

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum

To what degree does *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum* mimic Boston Public School's curriculum?

To remain in alignment to the fidelity of the curriculum, *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum* mirrors Boston Public School's curriculum, *Focus on Pre-K*. The early learning standards (*The Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children*) have been aligned to all the activities and the MDE (Mississippi Department of Education) has also adapted picture resources to reflect communities in Mississippi.

What is the research behind this curriculum?

MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum meets the requirements of the *Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children*:

- Aligned to early learning standards
- Comprehensive to cover all domains
- Emphasis on early childhood literacy
- Evidence-based of child outcomes
- Thematic-based instruction

The child outcomes evidence-based research can be found at this link: [Teacher as Researcher — Focus on Early Learning \(bpsearlylearning.org\)](https://www.bpsearlylearning.org).

Can teachers create their own units/themes in the curriculum?

To remain in alignment to the fidelity of the curriculum, it is important to follow the themes/units for the *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum*. However, there is a fifth week that is added to every unit to allow for flexibility and to include holiday/special activities. Sometimes a sixth or seventh week may also be added;

this may occur around times in the school year such as holiday breaks and/or assessment schedules.

Can the curriculum be supplemented with other curriculum?

MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum is a comprehensive curriculum and has been adopted as a High-Quality Instructional Material. To find out more about ordering materials, please visit the [instructional materials website](#).

Can the books be substituted/changed in each unit?

To remain in alignment to the fidelity of the curriculum, it is important to follow the Read Alouds for the *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum*. If a book is out of print, an alternative book title has been provided for the Read Aloud activity.

PowerPoint Slides are also available on the website for teachers to download.

These are found in each Read Aloud section:

Read Alouds

- Oonga Boonga (vocabulary cards) (Oonga Boonga Slides)
- Crybaby (vocabulary cards) (Crybaby Slides)
- Peter's Chair (vocabulary cards) (Peter's Chair Slides)
- Adapted resources
 - Oonga Boonga slides

Can additional books be read throughout the week?

Absolutely! As long as the specified Read Aloud texts are read according to the specific instructions indicated for each Read, teachers may supplement favorite books that are related to the unit themes.

Can these lesson plans be used with three-year-old and four-year-old Special Education children?

Children who receive special education services are required to have access to the general education curriculum as much as is appropriate to meet their needs.

Sample accommodations are provided for each activity, but teachers can adjust

these to fit the needs of their specific students. Some adapted resources are also available on the website:

Read Alouds

- [Oonga Boonga \(vocabulary cards\) \(Oonga Boonga Slides\)](#)
- [Crybaby \(vocabulary cards\) \(Crybaby Slides\)](#)
- [Peter's Chair \(vocabulary cards\) \(Peter's Chair Slides\)](#)
- [Adapted resources](#)
 - [Oonga Boonga slides](#)

Is there another strategy for classrooms with children with disabilities?

Teachers should always refer to the child's IEP (Individualized Education Program) for specific accommodations/modifications to use for a child, though there may be many other strategies that will work for a child in addition to what is in his/her IEP. There are Boardmaker materials that are designed to go along with many of the activities for each unit. Teachers can use those and/or adjust them for the needs of their specific students. Boardmaker is a software product that is available by subscription; if provided activities need to be adjusted, teachers will need to request a subscription to Boardmaker through their district or program.

Will phonological awareness and phonemic awareness be explicitly/intentionally taught?

Yes. This is done in Small Groups and throughout the day in Whole Group and in transition activities. "Songs, Word Play, and Letters (SWPL)" is a component that provides developmentally appropriate literacy and mathematics learning through fingerplays, poems, and songs. SWPL follows the phonological awareness progression: listening, syllables, rhymes, beginning sounds, ending sounds, middle sounds, and phonemes.

When will trainings begin for school districts/sites wanting to implement the curriculum?

Professional Learning trainings have already begun. Recordings of the trainings can be found on our website: <https://www.mdek12.org/EC/Mississippi-Beginnings-Curriculum>.

