

## Curriculum Scope and Sequence



Head Start Program Performance Standards §1302.32(a)(1)(iii) and §1302.35(d)(1)(iii): Center-based, family child care, and home-based programs must use curricula that have “an organized developmental scope and sequence that include plans and materials for learning experiences based on developmental progressions and how children learn.”

### What does “organized developmental scope and sequence” mean?

An **organized developmental scope and sequence** outlines what the early childhood curriculum focuses on and how the plans and materials support children at different stages of development. The **scope** refers to the areas of development addressed by the curriculum. Scope includes both the breadth (the curriculum addresses development across all of the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (ELOF) domains) and depth (curriculum content addresses specific developmental goals within each sub-domain). A content-rich curriculum ensures that this scope is sufficiently deep that it engages and sustains children’s interests across multiple learning experiences. The **sequence** includes plans and materials for learning experiences to support and extend children’s learning at various levels of development. A sequence of learning experiences progress from less to more complex, with the goal of supporting children as they move through the developmental progressions.

An organized developmental scope and sequence

- helps education staff support children’s development of skills, behavior, and knowledge described in the ELOF and a state’s early learning and development standards;
- includes examples of materials, teaching practices, and learning experiences that support children at different levels of development;
- allows flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children, including dual or tribal language learners and children with disabilities (or those suspected of having delays) and other special needs;
- provides information to education staff that helps them plan and communicate with families and other education partners.

## Why is a scope and sequence so important?

To be effective, curricula must be comprehensive in scope and provide learning experiences specifically designed to support children at various levels of development. A scope and sequence can be a helpful tool that education staff use to plan learning experiences tailored to children's ages and developmental levels. It helps staff look ahead to see where development is going, and intentionally scaffold their learning. It also helps education staff implement research-based teaching practices that support children as they move through the developmental progressions, including those described in the ELOF.

## What does a scope and sequence look like?

Read the following vignette to learn about the scope and sequence in the area of mathematics development in Elmwood Head Start's curriculum.

Elmwood Head Start education staff review their curriculum in the area of mathematics development. The **scope** of the curriculum includes number sense, operations and algebra, measurement, and geometry. The materials and plans for learning experiences are organized around a **sequence** designed to support children at various levels of development. The curriculum offers multiple learning opportunities that support children as they learn to understand simple patterns (ELOF Goal P-MATH 7).

For example, the curriculum includes learning experiences that invite children to experience patterns through movement (e.g., tap-clap-tap-clap) and to describe patterns while playing with colored blocks. Children are encouraged to say the pattern aloud as a group (e.g., red-blue-red-blue) or to fill in the missing element in a pattern (e.g., red-blue-red- ). The curriculum also includes learning experiences that invite children to copy simple patterns (e.g., with stringing beads). At a more advanced level, the curriculum provides learning experiences in which children, with teacher guidance, can create and extend patterns using objects, movements, or sounds.

The lesson plans within each of these learning opportunities describe how education staff can scaffold children's learning and development at various levels (e.g., asking a child earlier in the developmental progression to identify what would come next in a simple pattern, and asking a child later in the developmental progression to describe a pattern the child has created). This sequence of learning experiences supports children as they move along the developmental progression of understanding patterns.

## What do you learn about scope and sequence from this vignette?

- Elmwood Head Start's curriculum supports the development of skills and concepts in the ELOF domain of Cognition: Mathematics Development.
- The scope and sequence includes plans and materials for learning experiences that support children in making progress toward understanding more complex patterns.
- Education staff at Elmwood Head Start can use the curriculum's sequence of learning experiences to respond to different levels of mathematics development.

## Resources to Support Your Work

*The Kids Are in Charge: Children Guiding the Curriculum.* The infant/toddler and preschool Teacher Time webcasts provide useful tips for education staff to plan responsive learning experiences based on children's ages, developmental levels, and interests.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/teacher-time-birth-5-series>

*Tips for Teachers: Dual Language Learners.* This tip sheet provides practical strategies for teachers who work with children who are dual language learners.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/iss/engaging-interactions-2/engaging-interactions-teach-tips-dll.pdf>

*Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning.* Explore these 15-minute In-service Suites to learn how to enrich activities for children with specific learning needs.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/highly-individualized-teaching-learning>