



Vermont Early Learning Standards Manual

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Introduction

The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Manual is a companion resource to the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) with the intention of supporting and implementing developmentally appropriate practices across Vermont early learning environments and settings. The purpose of this manual is to help inform how to effectively use the VELS in daily practice and how to align curricula in order to provide high-quality early education for each and every child. The VELS Manual is a fluid document which will be informed by changes in standards, research, and requirements and updated by Vermont's Agency of Education Early Education Team.

VELS Alignment

The VELS are aligned with and incorporate the following:

- [NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practices](#)
- [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five](#)
- [Division of Exceptional Children's \(DEC\) Recommended Practices](#)
- [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy \(K-Third Grade\)](#)
- [Common Core State Standards for Mathematics \(K-Third Grade\)](#)
- [The Next Generation Science Standards \(K-Third Grade\)](#)

Part 1: VELS Foundational Documents

Early Education Team Purpose Statement

Each and every young child and their family are diverse in culture, language, geography, values, beliefs, and circumstances. To support individual growth, development, and continuous learning over their lifetime, the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) is committed to fully including each and every child in a continuum of high quality, evidence-based early learning experiences, from birth through grade three.

AOE Mission Statement

What defines Vermont **Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK)** is the implementation of high-quality, effective instruction by licensed educators who use evidence-based practices within intentionally designed early learning environments. Early educators align curriculum with the VELS, while adapting experiences to support the full participation of each and every child to realize their full potential and promote positive outcomes.

Vermont Early Childhood Guiding Principles

We believe that each and every child...

- Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.
- Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.
- Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

For each and every family, we will...

- Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their children.
- Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners.
- Build caring communities that accept differences and foster a sense of belonging.

For each and every child and their family, we will...

- Promote understanding of the importance of inclusive and effective early childhood experiences.
- Build equitable access to opportunities, support, and services.
- Acknowledge and address biases in ourselves and others and the importance of differences such as race, class, gender, family structure, ability, and sexual orientation.
- Advance policies, procedures, programs, and practices that honor and are supportive of each family's culture, strengths, structure, expertise, and preferences.
- Provide options, flexibility, and continuity within each community by working collaboratively within and across agencies, programs, and funding sources.
- Expand the number of early childhood professionals who are well prepared and reflect the diversity of the community.
- Draw upon evidence and research for practices that are responsive and appropriate to the child's culture(s), language(s), abilities, developmental level, identities, and needs.

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

“All young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential. The responsibility to ensure that young children with disabilities and their families are included in high-quality early childhood programs is shared by federal, State, and local governments, early childhood systems, early childhood programs and providers, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools.”

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (2023), U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS)

Decades of research indicate that inclusion is beneficial to all children with and without disabilities. Inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits. Therefore, inclusion in early childhood programs can set a trajectory for inclusion across the course of an individual's life.

However, many children with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing and participating in inclusive early childhood programs. For example, many children with disabilities receive special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities. There are disparities in children's access to inclusive early childhood programs and children with developmental delays or disabilities are suspended and/or expelled at higher rates than their neurotypical peers.

Furthermore, this joint policy statement:

- Reiterates the expectation for inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs.
- Sets the expectation that inclusion continues as children transition into elementary school.
- Highlights the latest science that supports inclusion and reinforces the legal foundation for inclusion.
- Reiterates and updates recommendations to States and local programs and providers for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities.
- Updates resources and examples of inclusion.

Regardless of your role in the early childhood field – leader, educator, faculty member, or family member, the revised joint **Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs**, is a vital document to read and share.

Reference: [Policy Statement on Inclusion with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs \(2023\)](#)

Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices

The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices were developed to provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve learning outcomes and promote the development of young children (birth through age 5) who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The purpose is to help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting those practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who serve them.

