



Stepping Stones

A Texas Migrant Early Childhood
Program for 3- and 4-Year Olds

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Home-Based Program Manual



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INTRODUCTION

This section provides information about the development and goals of the Stepping Stones program and its home-based component, as well as an overview of the program’s organization.

Background

In 1984–1985, the Migrant Education Program (MEP) at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) first implemented an early childhood program called Building Bridges. Over the years, the program was revised and refined. In an effort to revamp and realign it to the state’s revised prekindergarten guidelines, TEA partnered with the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at SEDL to work on a major revision of the program—Stepping Stones was the result.

Beginning in the spring of 2010, staff from TEA and the TXCC worked to develop a new Pre-K program for migrant children and their families. Staff from both organizations worked with a steering committee and a group of practitioners to develop the home-based component of Stepping Stones. The steering committee was made up of TEA, university, and education service center (ESC) staff with expertise in curriculum development, early childhood, and English as a second language. The steering committee provided direction, guidance, and feedback on the development process as well as the product.

The lesson developers were teachers, migrant coordinators, and ESC staff with experience in early childhood education, migrant education, and curriculum development. A select group of lessons was field tested, and feedback was gathered via observations, as well as interviews with parents, home educators, and program coordinators. This feedback was incorporated into the final product.

Goals

The MEP is authorized under Title I, Part C of Public Law 107-110 (Elementary and Secondary Education Act). Its purpose is to design and support programs that help migrant students overcome the challenges associated with their lifestyle and to help them succeed in school and transition to postsecondary education or employment. The Stepping Stones program was designed to meet the unique needs of 3- and 4-year-old migrant children. This program manual will provide administrators, coordinators, and home educators with the necessary guidance, resources, and tools to implement the Stepping Stones home-based program successfully.

The Stepping Stones program supports, empowers, and enables parents to prepare their children for school. Data collected in 2007 from a statewide comprehensive needs assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2007) revealed that Texas migrant children were more likely than the general student population to be retained in first grade because they lacked adequate preparation for entering school. The high mobility rate of migrant families often prevents their young children from enrolling into traditional preschool programs. The need for a migrant early childhood program was evident.

The underlying principle of this program is that parents are their children's first teachers. Parental involvement is critical and has a profound impact on a child's intellectual potential (Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1995; Cooper et al., 2010). The Stepping Stones home-based lessons have been specifically designed to engage parents in their child's education at home.

The primary goals for the home-based component of the program are to

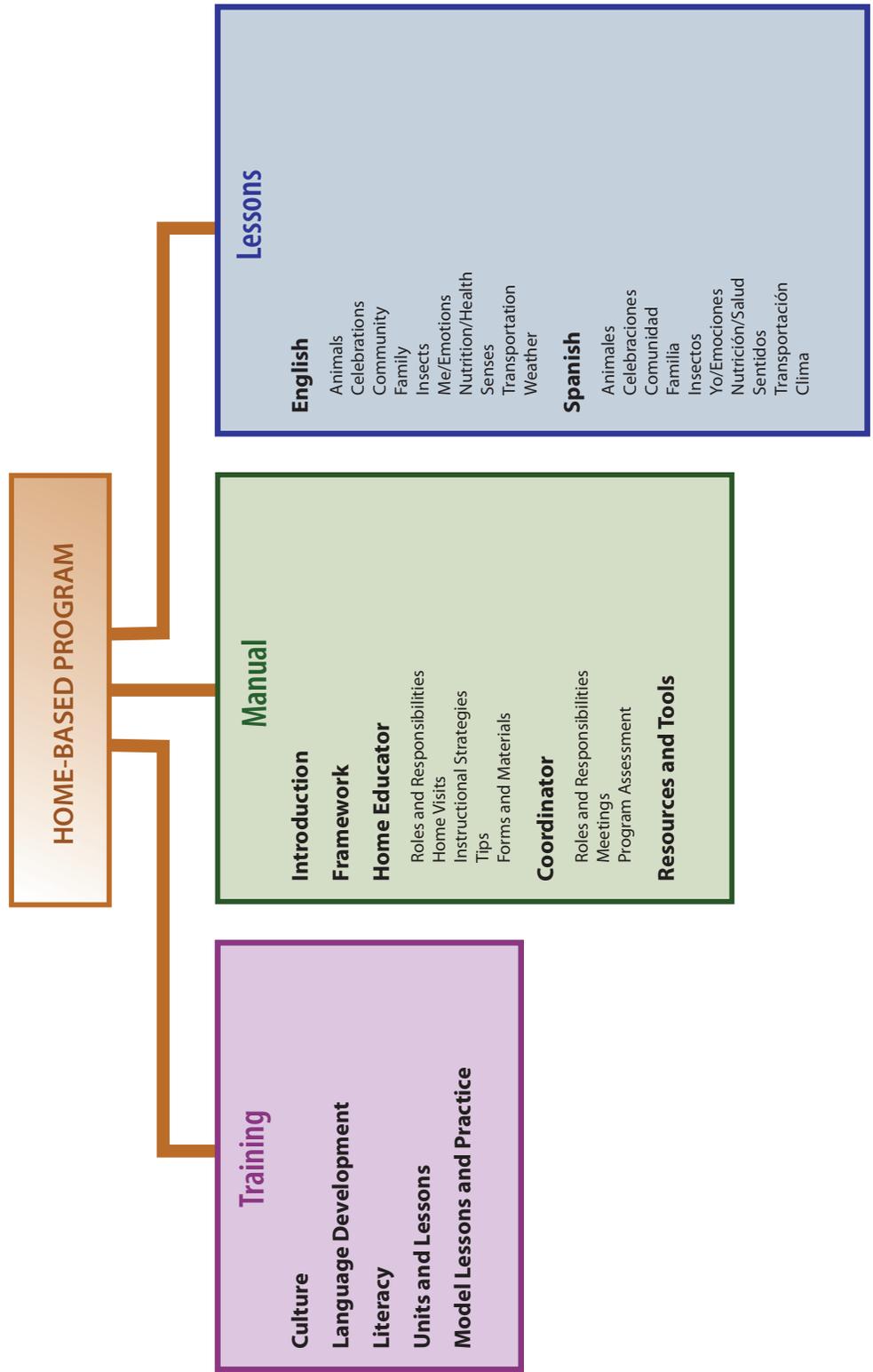
- 1) support migrant children's developmental growth;
- 2) enhance parents' skills to interact and foster their children's learning; and
- 3) build a network of support services, which will strengthen the learning environment and resources for the entire family.

These goals are essential to the academic achievement of young migrant children.

Organization

This program manual is for the home-based component and contains information to assist coordinators and home educators in implementing the Stepping Stones program. The diagram on the next page is a snapshot image of the Stepping Stones program and its components.

Stepping Stones Components



Introduction

References

Cooper, C. E., Crosnoe, R., Suizzo, M. A., & Pituch, K. A. (2010). Poverty, race, and parental involvement during the transition to elementary school. *Journal of Family Issues, 31*(7), 859–883.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record, 97*(2), 310–331.

Texas Education Agency. (2007). *Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Texas Migrant Education Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147492495&libID=2147492492>



FRAMEWORK

This section describes the structure of the home-based component of the Stepping Stones program. Included are the Big Ideas for each of the ten units; a description of how the lessons are aligned to the *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*; and descriptions of some of the features of the lessons, including the content objectives, developmental ranges, gradual release of responsibility, and the parent page.

Components of Framework

- ◆ Lesson Units
 - Animals—Animales
 - Celebrations—Celebraciones
 - Community—Comunidad
 - Family—Familia
 - Insects—Insectos
 - Me/Emotions—Yo/Emociones
 - Nutrition/Health—Nutrición/Salud
 - Senses—Sentidos
 - Transportation—Transportación
 - Weather—Clima
- ◆ Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines
- ◆ Content Objectives
- ◆ Developmental Range
 - Cognitive
 - Language and communication
 - Social and emotional
 - Physical
- ◆ Gradual Release of Responsibility
- ◆ Parent Page

Lesson Units

The lessons in Stepping Stones are divided into 10 units, each focused on a specific area of learning. There are 10 lessons within each unit, and these ten lessons should be taught sequentially. The units, however, do not need to be taught in any particular order. Below is a list of the units with the “Big Ideas” that unite the lessons for each unit.

Animals

Children are naturally curious about animals. This curiosity can be directed to help children learn about animal classifications, their characteristics, and their habitats.

Celebrations

Children begin to recognize events and routines that occur in a predictable order. Comparisons of family and community celebrations help children understand past and present events and identify similarities and differences between him-/herself and others.

Community

Children recognize their community as a part of the bigger world and explore the roles and relationships of community workers and consumers. Children learn that the community and community members benefit from people working in many different ways.

Family

Children develop self-identity and awareness as they explore the roles and relationships of their own family members. They learn that each family member can contribute to the well-being of the family unit. Children identify similarities and differences in characteristics of families.

Insects

Exploration of living organisms helps children learn about their world. Children investigate in order to describe, organize, classify, and compare characteristics of insects.

Me/Emotions

Children begin to appreciate themselves as unique individuals. Children recognize their own and others’ physical features and emotions.

Nutrition/Health

Nutrition is an important part of children’s daily routines and contributes to a positive self-concept and outlook. Children explore habits of good nutrition and health.

Senses

Children use the five senses—touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing—to explore, describe, and classify objects and organisms around them. These explorations help them make predictions, solve problems, make comparisons, and ask questions.

Transportation

Children are curious about travel. Children explore and describe the many ways to move people and things from place to place. They describe and compare characteristics of several types of transportation.

Weather

Children are eager to explore and describe the world around them, including changes in the weather and seasons. Children predict and describe weather types, select appropriate clothing, and explore weather-related safety issues.

These lessons were built around a few important constructs: the revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, specific and detailed content objectives, and an appropriate developmental range.

Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines

The Revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines* are designed to align prekindergarten programs with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). They focus on the following areas:

- Alignment
- Uniformity
- Research base
- Family
- Language development
- Skills
- The whole child
- Flexibility

This alignment helps provide children across programs with a more uniform system of instruction. The guidelines were designed around the latest research on issues such as the importance of family contributions to education and language development. The guidelines, and therefore the Stepping Stones lessons, recognize that parents and family are a child's first teachers and build on the influence of the family. They also recognize and build upon the importance of language development and English language learners (ELLs)—especially relevant for this program. Although there is an emphasis on school-readiness skills and knowledge, the guidelines also address other aspects of child development, including a responsive interactive style, social and emotional development, and flexible approaches to meet the needs of individual children.

The Stepping Stones lessons are aligned with the Revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines* to ensure that the program will advance all of these components. In addition, the lessons help prepare children for their entry into schools and standards-based instruction.

Content Objectives

Each Stepping Stones lesson has both content and language objectives. These objectives are related to the “Big Idea” of each unit. The content objective incorporates skill areas from the guidelines’ ten domains. Not only do these objectives incorporate important knowledge and skills needed for school entry, but they are also specifically designed to meet the special needs of migrant children.

Developmental Range

It is helpful to know the typical stages of childhood development. Listed below are skills and abilities that are typical for late 2-year-old to early 4-year-old children in four areas: cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and physical development. Keep in mind however, that each child develops at his/her own pace, and delays in any one of these areas is not necessarily cause for concern.

