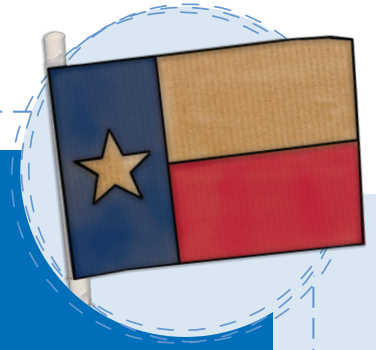


# Get Set for School<sup>®</sup>:

A Complete Pre-K Program for  
Kindergarten Readiness Success



LEARNING  
**Without Tears<sup>®</sup>**

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# I. Call for a Strong Pre-K Curriculum

*Children who attend high quality early childhood programs, where curriculum aims are integrated across the domains, learn more and are better prepared to master the complex demands of formal schooling. Recommendations call for addressing cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development as mutually supportive areas that require active attention in the preschool years.*

— Fulfilling the Promise of Preschool (2006), National Association of State Boards of Education

The Get Set for School Pre-K Program embraces the belief that the preschool years are crucial to a child's academic development. A well-balanced program is one that includes both teacher-led, structured activities that build language skills and content knowledge as well as student-led play that builds gross-motor skills, independence, and creativity (Fuligni et al, 2012). Integrated throughout Get Set for School's learning areas are key social-emotional skills, critical thinking skills, and gross and fine motor skills development.

The National Institute for Early Education Research recommends a curriculum that addresses children's ages, behavior, background, and learning needs; includes assessments to measure whether learning objectives are being met; facilitates family involvement; and is research-based for effectiveness (Frede & Ackerman, 2007).

Children are best served when curricula is based on clearly articulated goals shared by all, builds on children's experiences, is aligned to learning standards and assessments (Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007), and engages teachers and students together in meaningful learning that can be adjusted as needed (Kagan et al, 2012).

Get Set for School's curriculum provides infrastructure to support teacher-student interactions that strengthen effective preschool learning, where "teacher sensitivity, positive relationships, and support for children's autonomy" have a significant impact on child development and learning (Hamre et al, 2014).

## Improved Academic Outcomes

It is well established that a strong preschool program is critical for the academic achievement of children as they enter elementary school and progress onward.

*"In terms of what is taught, we know that children in Pre-K classrooms that spend time on the key academic content areas, such as literacy, language, and mathematics, have an academic advantage as they enter early elementary school"*

(Downer & Pianta, 2006).

Furthermore, the International Reading Association (2005) found that children who have experiences with language and literacy in high-quality preschool settings have productive futures.

## The Importance of Play

A growing body of research shows that every competency important to school success is enhanced by play (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002; Singer et al, 2003; Singer et al, 2006). For example, high-quality pretend play is related to children's abilities to begin to think abstractly and to take the perspectives of others (Bergen, 2002; Berk et al, 2006; Singer et al, 2003). According to Shonkoff (2000), play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. "Preschool children need to play, refine their motor skills, and practice their imaginative abilities" (Hirsh-Pasek et al, 2008). Moreover, active teachers can leverage children's ideas and interests to promote learning through play, circle-time, and small-group activities (Ginsburg, 2006).

Get Set for School addresses physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills, which are crucial for school readiness and will meet children where they are. The curriculum uses play-based, interactive, and multimodal lessons to teach developmentally appropriate social skills throughout the curriculum. Get Set for School lessons and activities incorporate play in multiple ways for effective instruction and learning. For example, children will act out words to learn new vocabulary or recite a story for dictation and then act it out in correct sequence. Play also facilitates the teaching of letters with mystery letter games, drawing, and building as children make connections and learn new concepts.

## Get Set for School Meets the Needs for a 21st Century Curriculum

Get Set for School prepares children for elementary school with a robust curriculum that incorporates academic content areas aligned to state learning standards and supports instruction that values a balance of structure and play, social-emotional learning, and ongoing assessment and communication between teachers, families, and support staff.

Throughout the 36-week curriculum in the *Get Set for School Pre-K Teacher's Guide Set* (Volume 2), children are provided with learning opportunities based on real-world needs, problems, and activities. Each unit is focused on a theme directly related to students' lives: Get Set for School, My Body, Community & Play, Earth, Machines, and Animals. Within each theme, the daily lessons are cross-curricular and integrated in an authentic way.



## II. Get Set for School's Curriculum

*An effective pre-kindergarten literacy program is one that, according to Vukelich & Christie (2004), provides a balanced curriculum that addresses emerging literacy skills in the context of social-emotional and cognitive developmentally appropriate experiences.*

Pre-K children enter the classroom with differing and continually evolving abilities. They are not all developmentally ready to learn the same skills at the same time (Schmidt, et al, 2007). To meet the needs of Pre-K children, a curriculum must be accessible at all points within the wide spectrum of needs and skills (Kotob, M.M. & Jbaili, F., 2020). It should invite participation, build a base of understanding, and challenge children's thinking (NRC, 2001; Scott, 2015). Teachers need support to meet all children where they are as they develop throughout the year.

Therefore, Get Set for School teaches in a developmental order by starting at a level that does not assume prior knowledge or competency. We enable children to excel by respecting their present level of development and building from there. There are certain skills that children need to learn explicitly through instruction (Mashburn, et al, 2008; Reutzel, et al, 2014; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011). We prepare children with essential early literacy skills for reading and writing by first teaching them to recognize, name, and write letters and numbers and then how to listen for and say sounds. Get Set for School also provides teachers with the tools to teach critical social skills through modeling, practice, exploration, and discovery across all content domains.

Preschoolers learn through movement and participation (Lengel & Kuczala, 2010; Furmanek, 2014; Scott, 2015). They need explicit, modeled instruction (Mashburn, et al, 2008; Reutzel, et al, 2014; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011) and playful learning opportunities to explore and internalize new ideas (Singer et al, 2006; Singer et al, 2003).

*Our multimodal, playful approach is at the heart of our success because young children are not ready to sit still and focus for long periods of time.*

Children learn best when they move, manipulate objects, build, sing, draw, and participate in dramatic play. Preschoolers thrive when instruction is differentiated depending on individual needs, and teachers require tools to help them meet these needs (Kotob & Jbaili, 2020).

Our unique Pre-K program makes teaching easy and rewarding with:

- A research-based approach that uses several resources of engagement, representation, and expression to involve a child's whole body and her senses in learning.
- Developmental progression that builds on what children already know
- Friendly language that connects with children
- Multimodal-multisensory lessons that break difficult concepts into simple tasks
- Hands-on materials that increase child engagement and make learning fun
- Technology solutions for students and teachers
- English and Spanish materials for English language learners

### A. LEARNING AREAS

The Get Set for School curriculum prepares young learners for school with the following learning areas: Language & Literacy, Readiness & Writing, Numbers & Math, Oral Language, Science, and Social Studies.

