

Transitional Kindergarten Curriculum Adoption Natomas Unified School District

Starting in the spring and summer of 2011, a committee of kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers and administrators met several times to discuss and plan grade level standards and goals for Transitional Kindergarten (TK). The committee focused on creating TK learning standards which provided a bridge between preschool and kindergarten academically and developmentally. The committee focused on creating standards for English Language Arts, mathematics and social-emotional skills using the California Preschool Learning Foundations, the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the California Kindergarten Common Core Standards.

In the late fall of 2012, specific curriculum publishing materials were considered and invited to provide sample materials and a brief presentation to a committee. On December 14, 2011, a focus committee met for an entire day and reviewed programs and materials provided by the following companies: Pearson, McGraw Hill, and Houghton-Mifflin. In attendance were Kendra Shelton, Christine Smith, Mindy Carreras and Amy Hunter. The committee created a screening tool and curriculum review process prior to viewing materials and listening to curriculum publisher presentations. The committee created ten focus questions to help guide the search for a program that would best match the Transitional Kindergarten Standards that were written in the summer of 2011 by a similar committee:

1. How well does the curriculum flow into and mirror the current adopted Kindergarten Curriculum/Program?
2. How well does the curriculum “stand the test of time”? If the District is moving forward with new curriculum (Common Core alignment), will it match that new direction?
3. Does it have social-emotional skill development as a focus and embedded in the lessons?
4. Is it developmentally appropriate for the age? Does it have appropriate amounts of small group instruction, individual instruction and whole group/direct instruction and learning opportunities?
5. Does the curriculum go deep enough to teach the NUSD Transitional Kindergarten Standards well?
 - a. TK Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details:
 - i. With prompting and support, answer questions about key details in a text.
 - ii. With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, focusing on beginning, middle and end.
 - iii. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story through answering questions (e.g., recall and simple inferences), retelling, reenacting, or creating artwork.
 - b. TK Math Standards:
 - i. Count up to 10 objects, using one-to-one correspondence (one object for each number word).
6. Is it user friendly for teachers?
7. Does it have materials to support differentiated instruction, including needs of Dual Language Learners (EL) and Special Education?
 - a. ELD OR ELL Specific section?
 - b. Intervention?
 - c. Challenge?

8. What is missing? What are concerns?
9. What enhancements would be needed?
10. How does this fit in the continuum from Preschool to Kindergarten?

After reviewing each curriculum selection, the committee recorded additional comments, questions, positives, negatives and recommendations.

The following titles were reviewed and evaluated by the team using the screening tool and questions above:

- Pearson: Opening the World of Learning (OWL)
- McGraw-Hill: DLM Express
- McGraw-Hill: Imagine It!
- McGraw-Hill: Little Treasures & Math Connects
- Houghton Mifflin: Splash into PreK

Curriculum representatives presented a brief overview, showing the team highlights and elements of the curriculum and answering questions. Then the committee addressed each screening tool question while delving into the materials. They had paper to take notes individually, but shared out as a group their observations, which were documented on an excel spreadsheet. The team then reviewed their findings and highlighted the answers on the spreadsheet to show positive results in green. The two programs that had the most positive responses and results were quickly evident. Several of the other programs were found to be more appropriate for preschool but would not provide a comprehensive program to meet the goals of TK. OWL and Little Treasures were the two programs that the team then discussed for further consideration.

On January 26, 2012, the Curriculum Committee reconvened, this time with two additional teachers to help provide a fresh perspective. Present were Mindy Carreras, Kathryn Freer, Amy Hunter, Christine Smith, Kendra Shelton and Georgia Allen-Schaaf. The committee used the following agenda to guide their focus and analysis:

1. Depth of curriculum – Task to recommend curriculum that provides a program with the best delivery to match the learning goals for Transitional Kindergarten.
2. Select Key TK Math Standards to analyze support, lesson delivery, depth of instruction: (see TK standards the team identified below)
3. Select Key TK Language Arts Standard to analyze support, lesson delivery, depth of instruction: (see TK standards the team identified below)
4. Is it Developmentally Appropriate?
5. Are a variety of modalities used?
6. Assessment- Does it assess to the level our TK Standard should be assessed?
7. Summarize our process