Cognitive/thinking skills

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Approach problems only from their point of view, self-centered
- ◆ Choose picture books, name pictured objects, and identify several objects within one picture
- ◆ Group objects by category
- ◆ Name some colors and numbers, identify some correctly, and understand counting concept
- ◆ Relate what they are doing to others and imitate more complex adult actions (e.g., play housekeeping)

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Understand concepts like grouping and matching (recognizing and matching some colors)
- ◆ Understand concepts of same and different, as well as size comparisons such as big and bigger
- ◆ Organize materials on their own (e.g., stacking blocks or rings in order of size)
- ◆ Identify parts of a whole, like a slice of pie
- ◆ Draw, name, and briefly explain somewhat recognizable pictures that are meaningful to them
- ◆ Ask “why” and “how” questions
- ◆ Tell you their full name and age
- ◆ Attend to an activity for a longer stretch of time (between 5 and 15 minutes)
- ◆ Learn both by observing and listening to adults’ explanations
- ◆ Follow a series of three to four simple directions

Language and communication

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Join familiar words into phrases
- ◆ Begin to use modifiers (adverbs and adjectives)
- ◆ Point to common objects when they are named and name at least 10 familiar objects
- ◆ Name objects based on their description
- ◆ Respond to “what” and “where” questions
- ◆ Enjoy listening to stories and asking for favorite stories
- ◆ Recount familiar events that happened that day

Language and communication (continued)

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Know first and last name and use pronouns (he, she, you, and I), sometimes incorrectly
- ◆ Make themselves understood to strangers, despite some sound errors
- ◆ Use more complex grammar, such as plurals and past tense
- ◆ Understand sentences involving time concepts (e.g., "Grandma is coming tomorrow.") and narrate past experiences in past tense
- ◆ Know approximately 300 words
- ◆ Understand relationships expressed by "if ... then" or "because" sentences
- ◆ Understand a series of two to four related instructions
- ◆ Use sentences with five to six words
- ◆ Sing a song and repeat at least one nursery rhyme

Social and emotional

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Begin self-evaluation and develop notions of themselves as good, bad, attractive, etc.
- ◆ Show awareness of their own feelings and those of others; talk about feelings and mental states, i.e., remember
- ◆ Unclear on distinction between fantasy and real, so they show increased fearfulness (e.g., fear of the dark or certain objects)
- ◆ Watch other children and briefly join in play
- ◆ Defend their possessions
- ◆ Begin to play house and assign roles in pretend play
- ◆ Use objects symbolically in play (e.g., use a spoon as a phone in pretend play)
- ◆ Participate in simple group activities, such as singing, clapping, or dancing
- ◆ Demonstrate shame when caught in wrongdoing and try to make others laugh
- ◆ Know gender identity

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Show a sense of humor, i.e., laugh at silly ideas
- ◆ Share toys, taking turns with assistance
- ◆ Initiate or join in play with other children and make up games
- ◆ Begin dramatic play, acting out whole scenes (e.g., traveling, pretending to be animals)

Physical

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ String large beads
- ◆ Turn pages in a book one by one
- ◆ Hold crayon with thumb and fingers instead of fist
- ◆ Use scissors
- ◆ Paint with wrist action, make dots and lines
- ◆ Help to dress and undress themselves

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Wash hands unassisted and blow nose when reminded
- ◆ Complete simple tasks with food without assistance (e.g., spreading soft butter or jam and pouring from a small pitcher)
- ◆ Build a tall tower of blocks
- ◆ Drive pegs into holes
- ◆ Draw squares and circles and copy other shapes and capital letters
- ◆ Manipulate clay by making balls, snakes, etc.
- ◆ Go up and down stairs without support

Sources of information for “Developmental Range”:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2009). *Caring for your baby and young child: Birth to age 5*. Retrieved June 1, 2010, from <http://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/toddler/pages/developmental-milestones-3-to-4-years-old.aspx>

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Gradual Release of Responsibility

Stepping Stones lessons incorporate the gradual release of responsibility instructional method. It is an effective method for supporting parents (or other adults in the home) as they work with their children. In this approach the home educator begins by modeling for the parent and the child. During modeling the home educator explains the purpose of the lesson and the content objectives. He/she then teaches the lesson to the child with the parent participating and learning about how the lesson should be taught. The home educator then begins gradually to release the teaching responsibility to the parent, while still supporting him/her and providing additional guidance and assistance when needed. Finally, the parent guides the child using the strategies modeled by the home educator, who is available to provide any needed support or assistance.

Parent Page

For each lesson, a Parent Page is included to leave with the parent (or other adult in the home) after the visit is over. The parent page includes the lesson objective and vocabulary as well as the follow-up questions and extension activities. This page is meant to prompt and support parents as they work with their children independently between home visits.



HOME EDUCATOR

This section is intended to be a useful source of ideas and advice for home educators as they work with parents and implement the practices and principles of early childhood education with migrant families and their children.

Information for Home Educators

- ◆ Roles and Responsibilities
- ◆ Home Visits
- ◆ Instructional Strategies
 - Language and Literacy
 - Description of Literacy Components
 - Instructional Strategies Used to Teach Literacy Components
 - Read-Alouds
 - Writing/Dictating
 - Stages of Writing Development
- ◆ Tips
 - General Tips
 - Family/Home Considerations
 - Teaching Tips
- ◆ Sample Documents
 - Sample Home Educator Visitation Log
 - Sample Home Visit Schedule
- ◆ References

Roles and Responsibilities of the Home Educator

The home educator's primary role is to inform, guide, and support the parent and the child in the successful implementation of this program. He/she will be responsible for collaborating and communicating with parents while becoming familiar with the family's routines, customs, and values. A culturally sensitive home educator will be able to use cultural knowledge to promote cross-cultural communication, learn about the parents' and child's educational histories, and work with families to empower them in meaningful ways.

Additionally, he/she will engage families actively in their own learning and provide opportunities for them to reflect on the uses of each lesson and its meaning in their daily lives. The home educator will work on a continuous basis to strengthen the role of parents as the child's first teacher.

The method used for supporting parents as they work with their children is the gradual release of responsibility. In this approach, the home educator begins by modeling for the parent and the child. During the modeling, the home educator explains the purpose of the lessons and the content objectives.

- He/she then begins teaching the lesson to the child with the parent participating and learning about how it should be taught. During the lesson, the home educator models effective questioning, provides specific examples, and supports the child's learning. This is the **"I do"** phase, because you, as the home educator, are doing all of the teaching while the parent and child observe and participate.
- Next, the home educator gradually begins to transfer the teaching responsibility to the parent, while still supporting him/her and providing additional guidance and assistance when needed. This is the **"We do"** phase, as the home educator and parent are working together to support the child's learning.
- The final phase is **"You do."** Here, the parent supports the child as he/she practices the concepts. The parent uses strategies modeled by the home educator as he/she guides the child. The home educator is available to provide needed guidance, but most of the responsibility is now with the parent.

During the entire process, the home educator can go back to a previous phase to provide additional support whenever it is needed. Additionally, the parent can go back to a previous phase to receive additional support from the home educator. As one can see, in the beginning, most of the responsibility belongs to the home educator; as the lesson progresses, the home educator gradually transfers more and more of the responsibility to the parent.

Home Visits

Home visits have proven to help create a connection between home and school (Council on Community Pediatrics, 2009; Kahn & Moore, 2010). They play an integral part in establishing rapport with the family. They increase the sensitivity and awareness of the home educator towards the needs, culture, and values of the child and his/her family. Home visits also provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions and express their concerns in a safe and comfortable environment.

Instructional Strategies

Language and Literacy

In the Stepping Stones lessons, language and literacy skills are built through two specific instructional strategies: read-alouds and writing instruction. Six specific literacy components (book knowledge, comprehension, concepts of print, concept of word, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness), as well as vocabulary, are taught using these instructional strategies. The components are described below, followed by detailed descriptions of the two instructional strategies—Read-Aloud and Writing/Dictation.

NOTE: Component icons indicate where the components are addressed in each lesson, with the exception of vocabulary. Vocabulary words are listed on page 1 of each lesson. In the lesson script, vocabulary is introduced and examples of how to link new words with existing knowledge are provided.

Description of Literacy Components

Book Knowledge

Book knowledge is the understanding of the way books “work.” Books follow a specific structure. For example, they have front and back covers and a title page; the reader starts on page one and proceeds by turning the pages from right to left (in Indo-European languages). Also, books are written by an author and the pictures are drawn by an illustrator; the pictures and the words together tell the story.

Book knowledge is important because books are often children’s first exposure to print and the wider world around them. Children become aware that an actual person writes a story and a person draws pictures that are connected to the story or ideas that are in the book. Later this awareness will help children analyze literature and develop writing skills (Clay, 1989; Hemphill & Snow, 1998; National Center for Family Literacy, 2008; Snow, 1994; Spencer, 1987).

Children’s enjoyment of reading books helps them become familiar with the structure of books (title, author, etc.). Once they are familiar with this structure, they are more able to pay attention to specific information in the book. So, the more children know about how books work, the more new information they can learn (Snow & Ninio, 1986; Spencer, 1987).

Building these connections across books and experiences is important because they serve as the foundation on which later reading comprehension can be built.

Comprehension

An early stage of comprehension is the ability to connect abstract concepts (such as those found in a book) to real-life experiences and concrete objects in order to make sense of them (Perfetti & Hart, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For example, if you are reading a child a story about the ocean and the child has never seen the ocean, that will be an abstract concept. It will be difficult for him/her to comprehend the story about the ocean without extra support. Therefore, you might talk about experiences with a lake or other water sources, ocean animals the child might have seen at the zoo, or movies and television programs about the ocean, etc. (McKeown & Beck, 2003; Snow, 1993).

Comprehension involves active engagement with ideas and the ability to relate personal knowledge and experiences to construct meaning. (National Center for Family Literacy, 2008). Reading comprehension is the “essence of reading” and is essential for academic and life-long learning (Durkin, 1993; Stevens, Slavin, & Farnish, 1991).

Functions of Print

Three- and four-year-olds begin to realize that print is meaningful and that it has many functions. One example is the awareness and understanding that strings of letters stand for something. Children display this understanding when they point to a sign and ask what it says, or when they scribble something on a page and ask, “What did I write?” Another example is the understanding that people can use print to communicate across time and space. A note can help remind us of the groceries that we need to buy tomorrow, or a letter can be sent to wish happy birthday to someone in a distant location.

Only through exposure do children learn that print stands for something, learn the functions of print, and eventually use what they know about print in reading and writing. Unlike language, literacy—including functions of print—needs to be intentionally taught (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Stuart, 1990; Weinberger, 1996).

Concept of Word

This is the recognition that groups of letters represent words and the understanding that written words represent spoken words. For example, children can recognize the name of their favorite cereal and understand what it stands for long before they can actually read the word. They soon learn that a certain group of letters stands for their name. They are able to recognize these things because they are meaningful for them. Repeated reading of books is an ideal vehicle for teaching this concept, because once a child knows the story well enough, he/she can attend to the appearance of words and other text features. Three- and four-year-old children are at the very beginning stages of developing this concept. Scribbles are the first representation of a child’s understanding of the concept of word. Through scribbling children demonstrate that they know that writing (scribbles) stand for things even though they are not using conventional forms (Ehri & Wilce, 1985; Morris, 1993; Stuart, 1995). Research shows that the understanding of concept of word is necessary for learning to read (Roberts, 1992).

Alphabet Knowledge

Alphabet knowledge is the ability to recognize visually, remember, and distinguish letter forms (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009). It does not include identifying the letter sounds. Young children begin to recognize letters in their own names because their names are meaningful to them.

Recognizing the alphabet is one of the best predictors of reading success in the early stages (Fielding-Barnsley, 1997; Jackson & Myers, 1982; McBride-Chang, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). This is a good place to begin, however one must remember that without understanding the underlying concepts, alphabet knowledge is not sufficient for comprehension of text at a later time (Riley, 1996).

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to distinguish similarities and differences in the sounds of spoken words and word parts. Learning rhymes in poems and songs and recognizing the

first sounds of important words (e.g., mom, dad, and their own names) are ways that children begin to understand this concept.