The focus of the curriculum is on classroom instruction with multisensory tools and interpersonal engagement between students and teachers. These tools engage children with multiple learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile). For example, when children use dough to form letters, they see, move, and touch. When they learn letters and say them aloud, they see the letters and hear the letter sounds. This provides more pathways for them to acquire and retain knowledge easily and effectively.

In addition, the PreK Interactive Teaching Tool (PreKITT) is a digital platform that allows teachers to manage and teach Get Set for School's curriculum. Teachers will have a variety of multimedia assets to seamlessly link technology into the classroom to make learning fun. PreKITT enhances both the teaching and learning experience as it includes digital teacher guides, animations, books, music, instructional videos and more. Children also can explore and use a variety of digital tools through the Student App to support with letter recognition, formation, etc. Educators can easily toggle between English and Spanish versions.

## LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

"Increasingly, early childhood is viewed as a sensitive period for the development of key cognitive, literacy, and language skills; in turn, these skills appear to be shaped by child characteristics and family, child care, and early classroom experiences" (Morrison & Cooney, 2002). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2003, 2009) and The International Reading Association (1998) suggest that the period from birth through age eight is the single best time in a child's life to develop literacy skills. The Get Set for School program provides explicit literacy instruction through modeling and direct instruction to help children make relevant connections to movement, narrative, and word and language concepts.

According to the National Early Literacy Panel (2009), reading instruction must be deliberate and well-planned. Literacy experts and educators know that children who receive early literacy experiences are more likely to become proficient readers. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) identifies print awareness, phonological awareness, oral language, vocabulary, reading readiness, and comprehension as key concepts that children need to acquire to become competent readers and writers. The Get Set for School Language & Literacy learning area uses a hands-on approach to integrate each of these core concepts, filling the need for child-friendly and joyful literacy experiences.

The Get Set for School Language & Literacy learning area helps children build language skills in context so that new letters (symbols) and words have meaning and relevance. Because reading and writing skills support each other and develop in tandem, the learning area gives children the foundation in letter recognition and letter sound recognition to build reading skills. Children understand that print has meaning and they can use it to express themselves. Lessons encourage children to say the words along with the teacher during storytelling.

## Phonological Awareness

Extensive research has demonstrated that the more time children are immersed in language-rich environments, the greater reading success they have later. Preschool language skills support the emergence of phonological awareness—identifying individual sounds (phonemes) within words and combinations of sounds within syllables (phonics) (NRP, *Reading Advice to Teachers*, 2005; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998; Lonigan et al., 2000)—which by the middle elementary school years these skills play a major role in supporting reading comprehension (Storch and Whitehurst, 2002; Biemiller, 1999; Walker et al, 1994).

"Nursery rhymes, rhyming games, and finger plays provide an engaging and fun avenue for children to learn the sounds and rhythms of language. Children who have knowledge of nursery rhymes develop stronger phonological awareness skills" (MacLean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987). The Get Set for School Language & Literacy learning area helps children develop phonological awareness with playful rhymes, alliteration, and activities that focus on beginning/ending sounds, and word parts.

Research indicates a sequence of phonological awareness skills from easiest (segmenting and blending the parts of compound words) to hardest (segmenting and blending the individual phonemes in words) although not necessarily in "lock-step" but rather in "over-lapping phases" (ILA, 2019; Lonigan, 2008). "Children's skill using and understanding sentences (syntax) and extended stretches of language are related to reading success and significant problems with these areas of language often are associated with reading problems" (Bishop and Adams, 1990; 1990, 1991, 2001).

The Get Set for School curriculum provides an explicit, systematic, multisensory instructional approach to phonological awareness that afford students many opportunities to identify, synthesize, and analyze sounds. Our research-based developmental approach to phonological awareness will allow children to hear and manipulate sounds in isolation as well as within words.



Children learn and revisit the following skills from the phonological awareness domain:

- Identify sounds and discriminate sounds
- Discriminate words
- Recognize rhyming words and make rhyming words
- Find words in a sentence and build sentences with words
- Segment compound words and build compound words
- Recognize syllables, blend syllables, and segment syllables
- Segment onset and rime and combine onset and rime
- Repeat beginning sounds, identify beginning sounds, and produce beginning sounds
- Identify ending sounds and produce beginning sounds

## Alphabet Knowledge

"Alphabet recognition is one of the major early literacy skills that are predictive of children's later reading development" (IRA/NAEYC, 1998; National Center for Family Literacy, 2007).

Alphabet knowledge combines the recognition of letters with other skills related to print. "As with concepts about print, concepts of word and letter can evolve from teacher modeling to student participation as children become comfortable with the terms" (Beauchat, Blamey & Walpole, 2009).

Get Set for School lessons teach children to identify capital and lowercase letters by sight and by name. Children learn how these letter symbols work together to form printed words that have meaning, and they understand how printed words relate to spoken language. Get Set for School's alphabet knowledge lessons are grounded in research. Students will be explicitly instructed in a strategic, systematic, and sequential manner.

In Get Set for School, children learn the following alphabet knowledge skills:

- Distinguish letters from pictures
- Recognize letters and position letters
- Recognize letters in name and identify letters in name
- Identify capital letters
- Identify lowercase letters
- Match capital and lowercase letters
- Use letter names and produce letter sounds
- Use digraphs

## Print Concepts

According to Stanovich (1993), "One of the most powerful experiential determinants of individual differences in vocabulary and declarative knowledge is exposure to print." Furthermore, book and print awareness are important for later reading success (National Center for Family Literacy, 2007; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

The Get Set for School curriculum provides many opportunities for students to receive explicit instruction in print awareness and concepts about print. Our multisensory language and literacy lessons follow a developmentally appropriate sequence to allow students to develop print awareness knowledge. Throughout the Get Set for School Language & Literacy learning area, children learn concepts about print through visual recognition from cues within the classroom and through recitation of letters and words during read-alouds and other interactive activities.

The Get Set for School *My Book* is a child's personal storybook and a special way to explore the wonders of books and words. Children are the authors and the illustrators as they draw themselves in pictures and share their own experiences about people, places, and things. As they work through *My Book*, children learn concepts about print, develop oral language, and build vocabulary.

Students will also develop an understanding of the everyday function of print in their school environment and beyond through ample opportunities to practice, including reciting stories or narrative sequences as the teacher takes dictation and repeats the narrative back to them.

