

Key Characteristic 4:

Curriculum Framework for Environmental Learning

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Guidelines for Excellence
**Early Childhood Environmental
Education Programs**

For educators, parents, home schoolers, administrators,
policy makers, and the public

KEY CHARACTERISTIC 4: CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

GUIDELINE 4.1—SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

GUIDELINE 4.2—CURIOSITY AND QUESTIONING

GUIDELINE 4.3—DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDINGS

GUIDELINE 4.4—SKILLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

GUIDELINE 4.5—A PERSONAL SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CARING

GUIDELINE 4.6—PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT



Guideline 4.1

Social and Emotional Growth

Early-learner programs provide opportunities for young children to **participate in a variety of social interactions**, including play and exploration in the outdoors that allow them to grow as **contributing members of their community**.

What to look for:

1. Opportunities and experiences are provided for children to learn about self-concept and control.
2. A sense of community is promoted.



Guideline 4.2

Curiosity and Questioning

Early-learner programs provide a **mixture of opportunities** to **develop curiosity, ask their own questions, and begin to develop reasoning and problem solving skills.**



What to look for:

1. Initiative and curiosity is encouraged.
2. Questioning is encouraged.
3. Opportunities to practice reasoning and problem solving are provided.

Guideline 4.3

Development of Environmental Understandings

Early learning programs provide children with opportunities to **develop knowledge related to environmental and social systems**, including the place where they live.



What to look for:

1. Opportunities to observe and understand earth systems.
2. Opportunities to observe and understand the living environment.
3. Interactions with individuals, groups, and culture.
4. An emphasis on developing a child's sense of place.

Guideline 4.4

Skills for Understanding the Environment

Early learning programs provide opportunities for children to **experience a variety of environmental conditions** and encourage them to **investigate topics of their own choosing**.

What to look for:

1. Opportunities for children to observe, investigate, and analyze.
2. Opportunities are provided that help children develop abilities to collect, describe, and record information.
3. Structure and opportunity are provided to help children work with flexibility, creativity and openness.



Guideline 4.5

Personal Sense of Responsibility and Caring

Early learning programs **model environmentally responsible actions** and **provide opportunities for children to make decisions** about their own activities.



What to look for:

1. Opportunities are provided for extensive positive interactions with nature.
2. Opportunities to participate in social interaction and to learn appropriate social roles.

Guideline 4.6

Physical Health and Development

Early learning programs provide young children with a wide variety of **physically challenging experiences**, including opportunities to run, jump, and climb in the natural environment. They also provide opportunities to **explore ways they can improve their own health**.

What to look for:

1. Opportunities to develop fine motor skills.
2. Opportunities to develop gross motor skills.
3. Opportunities to use the environment to promote health and fitness.

