



QuaverEd Pre-K Curriculum Evaluation


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A group of four young children, likely of African descent, are gathered around a tablet. They are wearing school uniforms consisting of light-colored shirts and dark ties. The child in the center is pointing at the tablet screen. The screen displays a colorful illustration of a farm scene with a cow, a pig, and a sheep. Below the illustration, the text "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" is written in a stylized font. Above the text, the lyrics "e-i-e-i-o" are displayed. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

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

Reviewed by
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August 21, 2020



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.

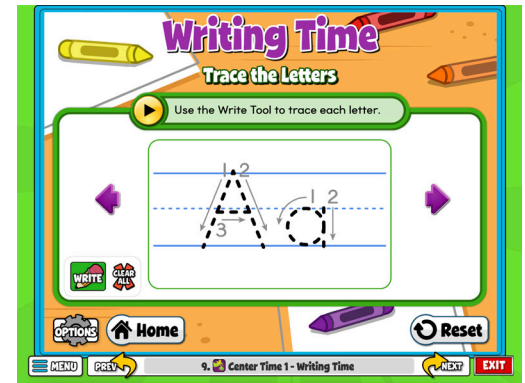
Overall, I would highly recommend the QuaverEd PreK curriculum. The curriculum is online, making it readily accessible in school and at home. The design of the curriculum makes it easy for teachers to assess children, differentiate learning activities, and keep track of instructional resources. The level 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

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

Lesson Guide		
	Circle Time 1	15 mins
	Center Time 1	40-50 mins
	Snack Time	15 mins

Snacks:

- Ideas for theme-related table conversations will be introduced in Week 2 as children become comfortable with their schedule.
- Engage children in conversation in order to get to know them and for them to get to know you.

Transitions:

- Clean up the snack and prepare to read aloud. Remind children of procedures. Child practices good habits of personal health and hygiene. *18.C.2.*
- If desired, access the Transitions Playlist from the opening section of the lesson and listen to songs such as Help Me Clean, Wash Our Hands, and Story Time.

Outcome Definitions		
	Read Aloud 1	15 mins
	Outdoor Time 1	20 mins
	Circle Time 2	15 mins
	Lunch Time	20 mins

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.

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

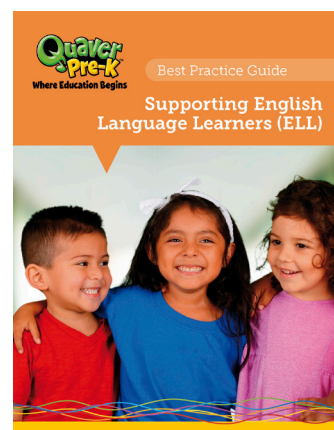
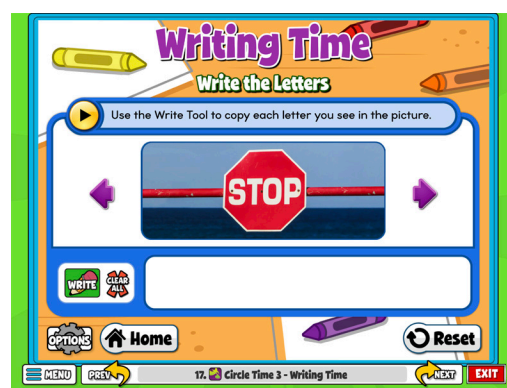
The materials and resources represent different groups of people, including teachers and students of color. Diversity is infused throughout all of the materials and is normalized as part of the curriculum. The commitment to diversity is continued in the instructional songs. Music used as part of the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

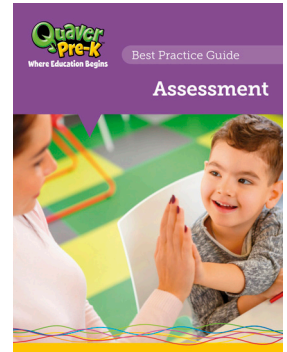
Skill/Subskill	Outcome	Breakout	Citation Type	Location
A. Self-Concept Skills	1. Child is aware of actions own body is in space and respects personal boundaries.	a. Child is aware of where own body is in space.	Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.01 - Small Group Morning Activities
			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.02 - Small Group Morning Activities
		b. Child respects personal boundaries.	Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.03 - Small Group Morning Activities
			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.04 - Small Group Morning Activities
2. Child shows self-awareness and can express pride in age appropriate abilities and skills.			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.05 - Small Group Morning Activities
			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.06 - Small Group Morning Activities
			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.07 - Small Group Morning Activities
			Teacher-Only Narrative	11.1.1.02.08 - Small Group Morning Activities



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.



