



# QuaverEd Pre-K Curriculum Evaluation

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Pre-Kindergarten students gather around a tablet to learn keywords in *"Old MacDonald Had A Farm"* from their Quaver Pre-K digital curriculum.

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## Overview

The QuaverEd Pre-K curriculum provides a comprehensive approach to teaching and supporting young learners. The curriculum presents age-appropriate unit themes with weekly detailed lessons and activities. Within the lessons, learning is supported through various instructional approaches, including direct instruction of content and inquiry-based learning. Children are given space to experiment with new ideas, and QuaverEd purposely incorporates hands-on activities during almost every part of the day. Additionally, teachers are given explicit guidance on ways to encourage language-use throughout the school day. The intentional inclusion of talk in the curriculum will benefit children's early language development. **The most notable and unique feature of the QuaverEd curriculum is its multimedia resources.** The videos, games, and songs embedded in the curriculum are visually and aurally engaging and produced with a level of quality that is currently missing from the PreK curriculum space. The integration of technology in the QuaverEd curriculum helps it stand apart from the competition and will make learning fun and exciting for children. Additionally, QuaverEd makes great effort to represent diversity in the multimedia materials, including in song and book selections. The curriculum also provides support for language-minority learners through instructional guides and materials that value and foster children's learning of their native/heritage language.

Each day and lesson has ample detail to guide teachers through the entire day. Due to the level of detail provided in the curriculum, the text can be overwhelming. The weekly view and ability to collapse parts of the daily lessons makes

it easier to navigate activities; however, teachers will need ample time to read through the daily lesson plans. The QuaverEd curriculum notes that multiple contributors helped build the curriculum, including classroom teachers. However, some units read like they were written by different people. For example, the emphasis of the Morning Messages changes with each theme. In some themes, the message focuses on the skills children are learning that day (e.g., writing new letters), and in other themes, the message focuses on content related to the theme (e.g., learning about ducks during the theme "Animals that Fly"). Additionally, some book reading questions offer potential responses while others do not. There is a need to streamline the instructional focus for the day to help guide teachers and Children.

QuaverEd excels at creating instructional technology that supports teachers and elevates their teaching practices.

**Overall, I would highly recommend the QuaverEd PreK curriculum.** The curriculum is online, making it readily accessible in school and at home. The design of the curriculum makes it easy for teachers to assess children, differentiate learning activities, and keep track of instructional resources. The level of detail in the curriculum will help teachers engage in effective and intentional instruction with their young learners. **QuaverEd excels at creating instructional technology that supports teachers and elevates their teaching practices.**



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# Review of Key Components

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## 1. Perceptual Quality of Materials

The curriculum offers a wide array of multimodal supports for young learners. The perceptual quality of the materials is exceptional and will be of immense educational value to children. There are numerous images, songs, movement videos and interactive games that support the instructional content and feature attractive and engaging designs. The curriculum also encourages the use of sensory-based supports that do not depend on access to technology, such as props for free-play during centers and the use of sand and magnets for letter tracing. All visual content can be clearly seen by children and often features large printed text to support early reading skills.

## 2. Child Participation

The curriculum encourages children to participate in learning activities through a variety of ways. Activities are designed to incorporate learning across content areas through movement, singing, play, writing, reading, and games. Children's voice and choice is honored immediately during the first week as they can choose their own centers. Student agency is regularly supported in the curriculum through projects and weekly dance compositions. The language of the curriculum pushes teachers to regularly validate children's work and encourage children to freely add and/or alter writing and art pieces.

## 3. Instructional Approach

The curriculum strives to encourage teachers to engage in intentional and responsive teaching. Teachers are regularly reminded to foster dialogue with children and allow them opportunities to share. This is best demonstrated during the meal times and read aloud times when teachers are prompted to ask questions. However, the morning message is often didactic and feels like it stifles children's voices in learning. In many lessons, teachers are instructed to state the message and then move on.

Most practices mentioned in the curriculum push against coercive or controlling teaching behaviors. For example, teachers are reminded to listen and respond to children and to not force them to sit in a certain way. **This provides agency and respect for children and will help foster a positive and supportive learning environment.** However, this narrative in the curriculum is contradicted by the instructional song "Obeying the Rules." In the song, the lyrics instruct children to "sit still." This directly contradicts the general guidance for teachers to allow children to sit how they want in their space. I would suggest changing the lyrics to reference a quiet body or minding one's personal space.