In Get Set for School, children learn the following concepts about print skills:

- Distinguishing print from pictures
- Recognizing book parts
- Following text from left to right
- Recognizing names
- Distinguishing letters, words, and sentences
- Recognizing signs



## Vocabulary Building

Vocabulary instruction through read-alouds, as well as through direct instruction, have a significant impact on language acquisition and reading comprehension, particularly in the early years (Biemiller, 2007; Biemiller, 2010). In addition to read-alouds, vocabulary researchers Blachowicz and Fisher (2004) recommend a variety of “rich oral language experiences” that include “word play” and an “awareness of words.” Revisiting vocabulary in multiple contexts is also critical to learning and being able to comprehend and use language (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004). Children learn through their experiences, including play, developing new concepts and both acquiring and refining their understanding of words. (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

Rich vocabulary is a key element of the Get Set for School curriculum, because vocabulary comprehension is essential to reading comprehension and academic success. When children grasp a word’s meaning, they understand what that word represents, and in turn, they understand the relationships of ideas and concepts that go with that word (Stahl & Murray, 1994; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Children with inadequate vocabulary comprehension have weaker reading comprehension and, as a result, choose to read less. Although economically disadvantaged students and English language learners often enter school with language deficits, a strong literacy program in the early years has been proven to help these students enrich their vocabulary and comprehension (Blachowicz et al, 2006)

Vocabulary instruction in Get Set for School follows a progression of vocabulary development that is age and sequentially appropriate. Vocabulary development activities are provided at first to expand students’ understanding of the school day. Vocabulary lessons begin with familiar concrete word experiences in which many children have background knowledge and then expand that knowledge with hands-on and active lessons. Conversation between classmates is encouraged in many of the directly taught lessons. These lessons are designed to enrich and expand understanding of spoken vocabulary, to practice using vocabulary accurately, and to provide a vocabulary-rich classroom climate in which children can begin to use new words independently and speak using complete sentences without teacher direction.

The Get Set for School curriculum gives teachers many opportunities to teach rich vocabulary and model language appropriately and through enjoyable activities. Vocabulary instruction reaches beyond Language & Literacy lessons

and is interwoven across learning areas, and in particular: Numbers & Math, Oral Language, Science, and Social Studies. For example, in math, students practice counting with the word “scarves,” sorting geometric shapes (circles, squares, triangles, etc.), graphing concepts such as “rows,” and eventually comparing different animals: beaver, bird, bear, etc. The continuity between lesson plans helps authentically reinforce concepts and vocabulary taught in many content areas.

## Reading Comprehension

For preschoolers, their first experience with reading comprehension happens during read-alouds. In order for children to make meaning of a text, they need the opportunity to ask and answer questions, engage in reciprocal teaching whereby they “take responsibility for the text,” and experience the text in multiple ways (IRA/NAEYC, 2009; NICHD, 2000; NICHD, 2005).

Read-alouds are an integral part of the Get Set for School curriculum in Language & Literacy and in Science and Social Studies. Children have multiple opportunities to listen to texts, ask questions, and answer questions. Children make meaning from texts that are read to them through the model:

“I do it, We do it, You do it,” and through reciprocal teaching which often takes the form of dramatic play.

Evidence shows that early success at reading acquisition leads to a lifetime of reading habits (NICHD, 2008; Juel, 1988; Juel, Griffith, & Gough, 1986; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Stanovich, 1986, 1993). Reading Comprehension for preschoolers begins first with foundational skills, including phonological awareness (phonemes, phonics, and print) and progresses towards oral fluency as young readers “read text aloud with accuracy, speed, and proper expression” (IRA/NAEYC, 1998, 2009; NICHD, 2000; NICHD, 2005). Vocabulary development is the foundation of developing comprehension in reading (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

Content-rich texts are essential for the development of literacy skills as children attempt to make sense of the world around them (Neuman, 2014). According to literacy expert Susan Neuman (2014), the integration of literacy skills across disciplines and with guidance and opportunities to play is essential to developing critical neural networks. Throughout the Get Set for School curriculum, children will engage with a variety of high quality, appropriately leveled texts of all types and genres that span across a variety of

content areas. Children will explore new places, discover new ideas, and learn about new and exciting characters through engaging nursery rhymes, fairy tales, finger plays, songs, poems, fiction, and nonfiction texts.

Fun, interactive read-aloud tips can be found in the *Get Set for School Pre-K Teacher's Guide Set* (Volume 1) to effectively integrate books into the Pre-K classroom. The Get Set for School Read-Aloud Library is incorporated throughout the curriculum and supports teachers connecting texts to children's experiences at home and school. The teacher's guide offers additional book title suggestions that are connected to the Get Set for School Pre-K Program units, content, and Pre-K standards. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) book titles, tips, and resources are provided for integrating SEL each day into the Pre-K classroom (see *Books All Year*, Volume 1). More book titles and suggestions are made throughout the curriculum in activities and in *Suggestions for 3-Year-Olds*. Classroom reading materials are available in English and Spanish sets, and both sets include some bilingual texts.

## READINESS AND WRITING

Active, hands-on activities foster a love of learning in the Pre-K classroom. Exposure to readiness skills happens best in a context where children learn at their own pace, in their own way. Get Set for School taps into that natural tendency toward gaining and testing knowledge with implicit hands-on instruction that, according to Jensen (2001), is more lasting and has greater meaning for children. Jensen further states that hands-on learning creates more neural networks in the brain and employs more senses. There is also significant empirical evidence correlating cognitive development and fine motor skills, in particular reading, writing, speaking, (Grissmer et al, 2010) and math skills (Cain-Caston, 1996; Heuser, 2000; Moch, 2002). Several studies also note that fine motor skills are a strong predictor of later achievement (Grissmer et al, 2010; Gonzalez et al, 2019). ). While a child's development of fine motor skills may impact their ability to write legibly, this should not limit their opportunities for meaningful writing experiences in the classroom (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

Get Set for School follows expert recommendations for a developmental progression that incorporates a range of activities and teaching strategies to support emerging handwriting skills (Olsen 2008, Spear- Swearling 2006).

Through play and explicit instruction, children progress through the following domains:

- Readiness
- Drawing
- Colors & Coloring
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Pre-Writing
- Writing
- Writing Lowercase Letters

### Readiness

Get Set for School teaches beginning social-emotional and readiness skills, such as developing fine motor skills, learning to hold a crayon, introducing Wood Pieces to help children learn body parts, position words, and the vocabulary to describe capital letters and numbers. Our curriculum provides guidance to teachers on how to directly introduce and model letter names, letter sounds, and the formation of letters. Each letter has several explicit lessons that follow an "I Do, We Do, You Do" multisensory approach.

### Drawing, Colors & Coloring

In order to build children's fine motor skills, critical in preparing to write, Get Set for School teaches children fundamental drawing skills, such as crayon grip, colors, directions, and coloring in simple pictures and shapes. Children learn about Mat Man®, a storybook character that children build on the floor. This activity is enjoyable and proven effective. It enables children of all abilities to draw Mat Man and anyone else. Children draw with small bits of chalk or crayons at an easel as well as in *My First School Book* and *My First Lowercase Book* which invite and encourage drawing.