Children who enter school with strong phonological awareness have the foundation they need to become better readers as they progress through school (Badian, 1998; Bentin & Leshem, 1993; Bryant, Maclean, & Bradley, 1990; Maclean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987; Scarborough, 2009; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wagner, Torgesen, Laughon, Simmons, & Rashotte, 1993). Phonological awareness should be built using sounds of the child's primary language. Especially for languages that are very similar (such as Spanish and English), learning the sounds in one language will help the child learn the sounds in the other language (Margolese & Kline, 1999; Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Sen & Blatchford, 2001).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words we use to communicate and understand (National Reading Panel, 2001). Vocabulary is the strongest and most enduring contributor to reading comprehension. The larger a child's vocabulary, the easier it is for him/her to make sense of what he/she reads. Most young children learn vocabulary as they listen to and have conversations with others—especially adults—and listen to stories being read to them (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Zevenberger & Whitehurst, 2003). Later, more vocabulary is learned through reading independently and direct instruction.

Instructional Strategies Used to Teach the Literacy Components

Two familiar instructional strategies are used to teach the literacy components in the Stepping Stones lessons. They are **Reading Aloud** and **Writing/Dictation**. Many primary classrooms use these effective instructional strategies to teach young children to read and write (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). You will see these strategies incorporated into almost all of the lessons. Because the bases of literacy start well before children enter school, it is important that parents use these strategies with their children at home. Home educators can model for parents how to conduct read-alouds and writing/dictation sessions. Prior to starting school children should have had these critical experiences:

- Many opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions around reading and writing
- Repeated exposure to language and opportunities to be active participants in conversations
- Sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to connect prior experiences to the text in a meaningful and interesting way
- Opportunities and motivation to use text for different purposes (i.e., letters, lists, maps, information, enjoyment)
- The knowledge that spoken words can be written using the alphabetic system
- A beginning understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically

(From *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (pp. 3-4), by C. E. Snow, M. S. Burns, and P. Griffin, 1998, Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences. Copyright 1998. Available from http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=6023. Adapted by SEDL with permission from the National Academy of Sciences, courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, DC.)

Read-Alouds

Importance of Read-Alouds

Reading aloud to children is one way to develop background knowledge and to extend their understanding of specific concepts (DeTemple, 2001). It is also a great way to expose children to vocabulary to which they might not be exposed through conversations.

As parents read aloud to their child, they are in a unique position to respond directly to his/her interests and needs and to connect relevantly and meaningfully to shared experiences. Experiencing positive feelings around book reading with family members is likely to increase a child's motivation for learning to read later.

How to Conduct a Read-Aloud With a Child

Find a book that is at the right level, interesting to the child, and connected to a meaningful topic. Then find a comfortable place where the child can sit directly next to you. Read-alouds should be a relaxed, stress-free sharing time for the child and adult. The adult should not attempt to "test" the child by asking too many questions or making too many demands.

The following literacy concepts can be addressed during subsequent readings of the story wherever they are appropriate. Be aware that too much focus on the concepts—with the exception of comprehension—may interrupt the flow of the story. It is advisable to read the story straight through the first time; then, select a few concepts to address in subsequent readings. This will increase the child's comprehension of the story. Also, be mindful of the child's attention to the story. Be ready to adjust by increasing or decreasing the focus on concepts depending on the child's interest and attention.



Book Knowledge

Book knowledge can be addressed during a read-aloud by talking about the book—the title, author, and illustrator—and mentioning any connections that make the book relevant and interesting (e.g., "The title of the book is . . . and the author of this book is . . . This is a book about bears; what do you remember about bears from when we went to the zoo?").



Comprehension

When reading a book aloud, promote comprehension by encouraging the child to ask questions and make comments. When possible, connect events or objects in the story to real-world knowledge and experiences.

Follow the child's interest and attention. If the child loses interest, stop reading the book and encourage the child simply to look at and discuss the pictures. Or, stop reading and begin again some other time (it is not important to finish reading the book). It is more important for the child to enjoy the book-reading experience.

When encountering a word that is unfamiliar to the child, pause to define and explain the meaning of the word. Use child-friendly language and examples that are familiar to the child.



Concept of Word

Reading books is the perfect opportunity to help children understand the concept of what a word is. While participating in read-alouds children have direct access to a visual representation of the words that are being spoken. Children can focus on the features of printed words (group of letters bounded by spaces) repeatedly or for extended periods of time. Using books that have repetitive words and phrases or that have been read multiple

times provides an opportunity to call attention to specific printed words. Home educators should carefully select the appropriate book and one or two meaningful words to highlight. Pointing to words as they are being read helps to focus the child on the printed words (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Ehri & Wilce, 1985).

Alphabet Knowledge

Reading aloud also offers an opportunity to focus on printed letters within a meaningful context (e.g., a word or a story). This is teaching alphabet knowledge. Before reading a book the home educator should select words containing letters that are relevant to the child. For example, young children can find the first letter of their name; older children may be able to find many other letters. This process should not disrupt the flow and meaning of the story.

Phonological awareness

If the read-aloud book has rhyming words and/or words with the same initial sound, the concept of phonological awareness can be addressed. The home educator can identify and explain or challenge the child to find words that rhyme or have matching initial sounds. This activity should only be conducted once or twice during a story. Even if there are many rhyming words, continual focus on them will disrupt the flow of the story.

Vocabulary

While reading aloud to a child, if the home educator encounters a word with which the child is not familiar, he/she should pause to discuss the meaning of the word. If possible, point to the illustrations in the book to support the child's understanding of the unfamiliar word. Provide a simple, child-friendly definition of the word. Also, try to connect the new word to the child's experience. For example, if the unfamiliar word is "nest," one might say, "This is an nest. Birds build nests and lay their eggs in them. Remember we saw a nest in the tree when we went for a walk? Tell me about it."

Read-alouds provide children with the opportunity to encounter unfamiliar words and ideas that they might not normally encounter in conversations. The read-aloud enables children to hear the words within a relevant and engaging setting. This helps support their understanding of the word's meaning by making it concrete.

Read-Aloud DOs and DON'Ts

DO—

- Reread books multiple times to the child
- Be aware of and reinforce connections that the child makes
- Make the experience enjoyable
- Support the child in making connections in English and Spanish when appropriate
- Share books that are of interest to the child
- Create shared reading routines

DON'T—

- Try to teach too many concepts in one sitting
- Force the child to listen until the book is finished
- Feel obligated to read non-fiction books from beginning to end

Writing/Dictating

Importance of Writing/Dictating

Writing/dictating with children is an excellent way to deepen their understanding of specific literacy concepts and build understanding that writing represents spoken words. Adults can model this strategy to help children understand the link between what is said and what can be written.

As parents write with their child they are in a unique position to tap into interesting, motivating topics and connect meaningfully to their shared experiences. Having positive feelings linked to writing with family members is likely to increase a child's motivation to experiment with writing on a regular basis.

How to Write/Dictate With a Child

Begin with an interesting, exciting topic with which the child has experience (e.g., a trip to the zoo, baking cookies, a science experiment, a story he/she has enjoyed, etc.). Young children should be invited to draw a picture about their experience prior to writing about it.

Have a variety of writing materials available. Children love to work with markers, crayons, colored pencils, and pens. Children can be instructed on how to use writing materials properly, but this should not be the focus of the lesson. Also, a variety of lined, construction, or colored paper should be provided, if available.

Find a comfortable place to sit; invite the child draw a picture and then tell you about the drawing. After the discussion, ask the child to "write" about his/her picture. Accept any writing, according to the child's writing development stage (see chart on page 23). Ask the child to tell you what he/she wrote; then inform the child you will write it again "your way" so you can both remember what was written. Repeat the sentence as you heard it. Then begin writing, saying each word as you write it. Encourage the child to watch you write each word. Remember to demonstrate writing and discuss your actions as you dictate what the child tells you about his/her picture. If the child has scribbled, be sure to validate the scribbling. Encourage the child to "read" what he/she wrote as you read what you wrote.

Many literacy concepts can be addressed when writing. Select the following concepts that seem most appropriate for the particular writing topic. It is not advisable to address too many topics in one sitting. Follow the child's interest.



Book Knowledge

Book knowledge, such as the title and author of the writing, can be included when the drawing/writing is complete. Ask the child to name the author (him-/herself) and invite the child to write as much of his/her name as possible. Next, ask the child to think about a good title for the page. If necessary, guide the child to create a title that is closely linked to the topic of the picture/writing. Provide prompts or choices if necessary (e.g., *Should the title be "I Like Me" or "All About Me"?*).



Comprehension

When writing with children, promote comprehension by discussing the topic of the writing/drawing. Think out loud—verbalize what you are thinking and doing as you write. Encourage the child to think out loud as he/she plans and draws or writes about his/her topic. Ask the child questions to push his/her understanding, and answer any questions the child may have.

Help the child to make connections between what he/she is writing about and his/her own experiences and existing knowledge.

Concept of Word

Writing/dictating is an excellent opportunity for children to learn more about words and how they are written. When you write what the child has dictated, repeat the words slowly as you write them. Once the sentence is finished, read the sentence and point to each word as you read it. Then invite the child to point to the words or his/her scribbles and “read” along. Guide the child’s fingers if necessary. Occasionally, invite the child to help count the words in the sentence. Counting the words helps the child understand that several words make up a sentence and that words are separated by spaces.

Alphabet Knowledge

Writing/dictating is also a prime opportunity to draw children’s attention to letters of the alphabet. Because the writing/picture is their own, and therefore meaningful, children are able to attend for longer periods and to more specific elements. As you write the child’s sentence, focus on meaningful letters. Focusing on all the letters would be overwhelming and confusing, therefore, care must be taken in determining on which letters to focus. Selection of appropriate letters to focus on will depend on the child’s developmental range and his/her existing knowledge of letters. If the child knows few letters, draw attention to meaningful letters such as those in his/her name. If the child knows more letters, take this opportunity to reinforce the letters he/she knows and introduce one or two new letters. Later, you might want to introduce new concepts, such as capitalizing the first letter of a sentence and first letter of a name. During the discussion of the letters, you can also mention the sound the letter makes and show how to form the letter properly when writing it. Connect to the child’s writing if he/she is using letters with scribbles.

Phonological awareness

During writing/dictation, draw the child’s attention to sounds in words. As you are writing—and the child is watching—say the word and stretch out the sounds so they become more apparent to the child. Beginning sounds of words can be compared (“Oh, /b/ - /b/ - bicycle starts like /b/ - /b/ - Blanca!”) and rhyming words can be emphasized (“You’re writing about a **bear**; that rhymes with **hair**!”).

Writing/dictating provides children with the opportunity to focus on many specific literacy concepts. Because the writing ideas are their own, children are interested and motivated to focus on these elements. During this activity, the child can closely watch adults as they model how writing is done. This helps the child extend his/her writing abilities as he/she moves through the stages of writing development.

