



An Introduction to
Scope and Continuum of Expectations
Emerging Language and Literacy
Curriculum

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Child development is influenced by external factors in the preschool classroom. Two external factors are the teacher and the chosen curriculum that guide the physical and instructional environment. *The Emerging Language and Literacy Curriculum (ELLC)* is a curriculum appropriate for children three to five years of age. Many early childhood curricula are designed to include a “Scope and Sequence.” The *ELLC* is designed with a scope that includes all developmental domains and a continuum of expectations (sequence). The ages and stages model of child development is broad and provides general guidelines for development; within each stage children develop at differing rates. According to Copple and Bredekamp, “Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child’s individual functioning.” (Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. Eds. (2009) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age Eight*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C.) The idea of uneven rates is reflected in the term, “continuum of expectations” since that is the natural flow of child development and learning. See the *ELLC* Scope and Continuum of Expectations at the end of this paper.

Scope: The scope in the *ELLC* is comprehensive and includes all developmental domains (language/literacy; physical/motor; cognitive/pre-academic; and social/emotional). Skills and indicators for each developmental domain are represented in a Learning Outcomes Chart found at the end of each of 22 thematic units and are described in *ELLC* Book A in a chapter titled Targeting Curriculum Objectives.

Continuum of expectations (sequence): The *ELLC* has chosen to use the term “continuum of expectations.” A continuum is, “a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other although the extremes are quite distinct” (McKean, E. (2005) *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2nd Ed, Oxford University Press). For example, if a child is learning book-handling skills, at the beginning of the continuum the child has no book-handling skills. At the other end of the continuum, the child will know the front, back, spine, how to turn the pages, the direction to hold the book, etc. From the beginning to the end of the continuum is quite distinct and the concept and skill of book-handling is learned over time. However, the elements within the continuum may not be as distinct and may not follow a particular order.

Cycling and Distributed Practice: The *ELLC* is developed to follow the research-supported teaching techniques of “cycling” and “distributed practice.” In contrast to a stage model in which a particular skill or skills are taught to mastery prior to introduction of a new concept or skill, a cyclic approach to learning considers natural development. Children are continually exposed to and participate in instruction designed to introduce and reinforce concepts and skills appropriate to their range of development. Instruction, exposure, and practice are distributed such that concepts and skills are introduced and reinforced in a cross-curricular fashion. In cycling and distributed practice, children are repeatedly exposed to a concept or skill but are not required to meet mastery before another concept or skill is introduced. For example, in the *ELLC* each unit has four days of planned phonological awareness groups. On the first day in each unit, the target is alliteration; and this skill is a repeated target on the third day. Across units, alliteration is repeated and practiced with differing phonemes (speech sounds).

Advantages in using cycling and distributed practice as teaching techniques. One advantage is that children entering the preschool classroom at different time points during the year will not miss instruction in key developmental areas. A second advantage of distributed practice

techniques is that memory is enhanced. A third advantage is that children become familiar with new concepts and skills because of constant review and exposure. A fourth advantage is that it allows for inclusive practices both culturally and for children with differing abilities. A major advantage of using these techniques is that it matches the natural flow of young children's learning.

The Relationship of ELLC Learning Outcomes Charts to the Scope and Continuum of Expectations

At the end of each ELLC thematic unit, a Learning Outcomes Chart describes the scope and expectations for child learning. A description of the objectives may be found in ELLC Book A, Targeting Curriculum Objectives. The Learning Outcomes Charts describe the instructional objectives and targets for each unit. In this curriculum a Learning Outcome is a statement of what children are expected to be able to do following a learning activity.

When examining any of the 22 Learning Outcomes Charts, it can be noted that the name of the unit and the **key concept** for the unit are at the top of the chart (e.g. Unit 10, Snow and Snowmen). Each thematic unit has a concept that is integrated across the key components within the unit (shared storybook reading, small phonological awareness groups, ELLC Circle Time, and learning centers). On the left side of the Learning Outcomes Chart, is the scope and **content** of the unit. Across the top of the chart is the **context** within which children are introduced to the concept and where they have hands-on practice with the knowledge and skills in the indicators and scope.

An example of a blank Learning Outcomes Chart is at the end of this paper.

The colored bars represent the time periods when children are achieving the scope indicators. All indicators are taught in every unit for children 3 to 5 years of age.

Developmental Domains	SKILLS	Scope Indicators	← Years →		
			3	4	5
Language and Literacy	Literacy Skills	Graphics/pre-writing			
		Book orientation			
		Print Awareness			
		Alphabet knowledge			
		Story structure			
		Shared story book reading			
	Phonological Skills	General Awareness			
		Memory for word patterns			
		Rhyming awareness			
		Phonemic Awareness			
		Sound Manipulation			
	Oral Language Skills	Comprehension			
		Vocabulary			
		Word order			
		Word endings			
Social talk					
Conversation Skills					
Physical/Motor	Physical Skills	Gross Motor			
		Fine Motor			
Cognitive/Pre-academic	Pre-academic and Thinking Skills	Counting			
		Sorting			
		Classifying			
		Estimation			
		Missing Objects			
		Prediction			
		Shapes			
		Colors			
		Construct a Model			
		Patterning			
		Sequential Order			
		Measurement			
		Graph/Chart			
		Social/Emotional	Social Skills	Contributes ideas to play	
Role Play					
Aware of Rules of play					
Share Materials					
Wait Turn					
Contribute to Discussion					
Engages in social routines					

ELLC Scope and Continuum of Expectations