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**TO:** State Board Members of the Education Policy Committee  
**FROM:** Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., Interim State Superintendent of Schools  
**DATE:** February 7, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** Early Learning Standards Revisions and Updates

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### **Purpose**

The Division of Early Childhood presents for review and adoption the revised and updated Early Learning Standards for children, birth through age 3.

### **Background/Historical Perspective**

The primary goal of revising and updating the Maryland Early Learning Standards is to develop high-quality, developmentally appropriate standards that align with the College and Career Ready Standards. The current Early Learning Guidelines are about a decade old and do not reflect the current brain or learning sciences research for early learners. During the revision process, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) took two approaches. First, DEC worked to engage more than 175 early childhood stakeholders, from both community-based and school-based settings, to have them review and provide feedback on the draft Early Learning Standards. DEC established and built trust with the early childhood community by incorporating much of the feedback provided into a final draft of the Maryland Early Learning Standards. Based on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, the second approach to this work included benchmarking the draft Maryland Early Learning Standards against other states and leveraging key components to develop best-in-class standards for Maryland.

### **Executive Summary**

This presentation will provide information on the following:

1. History and Background
2. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration
3. Next Steps

### **Action**

Requesting the adoption of, and permission to publish, the revised and updated Early Learning Standards.

### **Attachments**

Early Learning Standards-Feb7-2024.pdf  
MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_introduction.pdf  
MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_Social and Emotional.pdf  
MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_ApproachesToLearning.pdf

MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_Language and Literacy.pdf

MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_Early CognitionSTEAM.pdf

MD\_Early Learning Standards\_Revised\_Physical and Motor Development.pdf



DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

# Early Learning Standards Revisions and Updates

February 7, 2024

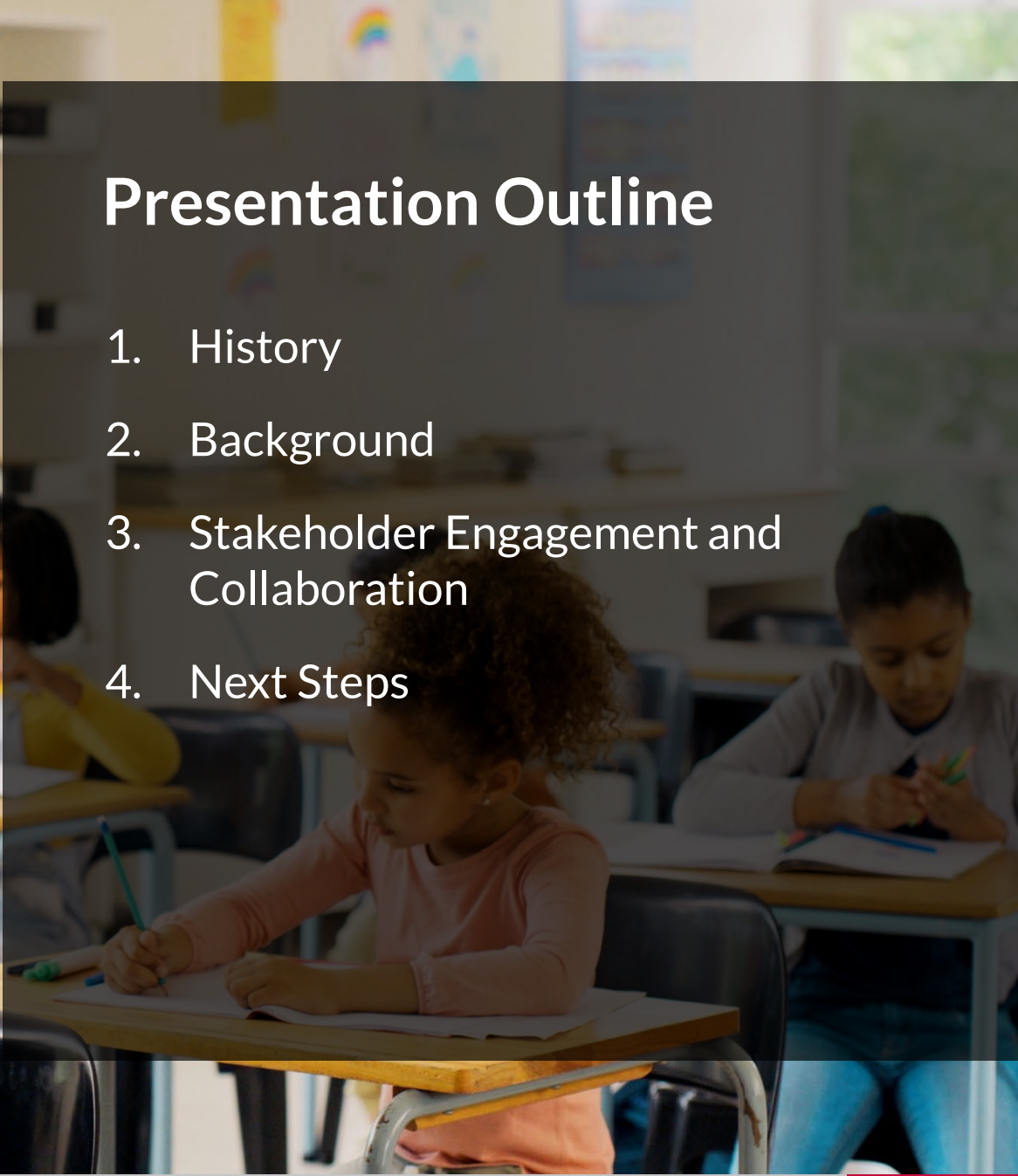
Presented By | Dr. Shayna Cook, Assistant State Superintendent