If you would like more information on *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum* trainings, please email earlychildhood@mdek12.org.

If you would like to request an in-person training, please fill out the training request form on the Professional Learning page:

<https://mdek12.org/EC/Professional-Development>

When will we receive all the materials, trade books, etc.?

The Office of Early Childhood has worked diligently with the Office of Communications to get Units 1-6 uploaded onto the [MS Beginnings: Pre-K website](#). All other materials will be provided by the school district/site (*Building Blocks Math* curriculum: Teacher Editions Volumes 1 and 2; manipulatives for math; printed copies of Set Up for Success, Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3; Read Aloud trade books; center materials; etc.) and can be ordered using the online catalog on the [instructional materials website](#). (printed copies of Units 4-6 will be available soon).

Will there be developmental assessments? When will they be used?

The Office of Early Childhood has prepared an [Informal Assessment](#). These documents include specific directions for assessing the children in the classroom. Teachers can use formal and informal ways of assessing (one-on-one with children, observations, conversations, documentation with photos, etc.). **It is important to note that all of *The Mississippi Early Learning Standards* are not assessed in these documents. Districts/sites have the autonomy to create developmentally appropriate assessments for the four-year-old preschool children in their district/site.**

How can all these parts of the day be scheduled and completed?

Pre-K classroom teachers and administrators should refer to *The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines* for specific requirements, as this is how classroom scheduling will be monitored.

To remain in alignment to the fidelity of the curriculum, daily components should include: Read Alouds, Intro to Centers, Centers, Thinking and Feedback, Small Groups (Literacy and Math), and *Building Blocks Math* curriculum. *The other components can be utilized flexibly throughout the week:* Storytelling, Story Acting, Problem Stories, and Let's Find Out About It.

How will the teacher know how much or how little to do each day?

Teachers should first refer to *The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines. MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum* is designed to be flexible; teachers can make the classroom daily schedule fit into the school's/site's daily schedule. Some days may need to be more flexible than others.

How can the teacher fit everything into the time suggested for Whole Group time?

Plan intentionally for more than one, brief Whole Group during the day, so that the time will be used more efficiently in other component areas (Centers, Small Group-Literacy and Math, etc.); strive for *Less Whole Group and More Centers / Small Group*. The Whole Group time will increase over the school year as children's attention spans grow.

During the fifth week of every unit, can teachers incorporate different monthly themes?

This is a great time for teachers to add special activities aligned to the theme. It is fine if this time needs to be extended to a sixth or seventh week! It is up to the school district/site to make sure the requirement of 180 instructional days is met.

Can hands-on, interactive worksheets be incorporated during Center Time?

According to *The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines* (page 3), worksheets are NOT developmentally appropriate for this age. Our Professional Learning team offers great trainings for teachers on how to turn worksheets into hands-on learning! Check out: [Going from Abstract to Active Learning](#).

Do I have to use the weekly plan that is on the website?

Teachers can use any template they want to use or that their school district/site may require. The [Editable Weekly Plan](#) on the website is a “suggested” plan.

Do you have additional resources that align with the curriculum for families?

Yes! We know how important it is for families to know what is happening during the instructional day. There are *Home Links* (in many different languages) available for each week of each unit that correlate with the Read Aloud for the week and the unit theme. There are also [Splash Pages](#), an online activity aligned to the weekly theme, and [MPB Classroom TV: Welcome, Friends Episodes](#) that families can watch at any time.

What are some comments from teachers who are currently using *MS Beginnings: Pre-K Curriculum*?

“This is the way children learn and the way teachers should teach!”

“I had a hard time getting used to the 4 different Read Alouds. I messed up A LOT, but after a while, I noticed the children starting to enjoy the Read Alouds and their comprehension/connections were growing.”

“I like that I can still do my holiday activities; the extra weeks allow for that!”

“Next year will be so much better!”