## Alphabet Knowledge and Pre-Writing

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between alphabet knowledge and reading and writing skills (Adams, 1990; Honig, 2001; Berninger et al., 2006; Stevenson & Newman, 1986; Treiman, 1993). Children develop alphabet knowledge across learning areas in Get Set for School through singing, speaking, matching, sorting, and naming—before they begin writing letters.

In the Readiness & Writing learning area, alphabet knowledge is reinforced through the lens of teaching letter formation, long before children are ready for paper and pencil. Get Set for School teaches letter by letter, and word by word. Using developmentally appropriate manipulatives, children learn to build, roll, or air write capital letters. Lowercase letters with similar formation groups are introduced based on the developmental principles of Arnold Gesell, Ph.D. (Gesell, 1940). This knowledge helps children build a strong foundation for both reading and writing as they become increasingly familiar with letter symbols and meanings.

## Writing and Writing Lowercase Letters

The Get Set for School program teaches writing as a process and letter formation. For formation, children learn the correct habits for writing and school readiness in a developmental progression based on fine motor skills research (Dosman et al, 2012). Children begin with learning grip and then we use a developmental teaching order based on stroke acquisition (vertical lines, horizontal lines, curves, then diagonals).

The program uses the “My Turn, Your Turn” approach to direct instruction. Students are instructed by the teacher to “Wait, watch me. My turn first.” The teacher demonstrates, and then students are asked to imitate throughout all Readiness & Writing lessons for letters (and Numbers & Math lessons for numbers). The truly scaffolded approach builds on skills daily and keeps children confident and joyful through the process as they enjoy success every day.

With writing as a process, children have opportunities for group writing on shared experiences, drawing that transfers into writing, and writing/drawing in response to reading, as well as revising class drafts.

## NUMBERS AND MATH

Young children show a natural interest in and enjoyment of mathematics. Seo and Ginsburg (2004) find that long before entering school, “children spontaneously explore and use mathematics—at least the intuitive beginnings—and their mathematical knowledge can be quite complex and sophisticated.” “Although most U.S. children enter school with a basic understanding of number, their knowledge is limited to small whole numbers and heavily influenced by the context in which the numbers appear” (NRC, *Adding It Up*, 2001). Many preschool programs miss out on the opportunity to leverage children’s interest in math and develop it adequately in preparation for elementary school (NRC, *Mathematics learning in early childhood: paths toward excellence and equity*, 2009).

The mathematics that children learn from preschool through the middle grades provides the foundation for algebra and more advanced mathematics course work. Even before they enter kindergarten, most children develop considerable knowledge of numbers and other aspects of mathematics (Duncan et al, 2007; Clements & Sarama, 2007 & 2009).

*The Get Set for School Numbers & Math learning area taps into and nurtures young learners’ innate math skills to enable them to learn more advanced concepts in subsequent years.*

The Get Set for School curriculum addresses each of these key mathematical concepts and follows the National Standards in Mathematics (NCTM, 2000) and the National Research Council (2009) recommendations that early childhood math experiences “concentrate on (1) number[s] (which includes whole number, operations, and relations) and (2) geometry, spatial relationships, and measurement” with a greater concentration of time focused on number concepts.

“Furthermore, other findings link math foundations with improved outcomes in literacy, science, and technology, as well” (Duncan et al., 2007). The Get Set for School Numbers & Math learning area helps children organize their math thinking so that they can make connections to everyday experiences and concepts to reinforce learning. The Get Set for School program engages young children with manipulatives and active lessons, helping them observe and explore the mathematical dimensions of their world (Boggan et al, 2010). They compare quantities, find patterns, take measurements, count objects, and navigate in space.

## Number and Operations

Recent research (Duncan, et al., 2007) has shown that children’s knowledge of numbers and ordinality is “one of the most powerful predictors of later learning” in all areas. The National Council of Teachers of Math (2006) recommends that Pre-K students should “develop an understanding of the meanings of whole numbers and recognize the number of objects in small groups without counting and by counting [to 10 and beyond].”

The Get Set for School Numbers & Math learning area incorporates active lessons that promote number recognition, formation, and counting. Number operations are integral to the Pre-K environment. Children manipulate and count objects in the room, sing songs that reinforce number concepts, and participate in different activities that explore numbers.

The program teaches children Number & Operations words and symbols for what they already know, while expanding their basic ideas about numbers to a solid understanding of quantities. They learn to count using their own bodies. For example, they learn that they have “1 head, 2 eyes, 1 nose, 10 fingers....” Pre-K students understanding of mathematical concepts is built on informal knowledge about quantities observed in their own lives before they are introduced to such concepts through formal instruction (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015). Pre-K children develop number sense, investigate relationships among numbers, and explore the properties of numbers.

Children also explore numbers through fine motor skill development. Similar to their experience with alphabet knowledge developed in Readiness & Writing, children explore number activities, tracing numbers, and manipulating objects as they are counting them.

## Geometry and Spatial Relationships

According to the National Research Council (NRC, *Mathematics learning in early childhood: paths toward excellence and equity*, 2009), the study of geometry and measurement helps children develop ways to mentally structure the spaces and objects around them. “In addition, these provide a context for children to develop further their ability to reason mathematically” (NRC, *Mathematics learning in early childhood: paths toward excellence and equity*, 2009).

The study of geometry and the way objects and people relate to each other in space is important to young learners as they develop an understanding of the world around them and their place in it. Get Set for School lessons give children hands-on tools to understand spatial concepts through developmentally appropriate pattern, puzzle, and sorting exercises and tools. We believe that children can go beyond simple identification of shapes to understand each shape’s characteristics.

Newcombe and Frick (2010) confirm that “mental spatial transformation abilities, while present in some precursory form in infants, toddlers, and preschool children, also undergo considerable development and show important individual differences which are malleable.” This means that Pre-K children are capable of spatial thinking and can learn geometry concepts at the Pre-K level. Doing so helps them “improve spatial functioning in general, but also reduces differences related to gender and socioeconomic status that may impede full participation in a technological society” (Newcombe & Frick, 2010).

Another study found that with training, “twice as many 5-year-olds produced rectilinear reaction time patterns that are indicative of mental rotation strategy” (Newcombe & Frick 2010; Platt & Cohen, 1981). Get Set for School promotes such spatial thinking with tools and activities that get children to slide, flip, and turn objects to match patterns, complete sequences, and solve puzzles.



## Patterns and Algebra

Fostering children's ability to reason and problem solve "is a long-lasting outcome that will benefit students throughout their mathematics education" (Sadler, 2009). Algebra is an area of math that uses symbols, letters, and patterns to solve problems. Children love to notice and make patterns. Get Set for School engages children in seeing and extending patterns to build observation, thinking, and problem-solving skills. Simple repetitive patterns and even simple growing patterns can build the foundation for understanding more complex mathematical patterns in the future.