Writing/Dictating DOs and DON'Ts

DO—

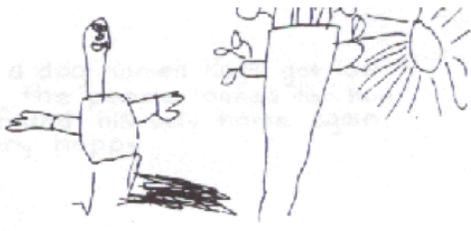
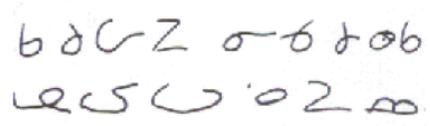
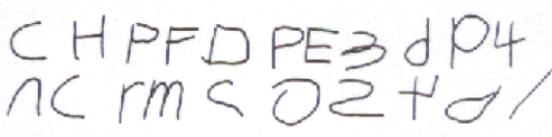
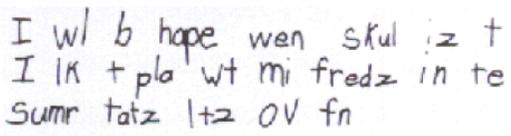
- Make a variety of writing materials available
- Make the experience enjoyable
- Be aware of and reinforce connections the child makes during writing/drawing
- Support the child in making connections in English and Spanish when appropriate

- Encourage the child to write/draw about things that are of interest to him/her
- Provide multiple opportunities to write
- Teach the child how to use materials properly

DON'T—

- Harshly correct, criticize, or discourage the child
- Withhold writing materials because the child might make a mess
- Wait until the child knows “how” to write before giving him/her an opportunity to try it

Stages of Writing Development

Stage	Example
<p>Preliterate: <i>Drawing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses drawing to stand for writing • believes that drawings / writing is communication of a purposeful message • read their drawings as if there were writing on them 	
<p>Preliterate: <i>Scribbling</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scribbles but intends it as writing • scribbling resembles writing • holds and uses pencil like an adult 	
<p>Early Emergent: <i>Letter-like forms</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shapes in writing actually resemble letters • shapes are not actually letters • look like poorly formed letters, but are unique creations 	
<p>Emergent: <i>Random-letters or letter strings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses letter sequences perhaps learned from his/her name • may write the same letters in many ways • long strings of letters in random order 	
<p>Transitional: <i>Writing via invented spelling</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates own spelling when conventional spelling is not known • one letter may represent an entire syllable • words may overlay • may not use proper spacing • as writing matures, more words are spelled conventionally • as writing matures, perhaps only one or two letters invented or omitted 	
<p>Fluency: <i>Conventional spelling</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually resembles adult writing 	<p>Once upon a time a dog named Rags got lost in the woods. All of the people looked for him After a while he found his way home again. His family was very happy.</p>

From: Sowams School. (2000). *Sowams School Curriculum Seminars*. Barrington, RI: Sowams School. Adapted from the work of J. Richard Gentry. SEDL reprinted with permission of Sowams School and J. Richard Gentry.

Tips

General Tips

- ◆ Some general materials are used frequently throughout the lessons. A box or bag containing these materials should be carried to each home visit. Materials can also be used to entertain a child while speaking with the parent(s). General materials include the following:
 - Construction paper
 - Plain, white paper
 - Crayons
 - Markers
 - Pencils
 - Blunt scissors
 - Alphabet letters
 - Lacing materials
 - Glue
 - Additional materials needed are listed in the “Materials needed” section of each lesson.
- ◆ Make sure you have familiarized yourself with the lesson and materials needed for the day’s activity. Consider practicing the lesson with a colleague prior to teaching it.
- ◆ Copy handouts and gather materials prior to each home visit.
- ◆ Provide the family with a box or other container to store materials, supplies, handouts, etc.
- ◆ Make sure you have a list of participants, contact information, meeting times, and addresses. Carry the list with you to each home visit.
- ◆ Stepping Stones lessons should be taught in the language understood by the parent and child.

NOTE: If the parent insists on having the lessons taught in English—even though the parent and child have limited proficiency—use information from the training to explain why the child needs a good foundation in his/her first language to build understanding in a second language.

Family/Home Considerations

- ◆ Remember that this is a family setting. Be respectful of the daily routines that are going on while the lesson is being taught and adapt accordingly. However, be willing to provide suggestions for removal of continuous distractions that are interrupting the effectiveness of the lesson being taught.
- ◆ Constantly reinforce to the parents that they are the most important teachers of their child. Parents should not feel that they are unqualified to be active participants in the Stepping Stones lessons. Remind them that they know more about their child than anyone else.

- ◆ Try to find an area that has the fewest distractions and is the most comfortable for the child (e.g., away from the T.V. at the kitchen table). Use this area consistently to provide the child with a structured routine.
- ◆ You may wish to bring books other than the unit books listed to the lessons to provide additional information and illustrations for use during the lessons. (If not otherwise available, they can be checked out from the public library.)
- ◆ If there is no computer or Internet access at the home, you may want to print and provide some of the resources that are available at the suggested links.
- ◆ If siblings are present during the home visit and would like to get involved, invite the child(ren) to join the activity, if appropriate, or find another activity to occupy him/her.
- ◆ If the parent harshly corrects, criticizes, or discourages the child, you should guide the parent with alternatives and always serve as a model.

Teaching Tips

- ◆ As you begin to work with the child, he or she may be shy and reluctant to interact. Continue to be patient and persistent to develop his/her participation.
- ◆ Use language and terms that are not threatening to the parent or child.
- ◆ Engage in meaningful conversations with the child. Allow the child to express his/her thoughts and ideas freely and encourage independent thinking.
- ◆ Model for the parents and remind them to stimulate conversation by providing prompts, questions, and nonverbal cueing, while encouraging the child to use complete sentences in answering questions.
- ◆ Allow sufficient time for the child to respond to questions. Always draw on the child's background knowledge and encourage the parent to probe further on prior experiences that are related.
- ◆ Provide praise that is specific to the task (e.g., "Good job on remembering in the tiger's name:").
- ◆ Instead of penalizing the child for an incorrect response, rephrase his/her reply as you provide the correct answer (e.g., "It does look like a leopard, but this is really a tiger:").
- ◆ Model reading aloud for parents and encourage them to read aloud to their child often. If the parent is not comfortable reading the book, he or she can still discuss the story or information through the pictures.
- ◆ To refocus a distracted child on the content of the lesson, acknowledge any off-topic comments and then bring the child back to the activity. However, if the distraction is related to the lesson, you can elaborate on it.
Example: Assume the lesson is dealing with fish and how they move in water. You ask the child whether he/she knows how the fish moves. The child answers the question by saying he/she was Superman for Halloween. You respond by saying, "Oh, that's nice—you must have received many candies. Now let's talk about the fish."
However, if the child does not answer your question, but instead says that his/her grandmother has a fish, you should follow the child's thought. You could say, "Tell me about your grandmother's fish. How does it move in water?"

- ◆ If families use non-standard terms (e.g., tummy, boo boo, etc.), explain the importance of using standard terms (e.g., stomach, injury, etc.) in order to prepare the child for school.
- ◆ A child may express himself/herself in both English and Spanish interchangeably, when applicable. You should model, as much as possible, using one language consistently. Example: You are describing a group of trees and ask the child what this group is called. The child responds “El bosque.” You should acknowledge the Spanish word “bosque” and then mention to the child that in English it’s called “forest.”

Sample Documents:

In this section you will find a sample visitation log and schedule that may be useful for your Stepping Stones home-based program. These forms are for information purposes only and are not required by TEA. However, TEA does require that Stepping Stones documentation be secured and maintained for auditing purposes. The forms may be duplicated for your use or modified to include information pertinent to your program.

Sample Home Educator Visitation Log

It is advisable to keep track of home visits for each family. The home educator can list the units and lessons presented on each visit plus any comments regarding successes, challenges, materials, etc. This is an excellent way to follow the child’s/parent’s progress through the program. This information can also be transferred to subsequent programs if the family moves.

Sample Home Visit Schedule

A sample home visit schedule is included. This form is meant to guide the home educator in planning for home visits. The form outlines approximate times for elements of a successful home visit. This form can be modified to fit programmatic needs. The form should not be distributed to parents or families.

Sample Home Educator Visitation Log

Child's Name _____ Scheduled Day & Time _____

Parent's Name _____ Phone # _____

Date	Unit Name	Lesson #

Comments:

Parent Signature _____

Date	Unit Name	Lesson #

Comments:

Parent Signature _____

Date	Unit Name	Lesson #

Comments:

Parent Signature _____

Sample Home Visit Schedule

This sample schedule provides an example of how the home educator can implement a home visit with the families participating in the Stepping Stones program.

5 minutes	Greeting
15–30 minutes	Lesson
5–10 minutes	Provide clarifications and support
5 minutes	Closing/clean up

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COORDINATOR

Coordinator

This section explains the crucial role of the leaders in effective implementation of the Stepping Stones home-based program. The roles and responsibilities of leaders are described. In addition, information about meetings and program assessment, as well as some sample documents are provided.

Information for Program Coordinators

- ◆ Roles and Responsibilities
 - Communicating Clear Expectations
 - Building Capacity
 - Monitoring and Reviewing
- ◆ Meetings
 - Format and Environment
 - Frequency, Time, and Duration
 - Topics
- ◆ Program Assessment
- ◆ Sample Documents
 - Sample Participation Form
 - Sample Welcome Letter to Parents
 - Sample Parent Meeting Topic Survey
 - Sample Parent Meeting Sign-in Sheet
 - Sample Parent Meeting Schedule
 - Sample Parent Surveys

Roles and Responsibilities

The key to a successful Stepping Stones program is its management. The Stepping Stones home-based program is designed to address several needs of migrant students identified by the 2007 comprehensive needs assessment (see page 6). However, managing a program involves planning program activities, building staff capacity to implement the program, and monitoring its implementation on a regular basis. Leadership in these areas is crucial to program success.

Planning is an important element of a home-based program. Each school year the coordinator should develop a plan that outlines the goals and action steps that will lead to program objectives. This plan should be detailed and include person(s) responsible, resources needed, evidence of implementation and impact, and a benchmark timeline. The plan should be reviewed regularly to determine progress on action steps. There are three primary roles and responsibilities for the coordinator: communicating clear expectations, building capacity, and monitoring and reviewing.

Communicating Clear Expectations

Program coordinators establish expectations when the home educator is hired. However, it is extremely important to reiterate expectations, including roles and responsibilities of program staff, in words and actions throughout the school year. Coordinators should also regularly communicate with all stakeholders in order to build their understanding of the program—and its importance—and to inform them of decisions and progress. A communication plan should be established at the beginning of the school year. The plan should outline several aspects of the communication process: when information will be shared; with whom; how (in speech, in writing, and in action); and what should be communicated (e.g., goals, priorities, and progress updates).

Building Capacity

Building the capacity of program staff is a fundamental part of program leadership. It will greatly contribute to the stated goals of the Stepping Stones program—to develop the ability of parents to serve as their child's first teacher. Program coordinators should ensure that program staff receive relevant and ongoing professional development so that the knowledge and skills necessary to work with families and implement the Stepping Stones lessons are continually improved. Local needs assessments can be conducted to determine the most pressing needs of the home educators. Data gathered for the needs assessment should include observations and surveys. An additional component of building capacity involves allocation of resources needed to carry out the work. Staff, materials, and time (for planning, traveling, etc.) should be carefully arranged and apportioned to support implementation of the Stepping Stones home-based component.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Monitoring implementation and impact of the Stepping Stones program is also critical to its success. Formal and informal monitoring of the program should occur regularly. Formal monitoring includes home visit observations, as well as gathering of program data (number of home visits, number of lessons taught, survey information from parents, etc.). Record keeping and reporting requirements should be clearly outlined and reviewed regularly. Formal monitoring can help guide decisions about additional support needed, adjustments in scheduling, or changes in priorities or communication strategies. Informal monitoring occurs in regular conversations with staff members. This type of monitoring provides regular and immediate information about challenges and issues that may be occurring.

It should be noted that monitoring can carry negative connotations. For example, staff might believe that observations are meant to evaluate their teaching performance rather than to inform the coordinator of progress being made. Coordinators should be open and honest with staff members about the monitoring methods and purposes in order to maintain trust and effective implementation of the program.

Meetings

An important element for the success of the Stepping Stones program is facilitating regular meetings between key Migrant Education Program personnel and parents of children participating in the program. The combined collaboration and communication among parents, the migrant coordinator, home educators, and other program personnel will further develop the capacity of families to foster the educational growth of their children.