The committee selected several TK math standards and TK English language arts standards as key standards for success in TK. Each teacher reviewed all of the standards and ranked them by importance on a scale of one to five. Through this thorough process, the most important key standards were used to analyze the curriculum selections. Some of the key standards identified and used for the process were:

TK English Language Arts:

Print Concepts

- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
 - Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
 - Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters. (Recognize that the text is what is read out loud and the pictures support the text.)
 - Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
 - Recognize and name more than half of the upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.
- Recognizing rhyming words.
- Demonstrate understanding of syllables in spoken words with two to three syllables.
- Orally blend the onsets, rimes, and phonemes of words and orally delete the onsets of words, with or without the support of pictures or objects.
- Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (CVC) words with the support of pictures, objects or flashcards. (Not including CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/.)
- Add or substitute beginning sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

TK Mathematics:

- Counting and Cardinality. Know number names and the count sequence.
- Count to 50 by ones.
- Recognize and name written numerals (out of sequence) to 20.
- Represent a number of objects with a written numeral 0-10 (with 0 representing a count of no objects).
- Count up to 10 objects, using one-to-one correspondence (one object for each number word).
- Begin to compare by counting or matching 2 groups of ten. Communicate more, fewer, greater than, less than or the same as the other group.
- Splits groups of objects into smaller groups in different combinations, combining to make larger combinations.
- Using a 5-frame, for any number from 1 to 4, finds the number that makes 5 when added to the given number.

The team split into two groups and spent the day going through each of the two curriculum programs searching for the lessons that addressed each of the identified key TK standards. The two teams separately looked at the two programs and took notes on the quality of the instructional materials and the depth to which each of the standards were taught. They also looked for levels of expected mastery and tools for assessment.

At the conclusion of the day, the committee shared out their findings. Both programs addressed a bridge between Kindergarten Common Core and the Preschool Learning Foundations, but Pearson OWL was found to have more resources, depth and rigor. The team saw that OWL provided more detail and resources for the teacher for the centers where much of the lesson practice and rehearsal will take place. Little Treasures had great support materials for social-

emotional skill building using Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, which can be purchased separately. OWL has social-emotional skill development lessons embedded in the curriculum, but the team felt the separate lessons under Little Treasures were a stronger resource. That being said, the committee still found Pearson OWL would be a better selection to support the instruction of TK standards.

Overall, when looking at the standards, the two programs addressed all the standards, provided instruction using a variety of modalities and were developmentally appropriate. When the committee was asked to select one program for recommendation, the majority stated that Pearson OWL was the stronger curriculum. The committee stated that OWL provided higher quality assessment tools for the teacher. The program is also set up to support RTI (Response to Intervention) with the use of strong screening tools. Each specific assessment is clear and provides more of an opportunity to show a progression of growth for the child.

Pearson OWL also has specific ELD (English Language Development) components included, something that was found to be lacking in Little Treasures. The teachers evaluated the ELD specific lessons and found them to be developmentally appropriate. The other curriculum programs had hints and tips for teaching English Learners, but the Pearson OWL program provided direct instruction opportunities for English Learners to address their specific needs, which a teacher could do in a small group during "centers."

The committee felt that the OWL manual was outlined clearly and user friendly. There is a different teacher manual for each instructional unit. Each manual alternates instruction for the teacher in English and Spanish, which could be of great assistance to teachers with students who speak Spanish as a primary language. Teachers who have taught Envision Math will also be somewhat familiar with the layout of the program and transition to using it may be smoother. Pearson OWL also provides a lot of online technology resources that teachers can use to supplement and enhance curriculum delivery.

In addition to recommending the Pearson OWL program, the committee recommended that the Mr. Rogers social-emotional lessons be included and purchased separately from McGraw-Hill's Little Treasures to help provide specific lessons for teachers to address specific social-emotional skill development. They acknowledged that the Pearson OWL program provides opportunity for social-emotional skill development, but believed the teachers could benefit from having that additional component and resource.