progress. Teachers are encouraged to use the Preschool Sequence to guide their observations and collections of student work, as well as to develop activity probes as needed to assess progress.

What does implementation of the Preschool Sequence look like?

Effective, experienced teachers understand that there is a wide-ranging continuum of teaching strategies from which they may choose at any given time. Sometimes, it may be most effective and appropriate to present a concept or skill in a small group, planned and directed by the teacher. At other times, children may effectively learn many skills and knowledge in centers.

For any teacher, the goal is to help each child progress to increasing skill, mastery, and autonomy in performing the Preschool Sequence competencies—to provide challenging, but not frustrating, learning experiences. The preschool professional development available through the Core Knowledge Licensed Professionals introduces teachers to a variety of different strategies and materials to help children learn the knowledge and skills specified in the Preschool Sequence.

Should educational goals and content be individualized for each child on the basis of ability, interests, and learning style?

In the past, some educators, often in their well-intentioned enthusiasm to recognize and address individual learning needs, have made erroneous assumptions about the overall ability of some children to learn. The highly respected Carnegie Corporation addressed this issue in its report, [Years of Promise: A Comprehensive Learning Strategy for America's Children](#) (1996):

“The fact is that differences among children predict little about what they will be able to achieve, when they have the right motivation, attention and support. Overcoming dangerous myths about children's aptitudes ... means expecting all children to master the same ambitious content while recognizing that individual children will progress by different routes and at different rates.”

The Preschool Sequence establishes high standards and expectations for all young children. Experienced, well-trained teachers understand that they must start “where each child is” and then move forward in a very intentional way with each child toward the achievement of these goals. Children in Core Knowledge preschool classrooms share the same educational goals, but teachers meet children where they are on the path to each goal.