The Recommended Practices (RPs) are intended to be used by individuals working across a variety of early childhood settings providing services to young children who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The set of practices consists of eight domains: leadership, assessment, environment, family, instruction, interaction,

teaming and collaboration, and transition. The practices can be helpful for those engaged in both preservice and in-service professional development and are embedded in the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Reference: [DEC Recommended Practices \(online edition\)](#)

Equity Statement

Advancing equity in early childhood education requires an understanding of broader societal context, biases, and how historical and current inequities have shaped the profession. The biases referred to here are based on race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability, language, national origin, indigenous heritage, religion, and other identities. To ensure equity and high-quality inclusive learning environments, leadership teams must:

- Provide high-quality early education programs that build on each child's unique individual and family strengths, cultural background, language(s), abilities, and experiences.
- Eliminate differences in educational outcomes as a result of who children are, where they live, and what resources their families have.

Educators and practitioners who are aware of their implicit and explicit biases as they relate to their teaching can better provide learning experiences that are aligned with children's cultural and familial norms. Public and private Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) programs can further promote equitable outcomes for young children by:

- Confronting and dispelling implicit and explicit biases.
- Improving advocacy for young children and families who are often subject to biases.
- Informing changes in policies, practices, and systems through advocacy.

Part 2: VELs Structure and Use

VELs and Child Development

The VELs makes explicit the goals we have for children's learning and development throughout the years from birth through third grade. Since children develop at different rates, some children may reach certain learning goals earlier or later than their chronological age. Children with disabilities or developmental delays may follow a course of development that differs from their typically developing peers. They may have a delay in one or more areas of development but have strengths in other areas of development. Acknowledging differences does not diminish the importance of the VELs to guide early childhood education and practice; rather it invites users to have a deeper understanding of each and every child and their family's culture, values, as well as the adaptations and accommodations needed for children who develop differently.

Therefore, it is important for users of the VELs to consider the developmental trajectory of each child by looking at specific standards for younger or older age groups as

needed. This will help educators and practitioners understand what and how the child is learning now, and how to support the child's next steps and growth by making changes in practices, environments, and activities in order to meet the needs of each and every young Vermont child.

Welcoming English Learners (ELs) into prekindergarten is an opportunity to promote the value and acceptance of cultural diversity for all children in Vermont classrooms. It is also a chance for early childhood educators to reflect on their own teaching practices and learning environments to ensure that every child's home language and culture are reflected in both. [AOE PreK EL's Guidelines](#) include federal laws, assessment, service supports, best practices, and resources from the [WIDA Consortium](#). Best practice for any services or supports received should be intentional for assisting PreK students with meaningful access to developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned with the VELs. EL PreK service and supports procedures should include, at the very least, collaboration between the EL Specialist, the early childhood educator, and the student's family. Family engagement and involvement is a priority in prekindergarten education. Through this triangular collaboration, EL Specialists may provide guidance, supports, and resources. The EL Specialists may provide direct services to the PreK student or work in collaboration with the early childhood educators who may provide the services, or a combination of both service delivery models.

References

[Guidelines for Serving English Learners \(ELs\) in Prekindergarten PreK](#)

[University of Wisconsin-Madison. WIDA-Proven Tools and Support to Help Educators and Multilingual Learners Succeed](#)

VELS Structure

VELS was developed to provide a roadmap of intentional teaching by describing, in detail, developmentally appropriate benchmarks across nine domain areas from birth through age 8. The VELs outlines the learning and development goals for **each and every** Vermont child in three sections:

- I. Developing Self
- II. Communication and Expression
- III. Learning About the World.

Each section is further divided into Domains, Elements, Goals, and Indicators all of which are organized by age. Domains are the broad areas of development and learning that happen in the years from birth through age eight. The elements and goals provide further detail of the critical aspect of the domain. The indicators are the specific statements of the expectations of what we expect children to be learning and doing at each age group or grade level. Each section follows this same order. All domains are interrelated, interdependent, and of equal importance.

Play is featured prominently in every domain of the VELS, understanding the belief that young children’s play is the foundation upon which to foster learning across all development and content are domains. Therefore, the inclusion of play is paramount when planning for and implementing curriculum, goals, and instruction.

I. VELS Developing Self Overview

This section includes three domains, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Learning and Growing, Moving and Being Healthy.