Format and Environment

Meetings should be conducted in a comfortable format and in a language that is understood by the parents. A friendly, interactive environment is essential in order to maximize participation. These meetings should encourage and promote parental involvement in a manner that is productive, engaging, and fun. It is recommended that both parents of a participating child attend the meetings in order to create stronger lines of communication and a better support system for the child. Light refreshments may be offered (refer to allowable use of funds, sections D3 and D4 in *Texas Migrant Education Program Guidance*, available at <<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147489992&libID=2147489991>>).

Parents are encouraged to bring their children to the parent meetings. However, appropriate care should be arranged for them so that parents can focus on the meeting. Structured activities for the children should be planned, such as story reading, crafts, games, experiments, and extension activities related to Stepping Stones lessons.

Frequency, Time, and Duration

It is recommended that parent meetings be held at least monthly. This will ensure that families are up-to-date on programmatic information relevant to Stepping Stones, its goals, special events, etc. Program coordinators and home educators should work closely with families to determine the best times, dates, and locations for parent meetings. Parent meetings can be held at a local school campus in order to familiarize families with the school and personnel. Meetings can also be held at community centers, public libraries, district service centers, and other public facilities. Parent meetings generally last 45–60 minutes; keep in mind family considerations and obligations when planning meetings. A schedule is provided in the Sample Documents section to guide the coordinator and the home educators in planning and conducting the parent meetings.

Topics

Meeting topics should address needs of the participating families. The program coordinator may wish to survey families about their specific needs or interests (see sample of topic survey). Home educators will also be able to provide insight into family needs because they have existing relationships with them. The meetings will provide an opportunity for parents to learn about relevant topics that will support their child's continued growth. In addition, they can receive general information about strategies that they can use to help develop the skills and

knowledge their preschoolers need. Parents will also have an opportunity to network with other migrant families in their community. When appropriate, facilitators may wish to share children's work related to the Stepping Stones lessons.

Meeting topics might include the following:

- How to do a read-aloud
- How to write/dictate with your children
- How and why to play games with your children
- How to sign up for a library card and why visiting the library is important
- How to use the computer to access resources
- Nutrition (ask a school nurse to visit and discuss nutritional needs)
- What school readiness look like
- How to deal positively with behavior problems
- How to deal with family stress

Program Assessment

Measuring implementation and impact of any program is essential to its effectiveness. The purpose of the Stepping Stones program is to empower parents as their child's first teachers in preparing him/her to start school. Therefore the primary focus of assessment should be at the parent level. Program assessment should include measurements of change in a parent's

- perception of him-/herself as the child's first teacher;
- understanding of the skills that children should know as they enter school;
- exhibited willingness to engage in promoting the skills necessary for school (talking with, reading to, and writing with the child);
- involvement with the home educator in teaching the lesson;
- confidence in asking for help; and
- confidence in taking the lead in parts of the lessons.

To gather data, begin by asking the parent to provide the following basic information. This information will help you make comparisons among groups of parents (according to characteristics listed below) in order to strengthen the claims you may need to make about the effectiveness of the Stepping Stones program on parents' empowerment.

- Parents' education levels
- Parents' ages
- English language proficiency
- Concurrent or previous services (Early Head Start, public pre-school, etc.)
- Other resources available (bus services, classes provided by the parents' employers, etc.)

Questions that elicit the information listed below will provide insight into a parent's ability to support his/her child. These or other questions can be entered into a parent survey with

appropriate answer scales (e.g., rank from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with the statements or rank from “low” to “high” in importance or confidence). The survey can be administered to parents at their child’s entry into and exit from the program in order to assess growth. A sample survey is included on pages 47–48 (in English) and 49–50 (in Spanish).

- Level of understanding of importance of talking with child
- Level of understanding of the importance of telling stories and reading books
- Level of understanding of the importance of writing with the child
- Level of confidence in using the Stepping Stones strategies for working with the child
- Level of confidence in accessing information and resources for the child’s education
- Level of awareness of child’s needs and how to help him/her learn the necessary skills
- Level of support provided by the home educator in helping teach the child skills he/she need for school
- How valuable the parent believe the activities in the lessons are for the child’s development
- How often the parent carried out extension activities

If you choose to conduct a parent survey, here are some suggestions to consider:

- Have someone other than the home educator administer the survey and do a walk-through with the parents on how to complete the survey.
- Make sure to provide the survey in both English and Spanish and allow the parent to choose which to complete.
- Plan how to ensure confidentiality for survey participants; explain to parents how their identity will be protected.

If you are also interested in collecting information about the academic development of children participating in the Stepping Stones program, you may wish to organize lesson objectives for each of the units into a checklist. This will allow you to assess children’s level of understanding of the lesson concepts.

Sample Documents

In this section you will find samples of forms and other materials that may be useful for your Stepping Stones home-based program. These forms are for information purposes only and are not required by TEA. However, TEA does require that Stepping Stones documentation be secured and maintained for auditing purposes. The forms may be duplicated for your use or modified to include information pertinent to your program, and your district or program logo may be added.

Sample Participation Form (English and Spanish)

The participation form is a useful tool to gather information that indicates which eligible families elect to participate in the home-based program. This form should be completed and filed for tracking and record-keeping purposes. A sample of this form is available in English and Spanish.

Sample Welcome Letter to Parents (English and Spanish)

The sample welcome letter welcomes the families that have chosen to participate in the program. A welcome letter should be presented to the parents or family members once enrollment in the program is finalized. It contains basic information about the program for the family and also lists agreed-upon dates/times of regular home visits. Contact information for the home visitor and/or the program coordinator should also be included. The sample is provided in English and Spanish.

Sample Parent Meeting Topic Survey

Meeting topics should provide relevant information for the participating families. The program coordinator may wish to survey families about their specific needs or interests at various points throughout the duration of the Stepping Stones program. The sample survey that is included here lists some topics that parents may find of interest. The list may be modified as needed.

Sample Parent Meeting Sign-in Sheet

Each Stepping Stone parent meeting should be documented. A simple and effective way to document meetings and attendance is to request that all attendees register on a sign-in sheet. A sample is provided. The sheet can be formatted to your program's specific needs. You may wish to collect contact information at every meeting to ensure program personnel have access to families' current addresses and telephone numbers.

Sample Parent Meeting Schedule

A sample meeting schedule is provided to guide the coordinator and home educator in planning for meetings with parents of children participating in the program. The schedule outlines approximate times for elements of a successful meeting, but it can be modified to fit programmatic needs.

Sample Stepping Stones Parent Survey (English and Spanish)

A sample survey, both in English and Spanish, can be adapted and administered to parents at the beginning and end of their child's participation in the program. Use of the survey is discussed in the "Program Assessment" section.

Sample Participation Form—English

Participation Form

(Please check one)

I **would** like my child to participate in the Stepping Stones program.

I would **not** like my child to participate in the Stepping Stones program.

My child attends or receives services from _____ (Optional).
(Head Start, public preschool, etc.)

Parent's Name _____

Child's Name _____

Child's Date of Birth _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Sample Participation Form—Spanish

Forma para Participar

(Por favor marque una)

Me **gustaría** que mi hijo(a) participe en el programa de Stepping Stones.

No me gustaría que mi hijo(a) participe en el programa de Stepping Stones.

Mi hijo(a) asiste o recibe servicios en _____ (Opcional).

Nombre del Padre _____

Nombre del Niño(a) _____

Fecha de Nacimiento del Niño(a) _____

Dirección _____

Teléfono # _____

Firma del Padre _____

Fecha _____

Sample Welcome Letter to Parents—English

Welcome!

Dear parent,

It is our pleasure to welcome you and your child to the Stepping Stones program. This program is designed to support your family in preparing your child for school. Throughout the duration of the program, our home educator will make regular visits to work with you and your child. During these visits the home educator will use specific techniques and tools to model for you and support you in developing the skills and knowledge your child will need as he/she enters school. We look forward to working with you in this endeavor.

As per your previous discussion with the home educator please save these dates for the Stepping Stones visits.

The home educator, _____, will be coming to your home every
(Name)

_____ at _____, beginning on _____.
(Day of week) (Time) (Date)

Thank you again for your participation,

(Coordinator's Signature)

(Printed name and contact information)

Sample Welcome Letter to Parents—Spanish

¡Bienvenidos!

Estimado padre de familia,

Es un placer darle la bienvenida a usted y a su hijo(a) al programa Stepping Stones. Este programa está diseñado para apoyar a su familia con la preparación escolar de su hijo(a). A lo largo del programa, nuestro ayudante educativo se encargará de establecer las visitas. Durante estas visitas, el ayudante educativo demostrará como utilizar las herramientas y recursos necesarios para demostrar el desarrollo de las habilidades y conocimientos que su hijo necesitará cuando entre a la escuela. Esperamos trabajar con ustedes en este esfuerzo.

De acuerdo a su conversación previa con el ayudante educativo, reserve estas fechas para las visitas de Stepping Stones.

El ayudante educativo, _____, ira a su hogar todos los
(Nombre)

_____ a las _____, empezando el _____.
(Días) (Hora) (Fecha)

Gracias por su participación,

(Firma del Coordinador)

(Nombre impreso y información de contacto)

Sample Parent Meeting Topic Survey

Please check all topics in which you are interested. List any additional topics you would like to see addressed.

- How to do a read-aloud
- How to write/dictate with your children
- How and why to play games with your children
- How to sign up for a library card and why visiting the library is important
- Nutrition (a school nurse can visit and discuss nutritional needs)
- What school readiness look like
- How to deal positively with behavior problems
- How to deal with family stress

Other:

Sample Parent Meeting Schedule

The schedule below provides an example of how time can be allotted in meetings with the parents participating in the Stepping Stones program. It outlines approximate times for elements of a successful meeting. The schedule can be modified according to program needs.

30 minutes	Parent networking (start networking prior to meeting start time, with refreshments if available)
20–30 minutes	Welcome and presentation of the main topic (experts on the topic are recommended as presenters)
10–15 minutes	Practice or engage in activity to reinforce the topic
5–10 minutes	Questions and clarifications
5–10 minutes	Announcements and closing

Sample Stepping Stones Parent Survey

Using the scale below, please circle the number that best matches your opinion for each statement.

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat agree/disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

1a. I believe having conversations (talking) with my child is important.	1	2	3	4	5
1b. I believe telling stories and reading books to my child is important.	1	2	3	4	5
1c. I believe writing (scribbling/drawing) with my child is important.	1	2	3	4	5

2a. I feel confident using the Stepping Stones strategies with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
2b. I feel confident that I understand what my child needs to be prepared to enter school.	1	2	3	4	5
2c. I understand how to help my child learn the skills he/she needs to be successful in school.	1	2	3	4	5
2d. I feel confident in accessing information and resources (websites, children's books, etc.) for my child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
2e. I feel confident in creating my own lessons for my child.	1	2	3	4	5

3a. My home educator gave me choices on how I could teach the Stepping Stones lessons to my child.	1	2	3	4	5
3b. My home educator encouraged me to ask questions.	1	2	3	4	5
3c. My home educator made sure I really understood how I could help prepare my child for school..	1	2	3	4	5

(continued on next page)

Using the scale below, please circle the number that best matches your opinion for each statement.

