



Curriculum and the School Age Curricular Framework An Alignment Review Tool

7.17.13

Purpose and Background: This tool is designed to help your program determine how well a curriculum framework aligns with the outcomes or learning components of the School Age Curricular Framework. A curricular framework or curriculum can be defined as “**what** the teacher teaches and **how** the teacher teaches”.

A school-age 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 a point when every group has their curriculum/programming and assessments aligned with SACF. This alignment is meant to ensure school-age programming is not narrowly focused on certain developmental domains, or that lesser attention is paid to some developmental domains. The School Age Curricular Framework addresses all areas of developmental learning for school-age children. The School Age Curricular Framework is intended to guide decisions on all aspects of program development and implementation, including curriculum and assessment. The SACF is not a curriculum describing what and how to teach.

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 developmental indicators of the School Age Curricular Framework.

- **COVERAGE** refers to how the curriculum addresses each of the developmental indicators.
- **BALANCE** refers to a relatively even representation of all the developmental domains 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 school-age 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. Discuss developmental indicators or outcome measures for your program. The following are *examples* of developmental indicators that demonstrate developmental progress of children. It may be necessary to add additional indicators or outcome measures for your particular program.^{1,2, 3,4}

- **Physical skills development**
- **Exploration of the world beyond home and family**
- **Competency development**
- **Moving towards independence**
- **Development of new thinking abilities**
- **New social skills development**
- **Development of a positive sense of self**

a. Do all group leaders/counselors have a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills included within a developmental indicator?

3. Review the selected curriculum. Does the review of developmental indicators answer these questions:
 - a. Coverage: Does this curriculum cover all or most of the developmental indicators?
 - b. Balance: Does this curriculum provide balanced coverage within and across each of the developmental indicators?
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 group leaders/counselors 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 developmental learning components 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. School-age 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 group leaders/counselors 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 curricula⁵ :

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| - Comprehensive domains of learning | - Individualizing instruction |
| - Specific learning goals | - Ongoing assessment |
| - Well-designed learning experiences | - Family involvement |
| - Intentional teaching | - Appropriate for program staff, children and families |
| - Culturally and linguistically responsive | |

¹ Official Platform of the National Afterschool Association. 2012 – 2013. National AfterSchool Association, McLean, VA. www.naaweb.org.

² Creating Portfolios with Kids in Out-of-School Programs. 2005. Roberta L. Newman. Newroads Media, a Division of Cape Charles Development Company.

³ ACA Youth Outcomes Battery . American Camp Association. 2011. www.ACACamps.org.

⁴ Afterschool Youth Outcomes Inventory. Partnership for After School Education. September 2000. www.pasesetter.org.

⁵ 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.

NOTE: If you have 4 and 5 year old children in a school-age program, the program should use the Curriculum Alignment Review Tool with Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. The WMELS specify developmental expectations for children from birth through entrance to first grade. The WMELS reflect attention to all the domains of a child’s learning and development.

- Is the curriculum covering (**coverage**) all seven of the developmental indicators or outcomes? How comprehensive is each represented? Give examples for each and age group.
 - Physical skills development

- New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family
 - New social skills development
 - Competency development
 - Developing a positive sense of self
 - Moving towards independence
 - Other (program specific)
- 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 with each age group.
 - Physical skills development
 - New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family
 - New social skills development
 - Competency development
 - Developing a positive sense of self
 - Moving towards independence
 - Other (program specific)
- The experiences are linked to specific learning goals and objectives. Give examples for each with each age group.
 - Physical skills development

- New thinking abilities development
- Exploration of the world beyond home and family
- New social skills development
- Competency development
- Developing a positive sense of self
- Moving towards independence
- Other (program specific)

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for planning environments. Give examples for each with each age group.
 - Physical skills development
 - New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family
 - New social skills development
 - Competency development
 - Developing a positive sense of self
 - Moving towards independence
 - Other (program specific)

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for selecting materials. Give examples for each with each age group.
 - Physical skills development
 - New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family

- New social skills development
- Competency development
- Developing a positive sense of self
- Moving towards independence
- Other (program specific)

- The curriculum includes clear guidelines for implementing experiences in the following. Give examples.
 - Physical skills development
 - New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family
 - New social skills development
 - Competency development
 - Developing a positive sense of self
 - Moving towards independence
 - Other (program specific)

- The experiences provide opportunities for children to engage in hands-on active learning. Give examples.
 - Physical skills development
 - New thinking abilities development
 - Exploration of the world beyond home and family
 - New social skills development
 - Competency development
 - Developing a positive sense of self

- Moving towards independence
 - Other (program specific)
- Does the curriculum provide guidance to group leaders/counselors in intentionally planning for 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 group leaders/counselors for individualizing instruction by:
 - Arranging environments
 - Adapting materials
 - Using a variety of child and adult directed teaching strategies
- Does the curriculum provide guidance to group leaders/counselors in creating an environment that reflects the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children? Explain.
- 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?
 - Levels of group leader/counselor qualification?
 - Costs for materials and training?
 - Professional development support and resources are available?