- **Approaches to Learning** includes how children play and explore, their curiosity about the world, and how they solve problems.
- **Social and Emotional** includes how children learn to regulate themselves and their emotions, how they learn and think about themselves, and the ways in which they get along with other children and adults.
- **Growing, Moving and Being Healthy** includes motor skills and coordination, as well as health and safety practices.

II. VELS Communication and Expression Overview

The Communication and Expression section includes three domains, Language Development, Literacy Development, and Creative Arts and Expression.

- **Language Development** includes how children learn, understand, and use language.
- **Literacy Development** describes how a child learns how to read and understand what they are reading.
- **Creative Arts and Expression** includes information about what children learn through the arts, as well as how they express themselves through music, art, dance, and dramatic play.

If a child is learning English as their second language, information about how children acquire and use their skills in English is included in the Language Development and Literacy Development domains.

III. VELS Learning About the World Overview

Learning About the World includes three domains: Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

- **Mathematics** includes how children learn about numbers, addition and subtraction, measurement, and geometry.
- **Science** includes information about how children explore using their natural curiosity, understand the natural world, and figure out how to solve interesting problems by learning how things work.
- **Social Studies** includes how children learn about relationships with their family, community, environment, and the world.

Reference: [Vermont Early Learning Standards \(August 17, 2016\)](#)

VELS in Practice

For early childhood educators, the VELS is the framework for planning, developing, and implementing age-appropriate curriculum, instruction, and supports. While it does not dictate how to teach, it does guide and inform early childhood learning experiences in order to support, facilitate and provide high-quality and developmentally appropriate teaching practices. Curriculum and instruction aligned with VELS highlights the importance of sustained play as the mode of learning for birth to age eight and promotes executive function skills, language abilities, social skills which are foundational for success in school and life (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)).

Play in the Early Learning Environment

The VELS purposely embeds and promotes the importance of play in early learning as developmentally appropriate practice. NAEYC defines “developmentally appropriate practice” (DAP) as methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning. In early childhood education, the foundation of DAP is rooted in play. Pretend play, construction play, exploration play, and physical play are types of play. Play in the learning environment is informed through observations, interests, and early learning standards. Using this information, early childhood educators create DAP learning opportunities through child-directed play, guided play, direct play supports or a combination.

- **Child-directed play** differs from “free play” in that there is a clear learning objective based on a child’s interests with the educator and child collaborating in the learning process. During child-directed play, educators scaffold learning objectives for the child.
- **Guided play** is most effective with preschoolers because children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning. Guided play is between free play and direct instruction utilizing child-directed interests and collaboration to promote learning. Scaffolding learning objectives during guided play is an opportune time to include social and executive functioning.
- **Direct instruction play** is when the educator takes on the lead role with an intentional learning goal. Though direct instruction is part of the learning environment, it may limit playful exploration, discovery, and learning if used exclusively.

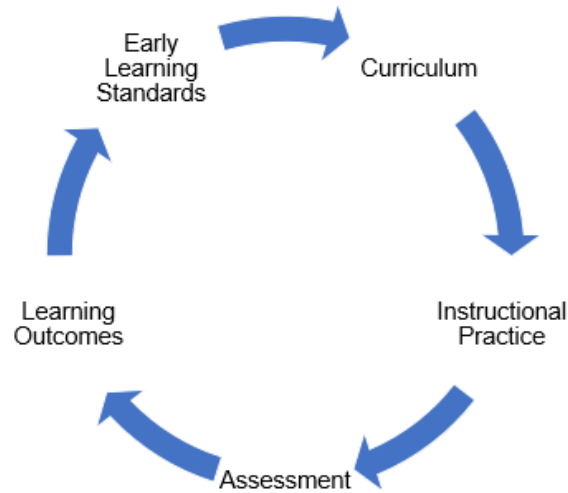
Reference: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2020). [DAP: Teaching to Enhance Each Child’s Development and Learning.](#)

Part 3: Intentional Use of the VELS

Curriculum Planning

Below is a curriculum feedback loop diagram that illustrates how curriculum and instructional practices are informed by early learning standards. For high-quality

teaching practices and positive learning outcomes, early learning standards, such as the VELs, need to be aligned with an evidence-based assessment, like Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). The alignment of VELs and TSG creates a partnership that promotes both. The success of the curriculum feedback loop is an educator who routinely reflects upon their practice and who implements additional strategies or supports for equitable access and increased participation.