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat agree/disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

4a. The activities in the Stepping Stones lessons will help improve my child's language and literacy development.	1	2	3	4	5
4b. The activities in the Stepping Stones lessons will help prepare my child for school.	1	2	3	4	5

5. How many times did the home educator visit your home? _____

6. How many times did you carry out extension activities after the home educator left your home? _____

7. What else do you need to help improve your child's success in school? (Please write your response below.)

Muestra del Cuestionario para Padres de Familia en Stepping Stones

Usando la escala siguiente, encierre en un círculo el número que mejor representa su opinión acerca de cada una de las declaraciones siguientes:

- 1 = Fuertemente en desacuerdo
- 2 = En desacuerdo
- 3 = Algo de acuerdo/en desacuerdo
- 4 = De acuerdo
- 5 = Fuertemente de acuerdo

1a. Yo creo que conversando (hablando) con mi niño(a) es importante.	1	2	3	4	5
1b. Yo creo que contarle historias y leerle libros a mi niño(a) es importante.	1	2	3	4	5
1c. Yo creo que escribir (garabatos/dibujos) con mi niño(a) es importante.	1	2	3	4	5

2a. Me siento muy cómodo al usar las estrategias de Stepping Stones con mi niño(a).	1	2	3	4	5
2b. Me siento muy seguro de entender lo que mi niño(a) necesita para estar preparado para entrar a la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5
2c. Yo se como ayudar a mi niño(a) a desarrollar las habilidades que el/ella necesita para tener éxito en la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5
2d. Me es fácil para conseguir información y recursos (sitios en la internet, libros para niños, etc.) para la educación de mi niño(a).	1	2	3	4	5
2e. Estoy seguro que puedo crear mis propias lecciones para mi niño(a).	1	2	3	4	5

3a. Mi ayudante educativo me dio opciones en cómo puedo enseñar las lecciones de Stepping Stones a mi niño(a).	1	2	3	4	5
3b. Mi ayudante educativo me animaba a hacer preguntas.	1	2	3	4	5
3c. Mi ayudante educativo se aseguro que yo realmente entendiera cómo poder ayudar a preparar a mi niño(a) para la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5

(continúe en la siguiente página)

Usando la escala siguiente, encierre en un círculo el número que mejor representa su opinión acerca de cada una de las declaraciones siguientes:

- 1 = Fuertemente en desacuerdo
- 2 = En desacuerdo
- 3 = Algo de acuerdo/en desacuerdo
- 4 = De acuerdo
- 5 = Fuertemente de acuerdo

4a. Las actividades de las lecciones de Stepping Stones ayudaran a mejorar el desarrollo del lenguaje y la lecto-escritura de mi niño(a).	1	2	3	4	5
4b. Las actividades de las lecciones de Stepping Stones ayudaran a preparar a mi niño(a) para la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5

5. ¿Cuántas veces visitó el ayudante educativo su casa? _____
6. ¿Cuántas veces hicieron las actividades de la extensión después que el ayudante educativo se fue de su casa? _____
7. ¿Que mas necesita para ayudar a mejorar el éxito de su niño(a) en la escuela? (Favor de escribir su respuesta enseguida)



RESOURCES AND TOOLS

The resources and tools provided here are useful for home educators when helping families and implementing the Stepping Stones lessons.

List of Resources and Tools

- ◆ Early Childhood Development Milestones—Skills and Abilities
- ◆ Stages of Writing Development
- ◆ Read-Aloud DOs and DON'Ts
- ◆ Writing/Dictation DOs and DON'Ts
- ◆ Stepping Stones Book List
- ◆ Calendar of Activities for Families
- ◆ Revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*
- ◆ Online Resources
- ◆ Contacts
- ◆ Developers, Field-Test Site Participants, Home Educators

Early Childhood Development Milestones—Skills and Abilities

It is helpful to know the typical stages of childhood development. Listed below are skills and abilities that are typical for late 2-year-old to early 4-year-old children in four areas: cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and physical development. Keep in mind however, that each child develops at his/her own pace, and delays in any one of these areas is not necessarily cause for concern.

Cognitive/thinking skills

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Approach problems only from their point of view, self-centered
- ◆ Choose picture books, name pictured objects, and identify several objects within one picture
- ◆ Group objects by category
- ◆ Name some colors and numbers, identify some correctly, and understand counting concept
- ◆ Relate what they are doing to others and imitate more complex adult actions (e.g., play housekeeping)

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Understand concepts like grouping and matching (recognizing and matching some colors)
- ◆ Understand concepts of same and different, as well as size comparisons such as big and bigger
- ◆ Organize materials on their own (e.g., stacking blocks or rings in order of size)
- ◆ Identify parts of a whole, like a slice of pie
- ◆ Draw, name, and briefly explain somewhat recognizable pictures that are meaningful to them
- ◆ Ask “why” and “how” questions
- ◆ Tell you their full name and age
- ◆ Attend to an activity for a longer stretch of time (between 5 and 15 minutes)
- ◆ Learn both by observing and listening to adults’ explanations
- ◆ Follow a series of three to four simple directions

Language and communication

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Join familiar words into phrases
- ◆ Begin to use modifiers (adverbs and adjectives)
- ◆ Point to common objects when they are named and name at least 10 familiar objects
- ◆ Name objects based on their description
- ◆ Respond to “what” and “where” questions
- ◆ Enjoy listening to stories and asking for favorite stories
- ◆ Recount familiar events that happened that day

Language and communication (continued)

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Know first and last name and use pronouns (he, she, you, and I), sometimes incorrectly
- ◆ Make themselves understood to strangers, despite some sound errors
- ◆ Use more complex grammar, such as plurals and past tense
- ◆ Understand sentences involving time concepts (e.g., “Grandma is coming tomorrow.”) and narrate past experiences in past tense
- ◆ Know approximately 300 words
- ◆ Understand relationships expressed by “if ... then” or “because” sentences
- ◆ Understand a series of two to four related instructions
- ◆ Use sentences with five to six words
- ◆ Sing a song and repeat at least one nursery rhyme

Social and emotional

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ Begin self-evaluation and develop notions of themselves as good, bad, attractive, etc.
- ◆ Show awareness of their own feelings and those of others; talk about feelings and mental stages, i.e., remember
- ◆ Unclear on distinction between fantasy and real, so they show increased fearfulness (e.g., fear of the dark or certain objects)
- ◆ Watch other children and briefly join in play
- ◆ Defend their possessions
- ◆ Begin to play house and assign roles in pretend play
- ◆ Use objects symbolically in play (e.g., use a spoon as a phone in pretend play)
- ◆ Participate in simple group activities, such as singing, clapping, or dancing
- ◆ Demonstrate shame when caught in wrongdoing and try to make others laugh
- ◆ Know gender identity

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Show a sense of humor, i.e., laugh at silly ideas
- ◆ Share toys, taking turns with assistance
- ◆ Initiate or join in play with other children and make up games
- ◆ Begin dramatic play, acting out whole scenes (e.g., traveling, pretending to be animals)

Physical

Late 2 to early 3

- ◆ String large beads
- ◆ Turn pages in a book one by one
- ◆ Hold crayon with thumb and fingers instead of fist
- ◆ Use scissors
- ◆ Paint with wrist action, make dots and lines
- ◆ Help to dress and undress themselves

Late 3 to early 4

- ◆ Wash hands unassisted and blow nose when reminded
- ◆ Complete simple tasks with food without assistance (e.g., spreading soft butter or jam and pouring from a small pitcher)
- ◆ Build a tall tower of blocks
- ◆ Drive pegs into holes
- ◆ Draw squares and circles and copy other shapes and capital letters
- ◆ Manipulate clay by making balls, snakes, etc.
- ◆ Go up and down stairs without support

Sources:

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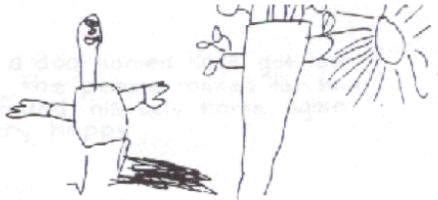
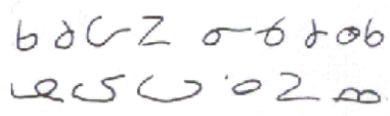
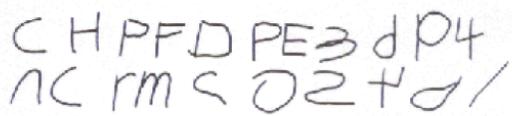
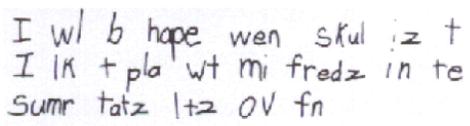
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Stages of Writing Development

Children in their preschool years should be provided many opportunities to experiment with writing. Just as children learn to speak and walk in incremental steps, they develop writing skills in stages as well. The chart below outlines stages of writing development through which children typically progress. Accomplishments at each stage should be celebrated, and support for subsequent stages should be offered by home educators and family members.

Stage	Example
<p>Preliterate: Drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses drawing to stand for writing • believes that drawings / writing is communication of a purposeful message • read their drawings as if there were writing on them 	
<p>Preliterate: Scribbling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scribbles but intends it as writing • scribbling resembles writing • holds and uses pencil like an adult 	
<p>Early Emergent: Letter-like forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shapes in writing actually resemble letters • shapes are not actually letters • look like poorly formed letters, but are unique creations 	
<p>Emergent: Random-letters or letter strings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses letter sequences perhaps learned from his/her name • may write the same letters in many ways • long strings of letters in random order 	
<p>Transitional: Writing via invented spelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates own spelling when conventional spelling is not known • one letter may represent an entire syllable • words may overlay • may not use proper spacing • as writing matures, more words are spelled conventionally • as writing matures, perhaps only one or two letters invented or omitted 	
<p>Fluency: Conventional spelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually resembles adult writing 	<p>Once upon a time a dog named Rags got lost in the woods. All of the people looked for him After a while he found his way home again. His family was very happy.</p>

From: Sowams School. (2000). *Sowams School Curriculum Seminars*. Barrington, RI: Sowams School. Adapted from the work of J. Richard Gentry. SEDL reprinted with permission of Sowams School and J. Richard Gentry.

Read-Aloud DOs and DON'Ts

DO—

- ◆ Reread books multiple times to the child
- ◆ Be aware of and reinforce connections that the child makes
- ◆ Make the experience enjoyable
- ◆ Support the child in making connections in English and Spanish when appropriate
- ◆ Share books that are of interest to the child
- ◆ Create shared reading routines

DON'T—

- ◆ Try to teach too many concepts in one sitting
- ◆ Force the child to listen until the book is finished
- ◆ Feel obligated to read non-fiction books from beginning to end

Writing/Dictation DOs and DON'Ts

DO—

- ◆ Make a variety of writing materials available
- ◆ Make the experience enjoyable
- ◆ Be aware of and reinforce connections the child makes during writing/drawing
- ◆ Support the child in making connections in English and Spanish when appropriate
- ◆ Encourage the child to write/draw about things that are of interest to him/her
- ◆ Provide multiple opportunities to write
- ◆ Teach the child how to use materials properly

DON'T—

- ◆ Harshly correct, criticize, or discourage the child
- ◆ Withhold writing materials because the child might make a mess
- ◆ Wait until the child knows “how” to write before giving him/her an opportunity to try it out

Stepping Stones Book List

Each Stepping Stones unit is built around three children’s literature books. Below is the list of books and their authors. Migrant funds should be used to purchase these books for each migrant program. These books should not be given to the families. Instead, home educators should take specified books along on the home visits to share with the child and to complete the lesson activities. Please see information on page 58 about how to order sets of books for your migrant program.