Kimberly Brenneman, assistant research professor at NIEER (National Institute for Early Education Research) and co-author of NIEER's math and science policy brief (2009), says, "Given the opportunity, preschoolers will use math and science-related thinking to solve problems even though they may not be aware they are doing so." Brenneman further states that high-quality Pre-K classrooms support math and science by providing experiences that encourage numerical reasoning and lead to investigations of objects by considering their sizes, quantities, measurements, spatial relationships, and various other aspects.

*In Get Set for School lessons, children engage in explorations of math and science ideas, and teachers interact with them in intentional ways to help them extend their knowledge and reasoning.*

Get Set for School provides positive experiences for using mathematics to solve problems. As a result, children develop curiosity, imagination, flexibility, and inventiveness that contributes to their future success in and out of school.

## Measurement and Time

We know children are ready to learn measurement concepts during the Pre-K years. "Many students use measurement instruments or count units in rote fashion" (Clements & Battista, 1992). According to Clement, Sarama, and DiBiase (2004), "Preschool children know that continuous attributes such as mass, length, and weight exist, although they cannot quantify or measure them

accurately. At age 4–5 years, however, most children can learn to overcome perceptual cues and make progress in reasoning about and measuring quantities."

"Measurement should not be taught as a simple skill; instead, it is a complex combination of concepts and skills that develops slowly over years" (Clements et al, 2004). Clement, Sarama, and DiBiase (2004) also note that emphasis should be on children solving real measurement problems to develop strong concepts and skills. They also found that measurement is particularly relevant to young children because it is one of the real-world applications of mathematics. It bridges geometry or spatial relationships and real numbers.

Get Set for School lessons provide many avenues for teaching young children to measure in a way that is relevant and memorable. Activities and math tools encourage the use of non-standard units of measurement, such as lining up objects like blocks or bags, to see how many of those objects it takes to span a bookshelf, a table, or a chair. Use of familiar music, movement, and object manipulation takes the mystery and fear out of measurement lessons.

## Data Representation and Probability

According to the 2003 NAEYC/NCTM joint position statement, it is important to "weave mathematics into children's experiences with literature, language, science, social studies, art, movement, music, and all parts of the classroom environment." Data representation activities help children organize information (for example, answers to a problem-solving question) in a visual way and connect mathematics to other subject areas. Data representations are a good way to connect questions in children's real worlds with numbers. Pictographs can be created in response to almost any Pre-K question, such as favorite ice cream or number of pets. Probability portrayed through data helps children answer questions about our world about the likelihood of future events (for example, how likely it is a student in their class has a pet at home). In this way math helps children make sense of their day and world.

As Francis Wardle (2007) explains, "Math knowledge and dispositions are not created in a vacuum. Math is about manipulating things: objects, shapes, concepts, and relationships; reproducing and documenting the world; and constructing, building, and estimating... Thus, we must provide a myriad of opportunities for young children to have direct, concrete experiences in the real world."

*Oral language skills are important in the Pre-K environment because "narrative capacity forms the foundation for reading comprehension, the ability to produce coherent writing, and the ability to understand subjects such as history, social studies, and science"*

(Fein et al., 2000; Jones & Cooper, 2006; Kim, 1999; Nicolopoulou et al., 2006; Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004).

## ORAL LANGUAGE

Children begin to learn language from birth. As they grow and develop, so do their language skills. Pre-K children learn to understand and use language to express their feelings, thoughts, and observations. These skills are key to the development of reading and writing skills (Snow et al., 1998). Children learn new vocabulary words and develop oral language skills by social interaction and listening to, retelling, and narrating stories. "It is the talk that surrounds a storybook reading that gives it power, helping children to bridge what is in the story and their own lives" (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Snow et al., 1995).

These language skills have a tremendous impact upon Pre-K students' reading and writing abilities as they progress through school (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

Within the units, the Get Set for School Oral Language lessons are organized by days of the week and taught on Mondays (action verbs), Wednesdays (adjectives), and Fridays (asking and answering questions). Children physically express ideas, such as walking slowly or skipping lightly, so that adjectives and adverbs go from being abstract concepts to real world experiences. These connections foster long-lasting understanding.

The Get Set for School program uses directed actions, multisensory tools, and active exercises to draw children into a lesson and help them learn new words. The teacher introduces objects or pictures, and children touch them, point to them, and say what they are. Through the "I Say, We Say, You Say" approach of lessons, children develop both listening and speaking skills.

## Listening and Speaking Skills

Before children enter school, oral language is the primary source of vocabulary acquisition (Beck & McKeown, 2007). However, according to literacy experts Beck and McKeown (2007), once children enter school, aural (listening) contexts are rarely rich enough in new vocabulary to build the speaking skills that prepare them to read. Furthermore, studies indicate that listening to read-alouds, for example, must be followed up with direct instruction that reinforces contextual understanding of new vocabulary (Coyne et al., 2004; Wasik & Bond, 2001). Therefore, oral language (listening and speaking skills) in preschool must be intentionally enriched with vocabulary that prepares children to be successful readers.

From the onset of the Get Set for School curriculum, direct instruction of concepts and improving listening skills are explicitly and repeatedly taught. Initially, simple body positioning and eye contact lessons teach children to use active listening skills by looking directly at someone while speaking with them. Lessons reinforce the concept of look/listen and review the importance of body position while addressing others. Students hear and say individual words and appropriate sentence structure and grammar as they participate in tri-weekly Oral Language activities while using Word Time.

Furthermore, listening skills are assessed by the teacher in every lesson in the instructional design of all lessons. Check for Understanding questions appear at point-of-use with each lesson for all learning areas: Language & Literacy, Readiness & Writing, Numbers & Math, Oral Language, Science, and Social Studies.

Classroom discussion with the puppet, Squawker, and the Word Time program bring conversation to life and makes conversation informative, fun, and engaging for the children. Puppet play allows teachers to model communication conventions in a unique and engaging way that Pre-K children adore. Conversation with the puppet introduces new vocabulary and models vocabulary usage. Children are then prompted to speak using new vocabulary appropriately in complete sentences and conversation.

Guidance is provided to develop speaking skills of children throughout the curriculum but is specifically addressed through the Oral Language lessons. These activities lay a foundation that encourages all Pre-K children to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically and boosts children's vocabulary, thinking, and speaking skills in a way that elicits joyful participation.

## SCIENCE

Children can learn key science concepts and essential approaches to learning through experimentation and inquiry in a hands-on, inquiry-based setting. In fact, researchers point out that it is essential these two components of science learning go hand-in-hand, as opposed to teaching concepts in isolation (Greenfield, White, and Bustamante, 2016). Greenfield, et al., describe the mutual benefits of teaching investigative science explorations alongside key approaches to learning in preschool (asking questions, verbalizing frustrations, seeking answers to problems, collaborating with peers, and solving problems efficiently). These explorations allow students to use their senses to “classify and sort objects, make observations and predictions, problem-solve, compare, and question” (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

Historically, science instruction has often been left out of preschool curricula despite children’s natural inclination toward investigation, experimentation, and inquiry (Greenfield et al, 2016). Recent studies have found that most children, especially the socio-economically disadvantaged, have a significant deficit in their understanding of science concepts and skills associated with thoughtful science curriculum and instruction (Greenfield et al, 2009, as cited in Greenfield et al, 2016).