Assessment informs instructional practice for additional strategies or supports for positive learning outcomes.

Lesson Planning Breakdown

A typical curriculum is made up of themed unit plans spaced throughout the school year. Within each unit plan are several lesson plans that support the main theme of the unit. When unit planning for the entire year, it is best practice to list the VELs domains that are addressed in each theme. This gives guidance and structure for the lesson plan. It is important to remember that multiple early education standards may be used in a single lesson plan. For example, a science lesson may include Science Element 3: Earth and Space Sciences, Social Studies Element 1: Inquiry, Creative Arts: Element 1: Visual Arts, and Literacy Development: Element 3: Writing. Reviewing the VELs after creating a learning activity for a lesson plan may be helpful in identifying additional standards (represented from other domains) addressed in the lesson plan.

Unit Plan components follow the lesson plan format except with a zoomed-out lens. Lesson plans drill down into specifics of the unit theme.

- Set goals and objectives for students.
- Choose content.
- Choose instruction methods.
- Connect learning activities to experiences.

- Choose and list resources.
- Choose assessment methods.

Best practice is for educators to use a lesson plan format whether it is developed by the educator, school district curriculum director, program director, or as part of a ready-built curriculum. Below is a sample lesson plan breakdown highlighting the use of VELs and assessment of learning outcomes. If your current lesson plan format does not have all of the components listed below, please consider adding them. A sample blank lesson plan template is provided in Appendix B of this manual.

Lesson Plan Components

Teacher Name: Ms. Smith

Title: Exploration of things that float and sink.

Date the Lesson Plan: April 2, 2024

Static Information	Lesson Plan Instructions
Lesson Plan Goal(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the developmentally age-appropriate goals (objectives, purpose, rationale) that children will be able to do by the end of this learning activity.
Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate the Vermont Early Learning Standards used in the learning activity.
Assessment of Learning (formal and informal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you measure if the children have mastered the learning activity goals (observations, work samples, participation etc.)? For UPK programs, VELs aligns with TSG for assessment of child outcomes when documentation is uploaded to their TSG profile.
Materials, Resources and/or Equipment Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What materials and/or equipment will be needed? • What textbooks, storybooks, and other resources are needed? • What needs to be prepared in advance? • What changes or modifications for the room set up or for any limitations of the room?
Lesson Plan Descriptions	Provide a general overview of the learning activity in terms of topics, focus, activities, and purpose, include inside or outside activities, small or large group activities.
Procedures for the Learning Activity	Provide a detailed, step-by-step description for the learning activity include: Where? inside/outside. How? Small/ large group activities. Why? the learning activities should be used to achieve the learning activity goals. Focus on what the teacher(s) will have children do during the learning activity. Think about the environment and envision the students moving around in that environment as the learning activity progresses.

Static Information	Lesson Plan Instructions
Adaptation and/or Modifications (Universal Practices)	<p>Consider modifications to make the learning activity universally accessible for children with a wide range of abilities and learning styles. Consider inclusiveness by including adaptations for children with disabilities that will be participating in this learning activity:</p> <p>Environmental supports for inside or outside the classroom for a child or children with an identified disability:</p> <p>Material Modifications for a child who has identified disability:</p> <p>Modifying the activity for child who has the identified disability:</p> <p>Type of alternate delivery methods (lecture, discussion, hands-on, internet, field work, consider children’s interests, previous experiences allow adequate preparation time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials in electronic format. • Type of encourage interactions - (in class questions and discussions, group work, internet-based communications). • Feedback - prompting during activity and feedback clear.
Program to Home Connection	<p>Consider ways to extend the learning activity goals from program to home so families may be active participants in their children’s learning and development.</p>
Teacher Reflection on Learning Activity	<p>Reflect on if learning activity goals met? How do you know? What worked or did not work? What would you do differently?</p>
Teacher Reflection on Practice	<p>Reflect on your engagement with the children during the learning activity. Do you use developmentally appropriate language during instruction, during the activity, and responses to each child? Reflect on gaps in your engagement with children which may require new learning to improve your engagement to ensure positive learning outcomes for all children.</p>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