# Presentation Outline

1. History
2. Background
3. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration
4. Next Steps







# History

The current Early Learning Guidelines have not been updated in more than a decade and lack alignment with current brain science, learning sciences, and child development research.

## 1. History

2. Background

3. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

4. Next Steps

## The Existing Challenges

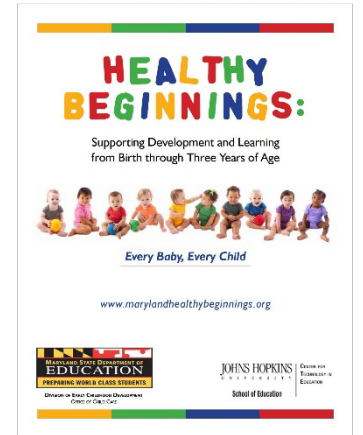
The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) wanted to address the following:

- Educators faced challenges in determining the difference between guidelines and a curriculum as well as how to utilize both in lesson planning.
- Healthy Beginnings and the Guide to Pedagogy were originally designed as guidelines and were not state standards.
- Educators were unclear about how to use the early learning guidelines (as guides and not tools for planning and/or assessment).
- MSDE no longer vets curricula materials for providers/educators although providers routinely request guidance on the selection of an appropriate curriculum for their programs. DEC has worked to update curricular recommendations on the MSDE website.

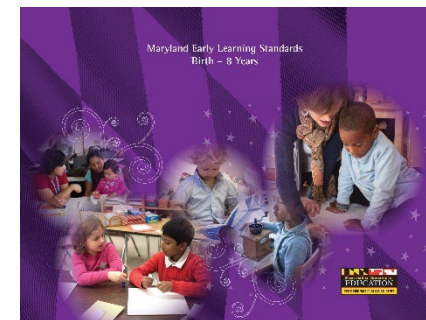
## Current Guidelines (Not Standards)

DEC began this work in response to making the necessary updates to the existing guidelines. This included initial discussions regarding the following:

- 2004 – The Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children (Birth-Three Years of Age) was published. (The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) required states to submit program plans which included Early Learning Guidelines.)
- 2007 – The Early Learning Guidelines were updated. (The last publication was in 2010.)
- 2015 – Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland’s Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8 was published and aligned with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards.
- Maryland lacked early learning standards that articulated what students should know and be able to do.



Birth to 3 years



Birth to 8 years (Grade 2)





# Background

The new Early Learning Standards were benchmarked against other states and incorporated the latest research in brain science and learning sciences, ensuring a strong foundation for early learning and instruction in our State.