Animals: <i>What Do You Do With a Kangaroo?</i> , Mercer Mayer <i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i> , Bill Martin Jr. <i>My Big Animal Book</i> , Roger Priddy	Animales: <i>What Do You Do With a Kangaroo?</i> , Mercer Mayer (retell the story, using the pictures, in Spanish) <i>Oso Pardo, Oso Pardo, ¿Que Ves Ahí?</i> , Bill Martin, Jr. <i>Abeceario Salvaje</i> , Yanitzia Canetti
Community: <i>Max Goes to the Dentist</i> , Adria Klein <i>When I Grow Up</i> , Jo S. Kittinger <i>Helpers in My Community</i> , Bobbie Kalman	Comunidad: <i>Max Va al Dentista</i> , Adria Klein <i>Cuando Sea Grande</i> , by Jo S. Kittinger <i>Ayudantes de Mi Comunidad</i> , Bobbie Kalman
Family: <i>Icy Watermelon</i> , Mary Su Galindo <i>I Love My Daddy Because . . .</i> , Laurel Porter-Gaylord <i>My Family and I/Mi Familia y Yo</i> , Gladys Rosa-Mendoza	Familia: <i>Sandia Fria</i> , Mary Sue Galindo <i>Quiero a Mi Papa Porque . . .</i> , Laurel Porter-Gaylord <i>My Family and I/Mi Familia y Yo</i> , Gladys Rosa-Mendoza
Insects: <i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i> , Eric Carle <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> , Eric Carle <i>Busy Bugs: A Book About Patterns</i> , Jayne Harvey	Insectos: <i>La Mariquita Malhumorada</i> , Eric Carle <i>La Oruga Muy Hambrienta</i> , Eric Carle <i>Busy Bugs: A Book About Patterns</i> , Jayne Harvey (use the pictures to extend on the concept of patterns)
Weather: <i>Weather</i> , Caroline Harris <i>Elmer’s Weather</i> , David McKee <i>A Sunny Day</i> , Robin Nelson	Clima: <i>Clima</i> , Caroline Harris <i>Elmer y el Clima</i> , David McKee <i>Un Día Soleado</i> , Robin Nelson
Senses: <i>My Five Senses</i> , Aliko <i>The Five Senses: Hearing</i> , Rius, Parramon & Puig <i>The Five Senses: Taste</i> , Rius, Parramon & Puig	Sentidos: <i>Mis Cinco Sentidos</i> , Aliko <i>El Oído</i> , Robin Nelson <i>El Gusto</i> , Robin Nelson
Transportation: <i>Beep Beep</i> , Petr Horacek <i>Whose Vehicle Is This?</i> , Sharon Muehlenhardt <i>Freight Train</i> , Donald Crew	Transportación: <i>Beep Beep</i> , Petr Horacek (retell the story, using the pictures, in Spanish) <i>Nuestros Autobus</i> , Suzanne Bloom <i>Tren de Carga</i> , Donald Crew
Celebrations: <i>Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with the Mexican Hat Dance</i> , Alma Flor Ada <i>Biscuit Loves Mother’s Day</i> , Alyssa Satin Capucilli <i>Celebrate Thanksgiving Day with Beto and Gaby</i> , Alma Flor Ada	Celebraciones: <i>Celebra el Cinco de Mayo Con un Jarabe Tapatio</i> , Alma Flor Ada <i>¡Huele a Pancakes!</i> , Trisha Matthews <i>Celebra el Día de Accion de Gracias con Beto Y Gaby</i> , Alma Flor Ada
Me/Emotions: <i>My Feet</i> , Aliko <i>I’m Growing</i> , Aliko <i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i> , Eric Carle	Yo/Emociones: <i>Los Pies</i> , Dana Meachen Rau <i>Crezco y Cambio</i> , Bobbie Kalman <i>La Mariquita Malhumorada</i> , Eric Carle
Nutrition/Health: <i>Germs Are Not for Sharing</i> , Elizabeth Verdick <i>A Chair For My Mother</i> , Vera B. Williams <i>Carrot Seed</i> , Ruth Krauss	Nutrición/Salud: <i>Germs Are Not for Sharing (English/Spanish)</i> , Elizabeth Verdick <i>Un Sillón Para Mi Mamá</i> , Vera B. Williams <i>La Semilla de Zanahoria</i> , Ruth Krauss

To order books online:

- ◆ Go to www.amazon.com
- ◆ On the right hand side of the page, click Wish List
- ◆ Under “Find someone’s wish list” enter the email address: stepping.stones@sedl.org
- ◆ If you are asked, the password is steppingstones.

Calendar of Activities for Families

Home educators or program coordinators should maintain a calendar of events in order to keep families informed of activities related to the migrant program (parent meetings, conferences, RIF activities, etc.). A calendar should be made each school year with these events included. In addition, ideas from the following monthly lists can be added to the calendar to enrich parent and child interactions. Alternatively, the appropriate list may be provided to the parents each month.

January

- ◆ Begin a list of books you have read to your child.
- ◆ Tell your child a story from your childhood.
- ◆ Teach your child a traditional song.
- ◆ Ask your child to help set the dinner table. Ask him/her to count the plates, forks, cups, etc.
- ◆ Have an indoor picnic. Discuss healthy foods.
- ◆ Read your child a story while he/she bathes.
- ◆ Draw a picture of the weather outside today. Label it cold, windy, hot, or sunny.
- ◆ Teach your child to tie his/her shoes.
- ◆ Make a tent indoors by draping a blanket over furniture. Pretend to be bears hibernating.
- ◆ Drink hot cocoa and count marshmallows.
- ◆ Play “Simon Says” with your child.
- ◆ Discuss clothing appropriate for wearing on cold days.
- ◆ Look through a magazine or catalog and help your child find the first letter of his/her name.
- ◆ Ask your child to help you sort clean laundry (socks, shirts, towels, etc.) and fold.
- ◆ Have your child draw a picture and mail it to a relative who might be celebrating a birthday. Discuss the job of the mail carrier.
- ◆ Go on a winter nature walk. Describe what you see.
- ◆ Teach your child to zip his/her jacket.
- ◆ Teach your child how and when to dial 9-1-1.
- ◆ Take a picture walk through your child’s favorite book. Instead of reading the words, discuss the pictures and talk about what will happen next.
- ◆ Ask your child to help at the grocery store by placing 2 bags of beans, or 4 apples in the basket.
- ◆ Tell your child about Martin Luther King, Jr.

February

- ◆ Sing the ABC song with your child.
- ◆ As you read a book to your child, ask him/her to turn the pages.
- ◆ Trace, color, and cut heart shapes.
- ◆ Ask your child to teach a family member how to trace, color, and cut heart shapes.
- ◆ Find things that are red, pink, or purple.
- ◆ Check the weather and decide together what to wear outside.
- ◆ Ask your child to count the crackers he/she puts in his/her soup.
- ◆ Talk to your child about the President of the United States.
- ◆ Have a race around the house. Talk about who finished first, second, and third.
- ◆ Teach your child to play "Go Fish."
- ◆ Have your child practice writing his/her name with markers or crayons.
- ◆ Help your child make homemade Valentine's Day cards for family members.
- ◆ Ask your child to retell one of his/her favorite stories. The child can use the book's pictures for support.
- ◆ Go on a shape hunt. Look for things shaped like circles, squares, and rectangles.
- ◆ Challenge your child to count the buttons on his/her shirt.
- ◆ Call a relative that lives far away. Ask the child to help dial the phone number.
- ◆ Before reading a story, ask the child to predict what it will be about.
- ◆ In the morning, take your child outside and look at your shadows. Later, go outside again and discuss how the shadows changed.
- ◆ Play hide-and-seek with the whole family.
- ◆ Practice clapping the number of syllables of family members' names: Ma – ri – a (3 syllables), An – drew (2 syllables).

March

- ◆ Help your child say words that rhyme with “cat” (fat, hat, bat, mat, rat, sat, pat, vat).
- ◆ Work with your child to put together a puzzle. Talk about using shape and color to help fit pieces together.
- ◆ Go outside on a windy day and discuss the wind. How does it feel? From which direction is it coming? What happens to the trees in the wind?
- ◆ While standing in line (at the grocery store, for a movie, etc.) talk about who is in front of you, who is behind you, who is first in line, and who is last in line.
- ◆ Learn and sing, “The Ants Go Marching.”
- ◆ Plant flower or vegetable seeds. Discuss how to take care of them. Record their growth.
- ◆ Tell your child about when you were a child. Where did you live? What games did you play? With whom did you play?
- ◆ Talk to your child about the contributions of Cesar Chavez.
- ◆ Teach your child how to stop, drop, and roll in case of fire.
- ◆ Discuss the St. Patrick’s Day tradition of wearing green. Make a list of green things.
- ◆ Name a “shape of the day.” Call attention to objects of that shape as they are seen throughout the day.
- ◆ Talk to your child about the texture of the clothing he/she is wearing (rough, smooth, bumpy, etc.).
- ◆ Look outside for insects. Observe their actions. Count their legs.
- ◆ Help your child make lemonade by squeezing lemons and adding sugar, water, and ice cubes. Ask your child to tell the steps.
- ◆ Take a nature walk and look for signs of spring (flowers blooming, leaves budding, baby animals, etc.).
- ◆ Hide an object in the house or yard. Give your child clues to help him/her find it (*near the bushes, under the blanket, by the television*).
- ◆ Ask your child to sort the silverware (forks, spoons, dinner knives).
- ◆ Teach your child a rhyme or finger play.
- ◆ Ask your child to count the number of red cars he/she sees on the way to the grocery store.
- ◆ Allow your child to dress up in adult clothes and role-play the part of an adult he/she knows.
- ◆ Add books to your book list. Count the number of books read so far.

April

- ◆ Before reading a story to your child, prompt him/her to look at the pictures and predict what it will be about.
- ◆ Take a walk in the rain. Talk about appropriate clothing to wear in the rain.
- ◆ When climbing steps, help your child count each one.
- ◆ Ask your child to help you dial a phone number. Discuss the numbers and help the child locate each one.
- ◆ While cleaning up, talk to your child about the importance of taking good care of his/her toys and other possessions.
- ◆ After a fun family event (trip, picnic, ball game, etc.) ask your child to draw a picture of his/her favorite part. Help your child write a sentence about the picture.
- ◆ Help your child count the number of windows in the house.
- ◆ Ask your child to help you plan one meal. Discuss the importance of healthy food.
- ◆ Turn on some music and dance! First dance fast, then dance slow.
- ◆ Teach your child how to use a computer mouse to interact with child-friendly software.
- ◆ Teach your child a poem you know.
- ◆ Have your child practice writing his/her name. Ask him/her to select the “best” one and post it on the refrigerator for all to see.
- ◆ Sit outside with your child. Close your eyes and take turns naming the sounds you hear.
- ◆ Chart your child’s growth by marking his/her height on a wall. Help your child understand that he/she is growing every day.
- ◆ Have your child watch weather reports to determine when the next rainy day might be.
- ◆ Ask your child to draw and color a rainbow. Have your child identify each color of the rainbow.
- ◆ While reading a familiar book, ask the child to identify the first letter of his/her name wherever it occurs in the book.
- ◆ Together, talk to a community worker (baker, bus driver, garbage collector, etc.) about his/her job. Discuss how community workers help us.
- ◆ Visit the public library. Allow your child to select any book he/she likes.
- ◆ Challenge your child to build the highest tower he/she can using blocks, plastic cups, or some other item that won’t hurt him/her if it falls.

May

- ◆ Search for things around the house that are shaped like circles.
- ◆ Count from one to ten, then practice counting backwards.
- ◆ Make mud pies with your child. Talk about textures (lumpy, smooth, rough).
- ◆ Play Hide and Seek. Talk to your child about problem solving.
- ◆ Read a book about Spring.
- ◆ Invite your child to help you follow a recipe. Talk about following directions.
- ◆ Teach your child about Cinco de Mayo.
- ◆ Go outside and examine your shadows. Discuss size, shape, and length.
- ◆ Have your child practice drumming the beat (by tapping the table or chair) of a song to which he/she is listening.
- ◆ Challenge your child to walk like a tightrope walker (i.e., one foot in front of the other).
- ◆ Tell your child a story about a giant. Invite your child to add details.
- ◆ Invite your child to draw a picture of his/her favorite part of a story you just read.
- ◆ Color a coloring book page with your child. Discuss favorite colors.
- ◆ Challenge your child to name all the things that make him/her feel happy.
- ◆ Teach your child the rules of a board game or simple card game (like “Go Fish”).
- ◆ Jump rope and count each jump.
- ◆ Take a walk and count the number of animals you see. Discuss their characteristics.
- ◆ Help your child plant a flower or vegetable seed. Together, take care of the plant and watch it grow.
- ◆ Help your child practice writing his/her first name.
- ◆ Hunt for things around the house that are black.