It is important to remember that **VELS is not a curriculum**, but rather developmentally appropriate indicators utilized to promote high-quality early learning through a standards aligned curriculum, promoting best teaching practices. Educational practice frameworks, like Universal Design for Learning (UDL), when used in conjunction with the VELs, support equitable access to the curriculum for each and every child. UDL creates an inclusive learning environment and universal supports to meet children where they are developmentally.

In the classroom, children have a variety of learning styles, strengths, and needs. For example, a child may have strong social skills leading them to make many friends in their classroom but may need additional support in order to physically navigate the classroom and playground safely. Regardless of differences, it's important to find ways to remove obstacles to learning and provide children with the instruction and tools

needed to be successful. UDL incorporates flexibility and variability into lessons to enable practitioners to make the necessary modifications to their teaching strategies in order to meet each and every child's needs.

It is important to note that UDL does not take the place of special education services but rather supports instruction for all students, with or without disabilities, in creating inclusive learning environments. Educators must continue to ensure that children with individualized education programs (IEPs) receive the accommodations, assistive technology, specially designed instruction, and related services to which they are entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). These special education supports and services remain essential to ensuring educational equity for children with disabilities.

Principles of UDL Practice Framework

- **Principle I. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement.** The “why” of learning. Educators planning curriculum should include children’s interests to promote self-motivation and self-regulation.
- **Principle II. Provide Multiple Means of Representation.** The “what” of learning. Educators present information and content in different ways, and to pre-teach new content/concepts language to strengthen children’s comprehension.
- **Principle III. Multiple Means of Action and Expression.** The “how” of learning. Educators differentiate the ways that children can demonstrate and express what they know (assessment).

Provide multiple means of Engagement	Provide multiple means of Representation	Provide multiple means of Action and Expression
Provide options for Recruiting Interest	Provide options for Perception	Provide options for Physical Action
Provide options for Sustaining Effort and Persistence	Provide options for Language and Symbols	Provide options for Expression and Communication
Provide options for Self Regulation	Provide options for Comprehension	Provide options for Executive Functions

Adapted with permission from The UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2018). Retrieved from CAST website.

The UDL Guidelines are available in an interactive format on CAST’s website. Here, you can dig deeper into each Guidelines to find more specific strategies and suggestions for providing options in instruction. *Note:* The UDL Guidelines 3.0 are expected to release in 2024. This upcoming revision will address systemic barriers that create inequitable learning opportunities and result in inequitable outcomes. [View the UDL Guidelines.](#)

In addition to creating inclusive learning environments by removing learning barriers for all students, with or without disabilities, UDL also promotes learner agency and learner

experts. A positive student outcome of using UDL is **learner agency**—self-motivation and engagement in their own learning process and supports students in becoming **expert learners**. Expert learners know how they learn and what resources they need to engage their own learning.

UDL Implementation

Implementing UDL Principles (Engagement, Representation and Expression) requires educators to internalize the UDL lens by removing learning barriers. **Learning barriers live in designs (practice, curriculum), not in students.**

Viewing Barriers in Students	Viewing Barriers in Designs	Removing Barriers
The student lacks motivation in math class.	The goals are disconnected from the student's interests and experiences.	The goal is rewritten to highlight an authentic application of the mathematical content to the rest of the world.
The students' command of the English language is not strong enough to pass a chemistry test.	The assessment is only offered as a written exam.	All students are given the option to write, dictate, or demonstrate their learning of the chemistry content.
The student lacks the social skills needed to work with a small group on an assignment.	The methods do not include instruction or structures to facilitate collaboration.	Students are taught to use group roles (leader, recorder, timekeeper, presenter) to structure their collaborative work and complete an assignment.
The student cannot participate in a history project because her reading skills are inadequate to read the textbook.	The materials are only provided as paper copies.	All students are provided access to multiple formats of the history text (print, audiobook, eBook).