We believe that science is an essential part of the Pre-K classroom experience and that science is learned through the “practice of science” (NRC, 2007). Science activities spark the imagination of young explorers as they learn about the world around them. Preschoolers are “scientists-in-waiting” (Gelman et al, 2010). Science lessons in Get Set for School cover themes of basic geography, self-care, plants, animals, and caring for the environment. Pre-K teachers can foster and build children’s **scientific inquiry** skills and take advantage of their natural curiosity and budding understanding of abstract concepts (Gelman et al, 2010; NRC, 2007).

Throughout Get Set for School’s curriculum, children build scientific thinking through discovery experiments, investigating activities, and inquiry-based instruction and exploration. Children have authentic opportunities to develop their observation, questioning, critical thinking, and communication skills. They explore their environment using a variety of scientific tools as they develop early science skills in one of our four science domains: scientific inquiry, physical science, life science, and earth science.

The Scientific Inquiry domain consists of observation, investigation, documentation, and communication

of interactive, hands-on experiences as well as time to process data. In Get Set for School, children will explore many areas, including sound, light, water, and nature. Since it is critical that children have numerous opportunities to test out these skills with a range of activities (Gelman et al, 2010; NRC, 2007), scientific inquiry is built into each of the 6 units throughout the curriculum through playful, enjoyable science activities.

The **Physical Science** domain pertains to properties and characteristics of nonliving objects and materials and the changes in nonliving objects and materials. In Get Set for School, children explore simple and complex machines, such as carts (wheel and axle), shovels and oars (levers), ramps and bridges (inclined planes), and pulleys through hands-on activities.

The **Life Science** domain in Get Set for School encompasses the properties and characteristics of living things and changes in living things. Children learn about the life cycles of plants, similarities and differences between living things, animals in their habitats, and the essential and changing needs of humans and animals as they mature from babies to adults.

The **Earth Science** domain in Get Set for School includes properties and characteristics of earth materials, objects, and changes in the Earth. Children explore Earth, sun, and sky; learn about caring for the environment, including recycling; and investigate different types of scientific professions (environmental scientist, aviation scientist, botanist, meteorologist, physicist, hydrologist).

## SOCIAL STUDIES

According to the National Council for the Social Studies (2017), preschool is the ideal environment for an engaging social studies curriculum that takes advantage of children’s “natural interest in the world around them.” The Get Set for School curriculum values social studies as an integral and enjoyable part of learning in the Pre-K classroom. Through discovery play and exploratory activities, children develop early social studies skills in these four domains: self and family, community, history, and geography. Teachers actively engage with the children and build on children’s awareness of these skills.

The learning gap for social studies, prior to elementary school, mirrors that of science with similar consequences for later education and academic success (Chapin, 2010). Children need to be introduced to key concepts in the preschool setting through a variety of engaging interactive experiences to be well prepared for elementary school and citizenship in general (Checkley, 2008).



Checkley (2008) states that social studies curriculum should be “meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.”

Furthermore, social studies helps to develop children’s “abilities to form and voice opinions, identify and solve problems, negotiate roles, perceive diversity and inequality, and recognize the consequences of their decisions and behaviors on others (NCSS, 2017). Through social studies, children develop the ability to understand themselves, which is a foundation for learning about others and the world (Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, 2015). Social studies lessons provide the opportunity for educators to develop critical approaches to learning (language and communication, critical thinking, engagement, and persistence) while also instilling in children the fundamental components of living in a “democratic society” (NCSS, 2017).

The **Self and Family** domain in Get Set for School focuses on culture, diversity, relationships, social roles, and occupations. For example, children share and learn about each other’s families, the relatives that comprise them, and cultural celebrations.

The **Community** domain in Get Set for School relates to skills for participation by vote, good conduct, being fair, and having respect for others. For instance, children share and document opinions on various topics including how friends share, different jobs within the community and beyond, similarities and differences between home and school, along with greetings from those languages. Included in these comparisons is learning how to share and graph data through charts and Venn diagrams.

The **History** domain in Get Set for School includes understanding past events, planning future events, and personal history. For example, children consider how they have changed over time, strategize to solve problems such as bullying, and plan a celebration to thank the school support staff.

The **Geography** domain in Get Set for School includes finding their way in familiar locations and understanding the physical world through drawings and maps. For instance, children make and use maps to familiar school locations with the teacher, compare the size of different countries, and identify geographical features.

## B. CONNECTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT

The National Research Council’s Early Education Committee recommends a curriculum that addresses content domains specifically and integrates them across the curriculum so students have a “broad-base of domain specific knowledge,” develop rich vocabularies, and are prepared for a “variety of classroom structures” as they move into elementary school (NRC, *Eager to Learn*, 2001).

Throughout each of the Get Set for School six-week units (Get Set for School, My Body, Community and Play, Earth, Machines, and Animals) skills and content are introduced across all learning domains in an appropriate, developmental sequence. Each week has a focus topic (i.e., School and Friends’ Names), which is then developed in each content area that week (Language & Literacy, Readiness & Writing, Numbers & Math, Oral Language, Science, and Social Studies). For each day, multiple learning standards are articulated within a given lesson so students develop these skills through repetition and engagement in a variety of ways. Get Set for School recognizes that children need to be actively engaged with lessons that intentionally activate prior knowledge and skills, especially when called upon to problem solve (NRC, *Eager to Learn*, 2001).

In the *Get Set for School Pre-K Teacher’s Guide Set* (Volume 2), teachers can identify learning standards for each lesson that are taught across learning domains by using the following key: (see figure 1)

For example, this Language & Literacy lesson includes four standards indicated in the “We’re Learning” section (Approaches to Learning/Social-Emotional Learning, Language/Communication, Mathematics, and Science). As children develop their language and vocabulary skills, they are also developing skills in these other domains. This pattern of repetition and approaching skills in multiple ways across domains is intentionally integrated into each content area so that children are called upon to activate prior knowledge and develop lasting understandings of content and skills. (see figure 2)

## Cognitive Development through the Arts

Get Set for School's multimodal lessons and hands learning activities expose children to fine arts, as well as fine and gross motor skills, through a variety of mediums including dance, music, dramatic play, painting, drawing, and movement. Children will have many opportunities to explore and create a variety of authentic pieces of art in all learning areas, as well as celebrate each other's art.

The Get Set for School curriculum incorporates rhythmic movement with songs, finger plays, and playful activities to give young learners many opportunities for developing important skills across learning domains. As suggested by Coulter (1995), song, movement, and musical games are "brilliant neurological exercises" vital to intellectual development.