The curriculum provides many opportunities for hands-on learning. Teachers are given specific suggestions on tools to include during instruction that will promote active learning and participation. Centers are used every day and feature relevant materials for learning within a theme. Additionally, the curriculum has projects for each theme that gives children opportunities to create.

## 4. Differentiation Tools

There are some opportunities for children to share their background knowledge and prior experiences. This is mostly seen in book reading activities and in some of the cumulative projects. It is important to provide teachers with more explicit guidance on times and ways to incorporate children's background knowledge.

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The curriculum provides a lot of supplemental materials to help teachers differentiate the material. Under the Instructional Guides, teachers are able to find strategies for transitioning to half-day instruction, including assistants, co-teaching, and engaging parents in learning. There is a specific guide on differentiating instruction. **Within the daily lessons, QuaverEd features digital games and songs that can easily be altered by teachers to meet the needs of individual students. This is a strong point of the curricular materials.** While the daily lessons also feature differentiation links, those links do not offer specific, tangible strategies related to process, product, and content. Additionally, some differentiation strategies provided through the links were just suggestions for ways to assess children.

## 5. Comprehensive and Developmentally Appropriate

The PreK curriculum is comprehensive and developmentally appropriate for PreK children. It features content related to math, literacy, social studies, the arts, physical education, and SEL almost daily. Oftentimes, these content areas are integrated through interdisciplinary instruction. **The highlight of the curriculum is the SEL support throughout the lessons and themes.** There is room for the curriculum to streamline the themes with instruction in other content areas a little more. Specifically, letter instruction sometimes feels very separate from the entire theme and focus for the day. For example, under Amazing Nature > Plants All Around > Day 1, the letter of the day is “P”; however, when focusing on the letter, the teacher is never encouraged to connect it with the word “plants.”

## 6. Goals and Objectives

Each activity is linked to a Texas PreK standard. Links to the standards are explicitly noted in the lessons and through the Correlations tab on the main page. The Correlation tab is a useful resource for navigating goals and objectives for PreK children and identifying points in the QuaverEd curriculum that address those specific goals and objectives. The label “Correlation” is not clear. My initial thoughts were that the page involved links to student data and outcomes. However, the page itself is extremely useful. Once a teacher is familiar with the purpose of the page, which is to link standards to the available content, they will be able to easily navigate it and use it throughout the school year.

The content clearly aligns with the state standards across all disciplines (SEL, Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Physical Development, and Technology). Teachers are able to easily search within and across each discipline to identify skills/subskills, outcomes, and specific lessons/activities that will address the skill/subskills.

## 7. Evidenced-Based Learning Activities

The PreK curriculum often uses best practices in the field and evidence-based approaches. Children are given opportunities to explore and play on their own, and the curriculum features a lot of multimodal instruction. Dialogic read alouds are used everyday to promote pre-literacy skills. **Activities are designed to allow children to be active participants in their learning and not just passive listeners.** Additionally, there is a lot of emphasis on writing which you do not often see.

## 8. Themes of Diversity and Inclusivity

The materials and resources represent different groups of people, including teachers and students of color. **Diversity is infused throughout all of the materials and is normalized as part of the curriculum.** The commitment to diversity is continued in the instructional songs. Music used as part of the curriculum is not limited to American and European folk music. There is no intentional support in the curriculum to learn about and discuss

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issues pertaining to injustice against marginalized groups. Some of the read alouds could be an opportunity to engage in this type of discussion.

## 9. Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching

**The lessons clearly attempt to address meeting the language needs of children.** From the first lesson, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to children's expressive and receptive language skills. However, there is some language used in the curriculum that takes a deficit-based stance (e.g., children "lacking" language).

There is a specific instructional guide for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). The guide encourages teachers to assess children in different modalities and to foster children's native language learning. It also encourages teachers to actively research and celebrate children's culture in the classroom, although there is some confusion in the guide's definition of Culturally Relevant Teaching. Specifically, it defines CRT as being dependent on the teacher, yet the guide goes on to say that CRT means honoring and valuing children's cultural backgrounds. The emphasis on engaging in CRT is further modeled in the curriculum through materials such as songs and read alouds that highlight different cultures and feature languages other than English.

## 10. Assessment

There is an instructional guide on Assessment that highlights different ways to assess children that goes beyond a paper and pencil task, including how to assess during outdoor time. The guide also values children sharing what they know through different modalities. Some assessments are linked to authentic tasks, but not all. The assessment tab is an extremely useful tool and will make it easier for teachers to record children's progress during the school day.