Barriers can exist in any of the four primary instructional components listed below.

- **Goals:** the description of what students will understand, know, or be able to do as a result of the learning experience
- **Assessments:** the method used for measuring student learning
- **Methods:** the manner in which the content is taught
- **Materials:** the media, tools, and resources used for teaching content

Advice for educators who are new to UDL is to start with one of the four barriers listed above and apply UDL principles (engagement, representation, and expression) framework by making small changes:

- **Proactively design**—*before* instruction
- **Implement**—*during* instruction
- **Reflect and redesign**—*after* instruction

Table 1: Instructional Components and Key Features

Instructional Component	Key Features
Goals	Goals should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly written • Separate from the means
Assessments	Assessments should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned with the learning goal • Incorporated throughout the learning process • Flexibility designed with options for how teachers assess and how students respond • Used to inform instruction and future design
Methods	Methods should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibly designed with options for students to participate in the learning experience • Adapted and combined to address learning variability
Materials	Materials should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible rather than fixed • Available in multiple formats • Culturally responsive

Reference: CAST (2018). [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2.](#)

VELS and Assessment

Learning standards are expectations of what children should know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. Teaching Strategies GOLD[®] (TS GOLD[®]) is the approved formative assessment used in Vermont as the progress monitoring tool for Universal PreK. TS GOLD[®] objectives align with VELS domains to help educators collect assessment documentation on every child in their program to inform educator practices for implementing high-quality curriculum and supports for positive learning

outcomes for each and every child. Please refer to the educator feedback loop on page ten of this manual for assessment visual. A crosswalk showing the alignment of the VELs with TS GOLD[®] can be found in the index.

- Assessment
- Lesson plan objectives met by each child
- Child observations (child running record observation template in index)
- Photos
- Sample of child's work (portfolio)
- Family feedback/input

References

[My Teaching Strategies GOLD 20XX-20XX Vermont Requirements and Guidelines \(updated August of each year\)](#)

[Teaching Strategies GOLD Transfer Request 20XX-20XX School Year \(updated August of each year\)](#)

[VELS Alignment with TSG - Birth - Grade 3 \(10/22/18\)](#)

VELS and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

When writing a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), goals should be related to education standards, strength based, and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and results oriented, and timebound). The VELs is foundational for school district teams to use in the development of age-appropriate IEP long-term goals and short-term objectives, and to support the education of all children with their same age peers in high-quality, early childhood settings. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) IEP goals and objectives should also be functional.

Because the VELs provides a roadmap for intentional teaching by describing in detail goals for the knowledge and skills children will gain through the early childhood years, it is a logical and necessary step when writing and implementing individual goals and objectives that address a child's developmental and educational needs. Incorporation of the VELs helps to ensure a child's equitable access and participation (given supports necessary) with their same age peers, within a fully inclusive high quality, learning environment.

Reference: [Form 5 Early Childhood Special Education \(ECSE\) Ages Three to Five Individual Education Plan \(October 20, 2020\)](#)

Early Multi-tiered System of Support (Early MTSS)

Vermont's Early MTSS is an innovation neutral framework that wraps around **The Pyramid Model** framework. The Pyramid Model framework is designed to build each and every child's social and emotional skills, competencies, and development. Early MTSS also supports initiatives in VELs including early literacy, mathematics, science,

arts and expression, and social studies, utilizing a two-prong approach: implementing equitable and inclusive high quality evidence practices while building system capacity. Like the Pyramid Model framework, Early MTSS is grounded in implementation science and utilizes the data-based decision-making process for continuous improvement efforts.