Throughout the curriculum, children play games to learn each other's names and practice following rules in the classroom. They sing, build, draw, play, count, and engage in letter and word games. They learn how to work with others to accomplish a shared goal. Activities encourage positive social interaction that establishes relationships and trust in others.

Research shows that the best learning occurs when children participate actively in several ways to access and retain information (Tomlinson, 2014). Skills (including physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language) do not develop in isolation. It is important that practitioners understand child development to justify practice and meet children's needs (NAEYC 2009; NASBE, 2006; NRC, 2001).

Figure 1



The Get Set for School learning domains correspond to those outlined in the Texas Pre-K Guidelines.

Figure 2

### Unit 1: Week 1: Day 1

Focus: School and Friends' Names

#### LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Objective:** Children ask and respond to simple questions.

**Grouping:** Whole group, small group

**Ask & Tell**

1. Have children sit together and sing "Ask and Tell."
2. Sing the first question. Then, lead the children in singing the response.
3. Continue until four to five questions are completed.
4. Offer an opportunity for children to volunteer to sing a question.
5. Start with addressing the whole class in the lyrics. Then, adapt lyrics to include more personal questions when children are ready.

✓ **Check for Understanding:** Observe as children ask and answer questions. What questions do they answer in complete sentences?

**Support/ELL:** Focus on one type of "Wh" question at a time.

**Enrichment:** Feature different children each week in the song to learn more about them.

**Materials:**

- PreKITT Resources 🎵: "Ask and Tell" Lyrics

**We're Learning:**

- ♥ Cooperate with peers
- 🗣️ Ask and answer simple questions, speak in 3–4 word sentences
- 📏 Recognize time of day, understand spatial relationships
- 🌤️ Understand impact of weather

**Vocabulary:**

ask, tell, weather, question, answer, sing

## Physical Development

Get Set for School lessons involve each student's whole body in learning experiences as shown through multimodal (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile) and scaffolded instructional strategies. Gross and fine motor skills are taught explicitly and thoughtfully to meet the needs of a variety of learners, including 3-year-olds and all students who in need of additional supports. Lessons follow the "I do, We do, You do," model to support explicit instruction and gradual release to independent practice.

According to Shonkoff (2000), play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Motor skills development and play are critical components of Get Set for School because they foster exploration and facilitate learning. There is a well-established consensus among early childhood professionals that play is an essential element of developmentally appropriate, high-quality early education programs (Alliance for Childhood, 2006; NAEYC & NAECCSDE, 2003).

In Get Set for School lessons, gross motor skills are developed through a variety of activities both within the classroom as well as suggestions for activities outside the classroom, such as dancing to music, nature hikes, and explorations around the school. Students practice coordinated activities such as pouring, shoveling, and balancing during the limbo.

The *Get Set for School Pre-K Teacher's Guide Set* (Volume 1) provides direction for using tools and manipulatives that intentionally develop students fine motor skills in age-appropriate ways. Manipulatives are included in lessons with kinesthetic and tactile components throughout the curriculum, but especially during modeled writing with building letters.

Manipulatives aimed at developing fine motor skills include:

- Wood Pieces Set for Capital Letters
- Stamp and See Screen®
- Roll-A-Dough® Letters
- Wet-Dry-Try with the Slate Chalkboard
- Magnetic Lowercase and Blackboard Set
- A-B-C Touch & Flip® Cards and
- 1-2-3 Touch & Flip® Cards
- Mix & Make Shapes™
- 4 Squares More Squares®
- Tag Bags®

In addition to an emphasis on fine and gross motor skills development throughout the curriculum, Get Set for School provides clear lesson plans to explicitly teach and model safe and healthy habits, both mentally and physically. While lessons on safe and healthy habits are taught throughout the curriculum, Unit 2 is entirely dedicated to it with the theme "My Body." An abundance of activities throughout each learning area provide children rich opportunities to learn and practice safe and healthy habits, such as healthy eating habits, good hygiene, names and functions of body parts, understanding emotions and facial expressions, safe and effective ways to communicate, safety at school and at home, and much more.

## Social-Emotional Learning

"Decades of research in human development, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience, and educational practice and policy, as well as other fields, have illuminated that major domains of human development—social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic—are deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior. All are central to learning" (Jones & Kahn, 2017). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020) describes social-emotional learning as five "interrelated areas of competence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making." These social-emotional skills must be taught explicitly with opportunities for children to practice them (Mashburn et al, 2008).

Get Set for School integrates each of these social-emotional competencies into all aspects of the curriculum across learning areas (Language & Literacy, Readiness & Writing, Numbers & Math, Oral Language, Science, and Social Studies). Teachers are supported by Get Set for School with clear materials, such as music, texts, and hands-on manipulatives throughout the curriculum to facilitate social skill instruction and to enhance social-emotional development. Get Set for School songs help Pre-K children develop social-emotional skills, such as smoothly transitioning from one activity to another, recognizing emotions, having positive self-esteem, or cooperating. In the Get Set for School program children develop social-emotional skills through cooperative play and through explicit instruction in learning to take turns, greet one another, and share ideas and collaborate.

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate additional texts that support the development of social-emotional skills in Circle Time. These texts highlighted in the Books All Year and Social-Emotional Learning sections of the *Get Set for School Pre-K Teacher's Guide Set* (Volume 1), where teachers will find detailed descriptions of each text and how it facilitates social-emotional learning. Specific recommendations for additional social-emotional resources and research are also included, as the Get Set for School complete program values that interactions between student and teacher in preschool form the foundation for how students will approach learning in the future (NRC, *Eager to Learn*, 2001; Paleromo et al, 2007; Pianta et al, 2005; Jones, Greenburg, Crowley, 2015).

## Differentiated Instruction

Experts in the field of differentiated instruction recommend the following guiding principles to support classrooms with students with varying needs (as cited in Huebner, 2010; Tomlinson, 2014):

- Focus on the essential ideas and skills
- Respond to individual student differences
- Group students flexibly
- Integrate ongoing and meaningful assessments with instruction
- Continually assess, reflect, and adjust content, process, and product to student needs.

"Thus, teachers in differentiated classrooms accept and act on the premise that they must be ready to engage students in instruction through different approaches to learning, by appealing to a range of interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity and differing support systems" (Tomlinson, 2014). Each lesson in the Get Set for School program provides flexible grouping suggestions (e.g., whole, small, individual) located underneath each lesson objective. In all areas of study, the developmental progression of skill attainment is measured and factored into instructional design (Tomlinson & Allen, 2000). For instance, crayon grip is addressed prior to beginning any letter written on paper. Materials can be scaled up or down to accommodate grouping needs for the various activities. Lessons also support multiple types of practices (e.g., guided, independent, collaborative) and provide guidance and structures to achieve effective implementation.