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## Vendor Selection: WestEd

Based on discussions with early learning practitioners and the need to create Early Learning Standards for the State, the following occurred:

- DEC received recommendations on who could assist with this process.
- WestEd had prior experience in working with developing early learning standards in California, New Jersey, Minnesota and Ohio, as well as the Early Learning Outcomes Framework for Head Start. (Part of their team was a writer/contributor for the Head Start Framework.) A team member was also a reviewer for Louisiana as well as the government of Singapore.
- WestEd reviewed the current standards, made recommendations to DEC, conducted focus groups and structured interviews based upon DEC recommendations and provided information on feedback from the participants.

# New Age Progressions Aligned with Child Development

## Current Age Periods

1 year

2 year

3 year

4 year

Kindergarten (5-6 years)

Grade 1 (6-7 years)

Grade 2 (7-8 years)



## New Age Periods

Young Infants (0 – 8 months)

Older Infants (8 – 18 months)

Toddlers (18 – 36 months)

PreK 3 (36 – 48 months)

4 year / Pre-K 4 (48 – 60 months)

Kindergarten (5-6 years)

Grade 1 (6-7 years)

Grade 2 (7-8 years)



# Simplified Domain Structure

## Current Domains

1. Language and Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Social Studies
4. Science
5. Fine Arts
6. Physical Education
7. Health
8. Social Foundations

## New Domains

1. Social and Emotional Development
2. Approaches to Learning
3. Language and Literacy
4. Early Cognition and STEAM
5. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

# Child Examples for each Indicator

<b>Strand: Early Literacy</b>			
<b>Standard L.EL.2: Demonstrates interest and attention to language and structure used in books, rhymes, and storytelling.</b>			
<i>Young Infants around 8 months</i>	<i>Older Infants around 18 months</i>	<i>Toddlers around 36 months</i>	<i>PreK3 around 48 months</i>
Attends to books, pictures, or rhymes recited by an adult.	Participates actively in storytelling, reading, or singing by pointing at pictures and saying, signing, or repeating words.	Says or signs, with modeling and support, repetitive phrases or refrains from favorite stories, songs, or rhymes.	Says or signs a few familiar words, phrases, or repetitive refrains from favorite stories, songs, or rhymes, often imitating the intonation of adult readers or speakers.
<b>Examples</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<p><i>Coos or kicks when being read to by an adult.</i></p> <p><i>Watches an adult's face while the adult recites nursery rhymes in the child's home language.</i></p>	<p><i>While experiencing a book about body parts, pats a picture of a nose on a person's face when the adult reads, "nose" in the child's home language.</i></p> <p><i>Communicates one or two familiar words in their home language, such as "ball" or "flower," when they see pictures of those objects in a board book.</i></p>	<p><i>Sings with an adult, "¡Ay, que vaca tan salada! Tolón, tolón, tolón, tolón," the words of a Spanish-language nursery rhyme.</i></p> <p><i>A child with a speech delay makes "shh shh" sounds and swishes their hands during the "swish-swash" verse in "Going on a Bear Hunt."</i></p> <p><i>When an adult sings "The Wheels on the Bus," a child who is familiar with the song sings, "round and round, round and round" at the appropriate time.</i></p>	<p><i>Sings along as an adult repeats the phrases in a nursery rhyme in the child's home language.</i></p> <p><i>Crawls into the space under a small table and communicates, "Esto debe ser una cueva," (This must be a cave), a line from the book Un Bolsillo Para Corduroy (A Pocket for Corduroy), which is one of the child's favorite books.</i></p> <p><i>Pretends to read a few pages of a familiar book to a younger child, reciting, "I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them, Sam I Am!," using the same "angry" intonation they have heard an adult use when reading.</i></p>

**Note:** Each Domain has strands. Under the strand is a standard, a set of indicators, child examples, and in-practice teacher examples.



