

Big Day for PreK™ “Cheat Sheet” for VA ECE Leaders

This “cheat sheet” is meant to be a quick reference for administrators when planning effective professional development opportunities for PreK teachers. It contains excerpts from the [Head Start Curriculum Consumer Report – Preschool \(reviewed in 2017\)](#) and [most recent prices](#) from the website.

Description: [Big Day for PreK™](#) offers learning experiences and materials that support children's social and emotional, academic, and physical development. The curriculum is organized into eight thematic units. Each unit includes weekly and daily lessons with whole-group learning activities, small group instruction, and learning centers.

Curricular Materials reviewed in the Curriculum Consumer Report: Teacher Welcome Kit (e.g., Professional Handbook), BIG Theme Boxes (e.g., Teaching Guides), BIG Wall Chart Box, BIG Book Box and Little Book Boxes, BIG Learning Box, Big Day Online.

Curricular Learning Goals for Children: Big Day for PreK™ provides measurable, developmentally appropriate learning goals throughout its curriculum materials. The Professional Handbook describes "Pathways to Readiness" with goals for pre-emergent, beginning, emerging, and developed skills. Furthermore, each Teaching Guide ends with a "Knowledge, Skills, and Concepts" chart that summarizes the learning goals covered in that unit. All learning activities in the Teaching Guides specify learning goals, and the learning activities support children in making progress toward these learning goals. The curriculum lacks guidance on how to use the learning goals with diverse children or how to use the learning goals to individualize learning experiences for all children.

Professional Development offered by publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt offers Getting Started for Teachers, a full- or half-day, in-person introductory course for up to 35 teachers, which is also available as a webinar. Furthermore, Big Day for PreK™ provides a range of courses that programs can use to support their ongoing professional development needs. They run a free professional development webinar series that focuses on domain-specific teaching practices. They also offer several half- and full-day in-person courses available at an additional cost that focus on a range of training topics, such as family engagement. Finally, Big Day for PreK™ can provide individualized coaching sessions that include collaboratively setting goals and thinking about the specific needs of children and teachers in a program.

Curriculum Materials to Support Implementation: Big Day for PreK™ includes a comprehensive set of materials to support implementation. The Professional Handbook offers specific guidance for implementation of the curriculum, such as how to set up the learning environment, an overview of the Teaching Guides, how to

differentiate instruction for all learners, and how to implement best practices in each of the learning domains. Each Teaching Guide includes daily lessons that clearly describe how to implement learning experiences, with lists of materials, specific teaching practices, and learning goals. The online Teacher Space provides additional helpful resources for teachers, such as a "Lesson Planner," assessment tools, and a "Family Space."

- **Fidelity Tool:** Big Day for PreK™ offers the [In-Classroom Observation Checklist](#), which can be used to assess fidelity of implementation. The tool guides observation in different areas, such as classroom environment, instructional materials, family involvement, and classroom management.

Curricular Supports for Teacher-Child Interactions

- **Interactions that Extend Children's Learning:** Many of the curriculum's resources provide guidance on and examples of how teachers engage in interactions that extend children's learning. All Teaching Guides include weekly "Teacher and Child Interactions" charts that provide examples and strategies for meaningful interactions that extend children's thinking and communication. For example, to support a teacher's quality of feedback, the chart suggests, "When children name the animals they think might live in each habitat, ask them to explain their responses ... 'Why do you think sharks live in the ocean? What do sharks need that an ocean has?' " Similarly, the BookStix provide specific prompts (e.g., what, why, and how open-ended questions) for teachers to extend children's thinking and communication during daily book reading.
- **Active Exploration:** While the Professional Handbook describes the importance of hands-on exploration for children's learning (e.g., encouraging children to express themselves creatively with a variety of materials in the learning centers), the Teaching Guides provide limited opportunities for preschoolers to actively engage in hands-on exploration. All activities, including learning centers, are structured and teacher directed, leaving children little room to engage with materials in open-ended ways and experiment with materials.

Curricular Supports for Individualization:

- **Individualization Based on Interests:** Big Day for PreK™ does not describe the importance of or offer guidance on how to plan learning experiences that build on individual children's interests. Learning experiences are pre-planned, and there is no guidance on how to modify them based on individual children's interests.
- **Individualization Based on Strengths and Needs:** The curriculum provides a variety of strategies to make learning experiences responsive to individual children's strengths and needs. For example, each "Big Learning Experience" provides modifications for 3-year-olds as well as enrichment modifications. Additionally, the learning activities offer "Responsive Instruction: One-to-One FollowUps," which provide suggested scaffolding strategies if you observe children with particular needs.
- **Individualization for Dual Language Learners (Scaffolding Strategies):** The Professional Handbook discusses the importance of individualization for children who are DLLs and provides specific teaching practices to support their development and learning. Furthermore, specific scaffolding strategies for children who are DLLs are embedded throughout the learning activities in the Teaching Guides.
- **Individualization for Children with Special Needs (Teaching Practices and Interventions):** The Professional Handbook provides a general overview of adaptations for children with disabilities or other special needs (e.g., teach to children's strengths, address children's needs with special scaffolding). It also describes how teachers can use the "One-to-One Follow-Ups" to provide responsive instruction, all of which follow a similar structure of "If you observe..., then adapt..." Finally, the Teaching Guides provide specific modifications for each "Big Learning Experience" in relation to certain disabilities

Child Assessment Tools and Guidance:

- **Ongoing Observation and Documentation:** The Professional Handbook describes how teachers can use informal observations, portfolios, anecdotal observation records, and checklists to understand children's developmental progress over time. To support this process, all Teaching Guides include weekly reminders for which assessment tools should be used, as well as specific prompts embedded throughout learning activities for teachers to observe children. Finally, the online Teacher Space offers downloadable forms such as observation guides and anecdotal records.
- **Standardized and Structured Assessment Instruments:** Big Day for PreK™ encourages programs to use the publisher's standardized and structured assessment instrument, the Scholastic Early Childhood Inventory. The curriculum describes how assessment tools should be age and linguistically appropriate, but the curriculum does not discuss the importance of assessment instruments that are valid, reliable, and individually or culturally appropriate.