The variety of instructional approaches to facilitate differentiated instruction include, but are not limited to: student choice, purposeful play, direct instruction, games, student inquiry, group participation, creative design, and independent exploration. The initial emphasis on teacher-led lessons followed by student-led activities allows children to use skills in a variety of practices. This approach helps improve student success and helps foster a "can do" attitude so children self-actualize by using skills and recently learned concepts. The playful learning environment created in the Get Set for School classroom allows children to safely practice using language and newly acquired skills while protecting their social-emotional well-being. Guided practice, independent work, and collaboration are used throughout the curriculum to build foundational learning skills.

Every lesson in the Get Set for School curriculum has language in which children are being explicitly instructed to perform the targeted activity and model mastery prior to participating in exploratory play, and every lesson in the teacher's guide has a Check for Understanding section. These lessons continually have teachers assess students' mastery since research indicates that children learn best when they can be grouped flexibly and instruction incorporates varying degrees of complexity (Hall et al, 2011). For those who do not master content readily, each lesson has a Support/ELL section that correlates with each Learning Area and Learning Objective, offering ways for educators to build student mastery. In addition, each week-at-a-glance overview provides recommendations for 3-year-old students that apply to all students who are not yet ready to master skills and content. And, for those students who are gifted/talented and need extra challenge, each learning area for the day includes Enrichment activities to engage and extend learning.

## English Language Learners and Dual Language Teaching

Get Set for School offers support for English language learners (ELLs) and a comprehensive literacy program with accommodations for linguistics (communicated, sequenced, and scaffolded) commensurate with various levels of English language proficiency for ELLs who speak Spanish and other languages at home.

The correlation between a strong foundation in the home language and proficient English literacy skills, particularly oral language skills, is supported by significant research (NAEYC, 2009; *Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners*, 2006). Children transfer cognitive skills from one language to another, and languages spoken at home should serve as the foundation for English language acquisition (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, 2015).

The Get Set for School Spanish version offers parity and the opportunity for students to think, speak, and learn in their home language. All Get Set for School materials encourage the use of the Spanish and English language, with an emphasis on universally accepted terms or labels. This freedom of language choice allows educators to engage in Dual Language teaching in the classroom to reach learners of either language simultaneously. For example, pictures, images, and diagrams provide the opportunity for teachers to attach and discuss common terms and labels with children. All teacher tools, including resources for families, are available in both English and Spanish. Families are encouraged to share materials from home when appropriate. The Get Set for School Read-Aloud Library (Volume 1) is available in English or Spanish, and both sets include some bilingual texts. Spanish language read-alouds offer trans-adaptation through language-rich books, helping students build knowledge in their home language.

“Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension” development (*Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners*, 2006) are all essential components of a literacy program that supports ELLs. Both the Spanish and English versions of Get Set for School include direct instruction for all components of phonological awareness.

Lessons that incorporate the Sound Around Box Picture Tiles (in English or Spanish) help coordinate the teaching of word parts and sounds:

- A-B-C Touch & Flip® Cards (in English or Spanish) are used in activities naming, labeling, and/or matching capital and lowercase letters
- The Magnetic Lowercase and Blackboard Set (in English or Spanish) is used for labeling of lowercase letters as tall, small, or descending
- Line It Up™ Story Cards (in English or Spanish) incorporate an emphasis on rich vocabulary for labeling and sequencing in the story, as well as lesson extensions into other content, such as math and science.

All Get Set for School lessons, but particularly the Oral Language lessons, are organized with the themes of the curriculum. Within the themes, these lessons begin with words and actions that are familiar and then move on to more unfamiliar words and actions. The model used involves a predictable sequence of activities. Children’s responses are guided by the questions presented to them and allow children opportunities to use their language to dive deeper into the meaning of the words. During lessons and read-alouds, Get Set for School ensures that ELLs have ample opportunities to talk with both adults and peers and provide ongoing feedback and encouragement. Children are exposed to rich language daily through all the content area lessons.

“One targeted approach to helping struggling ELLs is daily small-group instruction for students with similar needs” (Huebner, 2009) with direct, explicit instruction of literacy skills (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2007). Tracy Huebner, a senior research specialist (2009), goes on to write that “this intervention can produce sustained improvement in student achievement—especially if the groups focus on explicit, interactive instruction in the core areas of literacy.” A specific targeted Support/ELL section is provided for each Get Set for School instructional activity. Furthermore, the structure of the Get Set for School program and materials equip teachers to provide scaffolds and small-group interactions for ELLs through multiple classroom strategies including direct instruction.

The Get Set for School classroom setup and classroom management tips provided give English language learners consistent structure in an environment that promotes positive social interactions and the use of program manipulatives in lessons, centers, and circle time.



## School-Home Connection

Research consistently shows that a strong school-to-home connection helps children build curiosity, self-esteem, and motivation to learn new things (Frede, & Ackerman, 2007; Caspe, 2006). Literacy skills and strategies at home continue to stimulate both literacy and cognitive development in all children, including those who need interventions (NICHD, 2008). Research has consistently shown that children who with a positive home literacy environment perform better in kindergarten, regardless of socio-economic status (NCES, 2003). Get Set for School recognizes that families are children's first and most important teachers. The Get Set for School Pre-K Curriculum provides specific ways to build a home-to-school connection. The two hands-on materials, *My Book*, and *I Know My Numbers* are learning experiences designed to be shared at home. At times, lessons will ask families to lend items from home to personalize activities and to facilitate the connection between home and school for children to celebrate diversity, multiple cultures, languages, and traditions.

The Get Set for School curriculum helps make the transition from home to the Pre-K classroom fun and happy for both children and families. The curriculum includes resources that encourage teachers and families to work together and that involve families when planning for instruction that supports and builds on ways that children learn at home.

We encourage daily and weekly communication between school and home. Teachers have resources for including families through letters, home link activities to review learning from the classroom, letter formation charts, and materials designed for individual lessons. In addition, there are online resources that guardians can access and use at home with their children.

## Conclusion

Preschool is a unique time in children's lives. Pre-K children are little explorers whose learning follows the path of discovery. They develop rapidly as they ask questions and seek to understand their worlds. This is the time for high quality instruction that exposes them to play-based, developmentally appropriate activities that enhance their learning, expand their awareness of their world and their capabilities within it, ultimately building their confidence for participation.

Between the ages of 3–5, children learn foundational skills that remain with them for the rest of their lives. Those who receive a high quality, well-planned Pre-K education are better prepared academically to meet the demands of formal schooling.

The Get Set for School Pre-K Program is a curriculum that suits a wide range of children and adapts to their changing needs as they grow. It is an intentionally-designed curriculum that builds skills developmentally—through purposeful play, music, activities, and hands-on materials.

Get Set for School acknowledges what all great educators know, and research supports: learning needs to be joyful, child friendly, and active. The program believes in meeting children where they are and providing experiences that will enable them to blossom one step at a time.

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