Suggestions

1. Use videos to supplement text 🎥

The text for each day in the curriculum can be overwhelming. Additionally, some of the more detailed activities can also be confusing (e.g., projects, read alouds). I would suggest including videos of teachers implementing specific parts of the lesson in an actual classroom. This would help break up the text and allow teachers another option for digesting the material. I would specifically recommend a model video for read alouds, games, and activities with lots of teacher-child discussion (e.g., meal time, centers).

1. Eliminate any deficit perspectives 👤+

The curriculum mentions that teachers should note any children that lack vocabulary. While this is a simple wording issue, changes in the language can help teachers shift their instructional lens from a *deficit-based* to an *asset-based* perspective. All children bring some language skills to the classrooms – teachers should strive to recognize the skills children DO bring while also noting the school-valued language skills children will need to learn. Just because a child is choosing not to say something in the moment, does not mean they lack the word knowledge.

So, instead of lacking the vocabulary, it can be framed as seeing what words children use and noting the children that may need support in building their expressive vocabulary (the words they actually say out loud). It is a subtle change, but important for helping us continue to value children’s linguistic backgrounds and experiences.

2. Change a lyric in “Obeying the Rules” song ✔️

In the song, the lyrics instruct children to “sit still.” This directly contradicts the general message of the curriculum – teachers are encouraged to allow children to sit however they want in their personal space and most activities involve children actively moving. I would suggest changing the lyrics to reference a quiet body or minding one’s personal space.

3. Enhance the Morning Message 📅

The current structure of the morning messages is not consistent. First, it is unclear what the goal of the morning message actually IS in the PreK curriculum. I would suggest streamlining that goal across all lessons (e.g., should it reflect the theme? OR should it reflect a key skill we are learning today?). Second, the message can be used

to enhance children's learning. I would suggest making sure children are given a direct opportunity to respond to the morning message (this is currently done in some lessons). For example, in the Music and Sounds unit, Day 1, the morning message is: "This week we are going to be talking about music and different sounds that we hear all around us." The teacher then goes directly into teaching about rhythm patterns. Children are never asked to share what they think music is or to simply identify sounds that they hear right there in the classroom. Additionally, the didactic approach to the morning message does not push teachers to connect what is being learned to children's experiences (E.g., allowing children to share what they know and then stating that sometimes we can find patterns in the music or sounds that we hear as an introduction to rhythm).

4. Connect Letters with the Themes

Although this is done in some activities, I would suggest encouraging teachers to use a word that features the letter of the day AND matches the theme when learning or focusing on that letter, or asking children to think of a word that has the letter sound (this would be a great strategy for gifted/advanced learners). For example, Amazing Nature> Plants All Around:

- Monday: P – Plants
- Tuesday: F – Fruit, Flower

5. Provide Specific Differentiation Examples

The curriculum should consider adding specific differentiation strategies for projects and activities, at least once per theme. This includes children who need extra support, as well as children who may need more of a challenge. The guide is very helpful, but sometimes it helps to have examples!

6. Address Immigration and Anti-Racist Topics

I would suggest including books that highlight some of the current events of today, including immigration and anti-racism. This would allow for age-appropriate teaching on the subject and help teachers who are working with children impacted by a lot of the current policies. Additionally, I would suggest making an instructional guide on how to support children going through racial injustice and/or immigration issues. This seems like a great opportunity for SEL support.

7. Re-define CRT in the ELL Instructional Guide

The guide states that "Culturally Relevant Teaching starts with the belief that children succeed because of their teacher." It truly starts with the belief that children's lived experiences and cultural backgrounds are valuable. The guide goes on to describe a more child-centered approach, but the initial language takes a teacher-centered approach.

8. Other Notes Not Relevant to Review

- In the "Teacher Dashboard" Overview, I would suggest adding that the Instructional Guides feature a Scope and Sequence in the text. The curriculum has a very detailed and useful Scope and Sequence, and this is an important document to highlight for teachers.
- As a stats person, the "Correlation" label was confusing. I initially thought it was a place that reported students' data and did something with correlation tables. A label such as "Link to Standards," "Standards," or "Goals and Objectives" would offer more clarity – but may also not be a necessary change!
- I noticed a typo in Them 5/3/Monday/circle time 2: fish in pond last lyric



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