Early MTSS promotes the intentional use or implementation of universal, targeted, and individualized evidence-based practices across all routines and activities. This includes proactively identifying students who may be struggling and intervening early, which helps to ensure improved outcomes for each and every Vermont child and their family. As the continuum of supports are utilized, (universal, targeted, or individualized), data is collected and reflected upon, as part of the data-based decision-making process, in order to determine their effectiveness. As children move in and out of levels of supports, progress monitoring data is gathered and analyzed to ensure each, and every child is receiving the appropriate level of support and resources to match their needs. Reflection on data collected will inform the child's progress, and whether additional supports or interventions are necessary.

References

[Early Multi-tiered System of Support, \(Early MTSS\)](#)

[National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#)

[Pyramid Model Universal and Targeted Supports Overview \(visual\)](#)

[Education Quality and Continuous Improvement](#)

Part 4: VELs and Families

Family Involvement

Families play a crucial role in a child's healthy intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development. The VELs were also developed for families to give them an understanding of child development as well as ideas about activities they can do at home and in the community to help children learn. When educators and families work together and have a common understanding this further supports and compliments children's ongoing growth and development.

Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Requirement, Family Conferences

Family conferences are required twice a year. Below are some ideas for highlighting a child's progression utilizing the VELs and TS Gold assessments during family conferences. It is also recommended that educators include a section about VELs and TS Gold in their family handbooks and in family communications about unit themes aligned with the VELs.

- TS Gold assessment/Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) results
- TS Gold evidence
- Child's portfolio

Conclusion

The Vermont Early Learning Standards manual is a companion resource to the Vermont Early Learning Standards. This document's intention is to support educators, practitioners, and individuals in implementing developmentally appropriate practices in Vermont early learning classrooms and settings. It is important to remember that the **VELS is not a curriculum** and should be used to inform how an educator's curriculum and instruction should be tailored as well as how educational practices should be aligned with these Standards.

The VELS is intended to be a resource for families, teachers, caregivers, administrators, and policy makers to answer two questions:

1. What should children know and be able to do to prepare them for success in school and in life?
2. What experiences should be available in homes, schools, and communities to help them gain the knowledge and skills that prepare them for school and life?

The Early Education team hopes this companion resource is useful and practical in application for early childhood educators and staff.

Appendix

Appendix A. VELs Shorthand Guide

Shorthand	Domain	Shorthand	Age Group
AL	Approaches to Learning	IN	Infants (0-12 months)
SE	Social and Emotional Development	YT	Young Toddlers (9-18 months)
GR	Language Development	OT	Older Toddler (18-36 months)
LA	Language Development	YP	Young PreK (36-48 months)
LI	Literacy Development	OP	Older PreK (48-60 months)
CR	Creative Arts and Expression	K	Kindergarten
MA	Mathematics	FG	First Grade
SC	Science	SG	Second Grade
SS	Social Studies	TG	Third Grade

Appendix B. Examples of how to write in VELS shorthand

AL.1.1.YP.3

- **Domain** Approaches to Learning
- **Element 1** Play and Exploration
- **Goal 1** Children engage in play to understand the world around them.
- **Age** Younger PreK
- **Indicator 3** Build knowledge through play.

CR. 2.1.YP.2

- **Domain** Creative Arts and Expression
- **Element 2** Music
- **Goal 1** Children engage in making and listening to music etc.
- **Age** YP Younger PreK
- **Indicator 2** Repeat a short melody.

MA. 2b.1.FG.2

- **Domain** Mathematics Operations and Algebraic Thinking
- **Element 2b** Operations and Algebraic Thinking
- **Goal 1** Children develop and use concepts, properties, and representations etc.
- **Age** FG First Grade
- **Indicator 2** Solve word problems that call for addition of three whole numbers whose sum is less than or equal to 20.

Appendix C. Lesson Plan Template

Teacher Name: _____

Title: _____

Date the Lesson Plan: _____

Static Information	Add Lesson Plan Information
Lesson Plan Goal(s)	
Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)	
Assessment of Learning (formal and informal)	
Materials, Resources and/or Equipment Needed	
Lesson Plan Descriptions	
Procedures for the Learning Activity	
Adaptation and/or Modifications (Universal Practices)	
Program to Home Connection	
Teacher Reflection on Learning Activity	
Teacher Reflection on Practice	