# In-Practice Teacher Examples for each Indicator

<b>Strand: Early Literacy</b>			
<b>Standard L.EL.2: Demonstrates interest and attention to language and structure used in books, rhymes, and storytelling.</b>			
<i>Young Infants around 8 months</i>	<i>Older Infants around 18 months</i>	<i>Toddlers around 36 months</i>	<i>PreK3 around 48 months</i>
Attends to books, pictures, or rhymes recited by an adult.	Participates actively in storytelling, reading, or singing by pointing at pictures and saying, signing, or repeating words.	Says or signs, with modeling and support, repetitive phrases or refrains from favorite stories, songs, or rhymes.	Says or signs a few familiar words, phrases, or repetitive refrains from favorite stories, songs, or rhymes, often imitating the intonation of adult readers or speakers.
<b>In-practice Examples</b>	<b>In-practice Examples</b>	<b>In-practice Examples</b>	<b>In-practice Examples</b>
<i>Read, rhyme, or tell stories that have a repeating structure and predictable, exciting moments, such as “Open, shut them” in English and/or the home language. Vary your speed and pitch and pause between lines to observe infants’ responses.</i>	<i>Invite children to participate in story time in English and/or the home language by asking them to point to a picture, answer questions, or act things out (e.g., “¿Como dice el leon?” [What does the lion say?]) while reading a page about a lion).</i>	<i>Read books, tell stories, or sing rhymes that have a predictable, repetitive structure in English and/or the home language.</i>	<i>As you read, rhyme, sing, or tell stories in English and/or the home language, pause at predictable places and ask children to fill in the words or lyrics. Ask children for plot ideas as you tell stories. Use the tune of children’s favorite songs and create new versions of the songs by switching out some or all the words.</i>

**Note:** Each Domain has strands. Under the strand is a standard, a set of indicators, child examples, and in-practice teacher examples.

A photograph of four diverse children (two girls and two boys) smiling and hugging each other outdoors. The sun is shining brightly behind them, creating a warm, golden glow. The children are wearing casual clothing: a patterned grey shirt, a teal shirt, a blue t-shirt, and a blue and white striped shirt.

# Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

Maryland's Early Learning Standards underwent a comprehensive review, engaging stakeholders in early childhood education and content experts from the Office of Teaching and Learning.

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## Focus Groups and Structured Interviews

- Occurred in Spring 2022 through Spring 2023
- DEC conducted focus groups and interviews with key early childhood stakeholders
- Based on feedback from the focus group participants, WestEd made additional revisions to show standard alignment (between PreK3 and PreK4)
- WestEd expounded upon age range examples and eliminated academic jargon by replacing it with plain language equivalents
- Received feedback from more than 175 stakeholders (e.g., family child care providers, child care centers, local education agency teachers and staff, early childhood advocates, and higher education)
- Feedback from stakeholders was incorporated into the Early Learning Standards.

## Office of Teaching and Learning Review Process

- The standards were benchmarked against other states to ensure that new Maryland's Early Learning Standards are best in class.
- The Division of Early Childhood staff reviewed and provided feedback across all its offices.
- The content directors as well as multilingual learner and special education staff reviewed the standards and provided feedback.
- Feedback was incorporated to improve the final product and ensure alignment longitudinally.
- An alignment document to College and Career Ready standards has been developed.



## Next Steps

The next steps involve socializing the new standards within the early childhood field and assisting educators in various early learning settings to effectively implement these standards to support child development and learning.

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## Next Steps

- In March 2024, a small group of expert stakeholders from local education agencies and private providers or community-based programs will meet to discuss and provide feedback on how to align the Next Generation Science Standards with the Maryland Early Learning Standards given the gap in science standards for four-year-old children. A separate companion document with Pre-K4 Science Standards will be developed.
- An alignment document to Next Generation Science Standards will be developed.
- An Early Learning Symposium releasing the new Early Learning Standards will be held during the Month of the Young Child in April 2024. Early childhood educators from private provider or community-based programs and public schools will participate in workshops on how to use the standards to support child development and learning.
- The Division of Early Childhood will develop guidance and a process for approved curriculum across all early learning settings.
- Professional learning and training will be rolled out to support the field with implementation of the new standards.