June

- ◆ At mealtime, discuss with your child the importance of eating healthy foods.
- ◆ Help your child say words that rhyme with "slip" (tip, nip, pip, rip, dip, flip, hip, lip, sip, trip, whip, zip).
- ◆ Have a tea party with your child. Discuss good manners ("Please" and "Thank you").
- ◆ Ask your child to help make a picnic lunch and eat outside.
- ◆ Help your child build fine motor skills. Allow him/her to cut out pictures from old magazines or newspapers.
- ◆ Teach your child your street address.
- ◆ Cut apple slices for your child. Encourage him or her to count them before eating them.
- ◆ Play catch outside. Begin by standing close to your child and tossing the ball to him/her. Slowly move farther away as you continue to toss the ball back and forth.
- ◆ Ask your child to name all the ways he/she can show someone that he/she cares about them.
- ◆ While visiting the grocery store, visit the dairy section. Discuss dairy products and all the things made from milk.
- ◆ Ask your child to explain to you how to brush his/her teeth. Encourage your child to use the terms "first," "next," "then," and "last."
- ◆ While traveling in the car, have your child identify safety vehicles (police cars, ambulances, fire engines). Discuss their purposes.
- ◆ Add books to your book list. Count the books read so far.
- ◆ Have your child look into a mirror and describe himself using details (curly hair, brown eyes, rosy cheeks, long eyelashes, etc.).
- ◆ Teach your child about the dangers of strangers.
- ◆ With your child, sing the ABC song while washing your hands.
- ◆ Have your child sort his/her stuffed animals (by size: large and small; by weight: heavy and light; or by color: black, brown, pink, blue).
- ◆ While eating ice cream or a popsicle, talk to your child about what makes it melt.
- ◆ While waiting in line, discuss who is first, second, third, and last in line.
- ◆ After your child draws a picture, help him/her write a caption that describes what is happening. Read the sentence to your child, pointing to the words as you read.

July

- ◆ While your child is in the bathtub, challenge him/her to guess which toys/objects will sink and which ones will float.
- ◆ Teach your child about 4th of July traditions in your family.
- ◆ Invite your child to draw a picture about his/her favorite 4th of July activity.
- ◆ Encourage your child to help take care of the family pet (feeding, walking, cleaning up). Talk about shared responsibilities.
- ◆ Visit the produce section of the grocery store. Talk about foods that grow on trees and bushes, also discuss foods that grow near the ground and under ground.
- ◆ Teach your child what the different colors of the stoplight mean.
- ◆ Invite your child to jump rope. Help your child count jumps.
- ◆ Search for things around the house that are rectangular in shape.
- ◆ Before going outside, invite your child to look outside and determine what clothes would be appropriate for the weather.
- ◆ Challenge your child to count his/her toes.
- ◆ While eating watermelon (or any other fruit), ask the child to describe how it looks, tastes, smells, feels.
- ◆ Talk about swimming safety.
- ◆ Read a fairytale about a princess and a prince. Dress up like the character using props like swords, crowns, robe.
- ◆ Role-play different careers with your child (baker, firefighter, doctor).
- ◆ Make sock puppets and tell a story.
- ◆ Read under a fort made out of blankets.
- ◆ Use cookie cutters and talk about the shapes.
- ◆ Drink different juices and talk about what fruits are in them.
- ◆ Help your child learn to throw and catch a ball.
- ◆ Make paper airplanes. Experiment to see which design flies furthest, highest, etc.

August

- ◆ Discuss the job of the barber. Talk about the tools he/she uses (scissors, comb, spray bottle, chair).
- ◆ Create finger paintings.
- ◆ Make a Cheerios necklace.
- ◆ Show how to make ice cubes. Teach the concept of cold, freeze, and melt.
- ◆ Make stick puppets and tell a story.
- ◆ Help your child count stairs as he/she climbs them.
- ◆ Add titles to your book list. Count how many books you've read so far.
- ◆ Teach your child the proper method for brushing his/her teeth.
- ◆ Find things around the house that begin with the letter S.
- ◆ Help your child pour a bowl of cereal.
- ◆ Teach your child how to take care of books.
- ◆ Help your child spell his/her name with magnetic letters.
- ◆ Before reading a book, ask your child to predict what might happen.
- ◆ Practice skipping outside.
- ◆ Mix food coloring or paint to make new colors (red + blue = purple, red + yellow = orange, blue + yellow = green).
- ◆ Ask your child to help you make the grocery list.
- ◆ Ask your child to count the buttons on the clothing he/she is wearing.
- ◆ Remove the shoelaces from a pair of shoes and ask your child to re-lace them.
- ◆ Blow up a balloon and hit it back and forth across the room. Challenge your child to keep it from touching the floor.
- ◆ With your child, recite the days of the week.

September

- ◆ Challenge your child to name all the things that make him/her feel scared.
- ◆ Visit a pet store and talk about pets (how to care for them, the difference between pets and farm animals, etc.).
- ◆ Play hide-and-seek.
- ◆ Teach your child your street address.
- ◆ Ask your child to set the table.
- ◆ At the grocery store or mall, ask your child to close his/her eyes and name all the things he/she can hear.
- ◆ Talk to your child about the importance of getting enough sleep.
- ◆ Set a limit for the amount of time your child watches television.
- ◆ Ask your child to clap along with you while you count to ten.
- ◆ Let your child select the clothes he/she will wear today.
- ◆ Sing the ABC song with your child.
- ◆ Talk to you child about the day he/she was born.
- ◆ Teach your child the rules for using scissors (cut only the paper provided, use only scissors with blunt ends, stay seated, clean up).
- ◆ Ask your child to “read” his/her favorite story to you.
- ◆ Take a walk and look for things that are triangular in shape.
- ◆ Help your child pour a glass of milk or juice.
- ◆ Give your child a paintbrush and a container of water. Let him/her “paint” the house or sidewalk.
- ◆ Read a wordless picture book.
- ◆ Teach your child a poem you know.
- ◆ Ask your child to tell you about his/her best friend. What does your child like most about him/her?

October

- ◆ Help your child make his/her favorite sandwich.
- ◆ Ask your child to help you wash the dishes.
- ◆ Ask your child to find the first letter of his/her name in an old newspaper or magazine. Challenge him to circle all of those letters he/she can find.
- ◆ Teach your child to tie his/her shoe.
- ◆ Ask your child to count the plates at the dinner table.
- ◆ Add books to your book list. Count how many books have been read so far.
- ◆ Look for things around the house that begin with the letter F.
- ◆ Cut an old cereal box into puzzle pieces. Challenge your child to assemble the puzzle.
- ◆ Ask your child to help you fold the laundry.
- ◆ Before bed, ask your child to recount the events of the day. Have him/her tell what happened first, next, and last.
- ◆ Survey family members about their favorite colors.
- ◆ Teach your child about opposites (hot/cold, up/down, mean/nice).
- ◆ While washing hands, sing the ABC song.
- ◆ Talk with your child about going to school. Help him/her understand what it will be like.
- ◆ Count the dots on dominoes or the hearts/diamonds/spades/clubs on cards.
- ◆ Using magnetic letters, ask your child to name all the letters he/she knows.
- ◆ Teach your child about kitchen safety.
- ◆ On a computer, guide your child to a child-friendly website to play a game, listen to a story, or learn about something in which he/she is interested.
- ◆ Help your child identify coins (penny, dime, nickel, quarter). Discuss their values.
- ◆ Help your child carve a pumpkin.

November

- ◆ Trace your child's hand and make a turkey. Color and add feathers.
- ◆ Have your child practice zipping up a jacket.
- ◆ Help your child sort food cans from smallest to largest.
- ◆ With your child, make a list of the things for which you are thankful.
- ◆ Search in an old magazine or newspaper for things that are square in shape. Cut them out and make a collage.
- ◆ Take a walk outside. Look for things that are orange.
- ◆ Give your child tongs or tweezers. Ask him/her to use them to pick up small objects (cotton balls, socks, marshmallows)
- ◆ Place an object in a paper bag. Ask your child to reach inside the bag (without looking) and guess what the object is.
- ◆ Look at pictures of animals. Talk about their characteristics (number of legs, body covering, horns, hooves, claws, etc.).
- ◆ Go outside and look for shadows. Describe them.
- ◆ Challenge your child to name things that will fit in his/her pocket.
- ◆ With your child, practice balancing on one foot, then the other.
- ◆ During a meal, talk about sources of the foods (milk—cows; corn—plants, etc.).
- ◆ Do leaf rubbings.
- ◆ Read a book but don't finish it. Ask your child to predict how it will end.
- ◆ Ask your child what he/she does right before _____ (going to bed, taking a bath, eating a meal, going outside, etc.).
- ◆ Hide an object in a room. Guide your child to find it by providing clues (use position words like "under," "beside," "near," etc.).
- ◆ Ask your child to arrange the family's shoes in order from smallest to largest.
- ◆ Check the weather forecast and ask your child to select clothing appropriate for the weather.
- ◆ Take a walk and collect fall leaves.

December

- ◆ Cut snowflakes.
- ◆ Help your child cut three sizes of circles and make a snowman.
- ◆ Search around the house for things that are white.
- ◆ Ask your child to count how many people are in your family. Compare that number to the number of people in another family (neighbors or cousins).
- ◆ Teach your child the rules of a new board game or card game.
- ◆ Read a book to your child and add it to your book list. How many books have you read so far?
- ◆ Ask your child to tell you about a time when he/she was surprised.
- ◆ Ask your child to name all the things that can be used as coverings for our feet (socks, sandals, boots, slippers, etc.).
- ◆ Examine insects. Look for six legs, three body parts, and antenna.
- ◆ Talk to your child about what animals need to survive (food, water, shelter).
- ◆ Invite your child to help cook a meal. Allow him/her to measure ingredients.
- ◆ Work with your child to count objects and write the number.
- ◆ Ask your child to draw a picture of his/her favorite food. Help him/her write about it.
- ◆ Talk to your child about how to prevent cavities.
- ◆ Look for purple things.
- ◆ While reading fiction and non-fiction books, discuss whether they are pretend or real.
- ◆ Ask your child to name words that rhyme with "me" (be, fee, he, knee, pea, tree, see, we).
- ◆ Practice kicking a ball back and forth with your child outdoors.
- ◆ Challenge your child to name things that grow on trees.
- ◆ Role-play the job of the postal worker.

Revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*

The Stepping Stones lessons are built around the Revised *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines* (2008). Each unit addresses all of the 10 domains (Social and Emotional Development, Language and Communication, Emergent Literacy–Reading, Emergent Literacy–Writing, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Physical Development and Technology). Furthermore, every lesson contains skills from the Language and Communication domain.

Home educators and coordinators should be very familiar with these guidelines. To download the English and Spanish guidelines go to

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147495508&menu_id=2147483718

Online Resources

For the most current information available about the Migrant Education Program (MEP), please visit the program’s website at

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4700&menu_id=798&menu_id2=2147483722

Contacts

For questions concerning Stepping Stones, please contact the migrant education staff at your regional education service center (ESC). Staff at the ESCs may contact their assigned TEA MEP staff member.

Questions concerning the Stepping Stones Program Manual may be directed to the TEA’s Curriculum Division by telephone at (512) 463-9581 or via email at curriculum@tea.state.tx.us.

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Stepping Stones

A Texas Migrant Early Childhood
Program for 3- and 4-Year Olds