EARLY CHILDHOOD SRBI
Supporting All Children

Connecticut

SRBI
scientific
research-based
interventions

2010

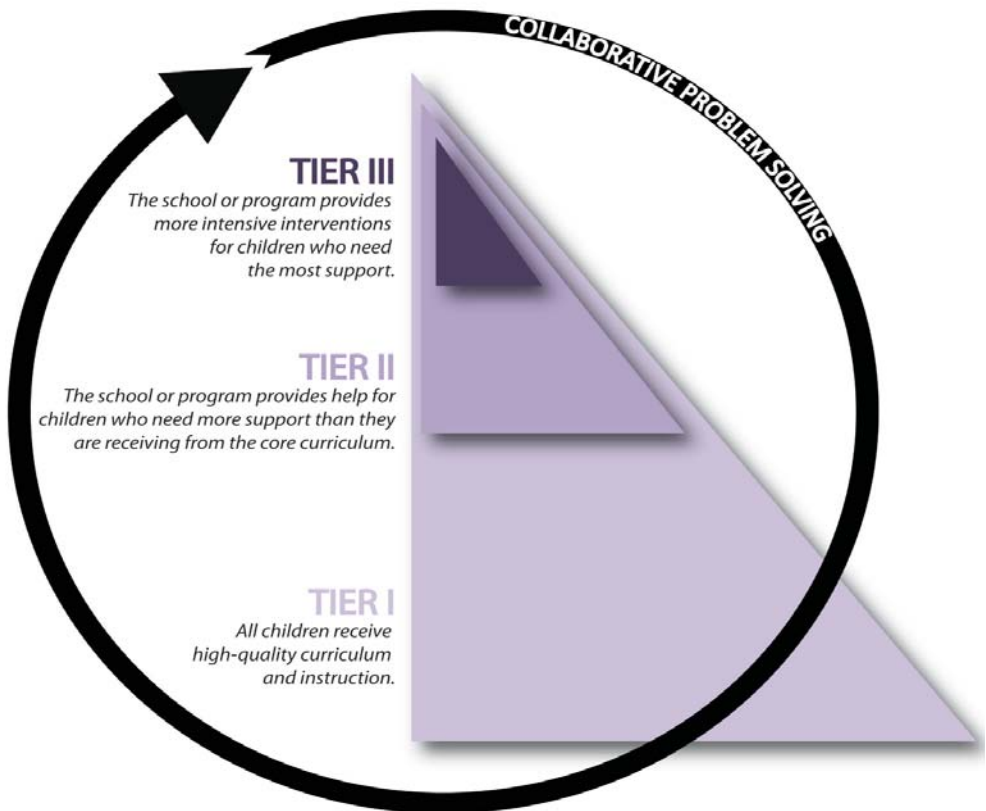## A Guide for Preschool Programs

High-quality preschool programs support all children, regardless of their range of experience or current skills, abilities and interests. Early Childhood SRBI offers a framework for providing this support and ensuring that the needs of our youngest learners are met. Many of the key components of this framework are already present in high-quality preschool programs.

Early Childhood SRBI is adapted from Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), Connecticut's Framework for Response to Intervention (RTI), currently being implemented in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the state. Implementing a similar framework, appropriate for early childhood, will help to ensure that our youngest learners have a solid foundation for future life and school success.

Key Components of Early Childhood SRBI

- High-quality core curriculum that addresses state learning standards in all domains;

- Assessment to determine how children are progressing;

- Individualized support, across multiple tiers, for children who are not making expected progress;

- Collaborative problem solving as a basis for making decisions; and

- Comprehensive supports for social, emotional, behavioral, mental and physical health.

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

TIER III
The school or program provides more intensive interventions for children who need the most support.

TIER II
The school or program provides help for children who need more support than they are receiving from the core curriculum.

TIER I
All children receive high-quality curriculum and instruction.

Curriculum

Curriculum includes multiple components and is more than just a collection of activities. In addition to planning for the materials and activities to support children's learning, intentional teaching includes consideration of the teacher's role in supporting children's growth, the needs and interests of individual children, and how families will be involved. High-quality early childhood curriculum includes:

1. Performance standards (learning expectations) for children, based on or aligned with state standards. In Connecticut, learning expectations for children in their preschool years may be found in the *Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework* and *Preschool Assessment Framework*, as well as the *Prekindergarten to Grade 8 Curriculum Standards* for content areas.

2. Ongoing assessment of children's skills, development and abilities based on the identified performance standards across all domains, including personal-social and physical development.

3. Content in language and literacy, mathematical concepts, scientific inquiry, social studies and the creative arts.

4. Processes and learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive and use child interest to capture the energy of children's curiosity.

5. Teacher interaction that promotes a positive climate and balances teacher-directed and child-initiated experiences.

6. Intentional organization of the environment, schedule and materials.

7. Partnerships with families that involve meaningful and culturally relevant participation.

> **The core curriculum includes high-quality standards-based learning experiences and instruction for all children.**

Individualized Support

Preschool teachers differentiate instruction for children within the general curriculum. They recognize that there is a range of typical child development and help each child make progress from his or her current skill and knowledge level. In addition, they incorporate individual children's interests, backgrounds, and learning styles into the general classroom experience.

Assessment

Assessment plays an important role in Early Childhood SRBI. Preschool teachers continuously collect information on all children in their classrooms. They observe and document examples of how children are learning related to performance standards and include information gathered from children's families and other caregivers.

Early Childhood SRBI also includes the use of a type of assessment referred to as universal screening, which focuses on behavior and/or key developmental skills to determine if the curriculum is effective for individual students. The purpose of this tool is to identify children for whom additional classroom support may be necessary. If the universal screening shows that a large number of children require additional support, this may mean that the core curriculum is not supporting the learning needs of the children in the class.

Selecting a universal screening tool in early childhood takes special consideration. In SRBI, universal screenings are typically tools that look at key skills, are quick to administer and low-cost and can be administered several times throughout the year. In early childhood, there are many additional factors to consider when making decisions about which tool to use as a universal screening. Below are some questions to guide decisions around universal screening for Early Childhood SRBI:

- Who will be screened? How will screening results be considered for children who have just started preschool and have not yet had the opportunity to benefit from the core curriculum?

- What are the key skills in each domain that will help determine which children are in need of additional support?

- Do current assessments provide the information needed to determine which children need support?

  - Could information from a current system of ongoing observation, documentation and assessment be used for this purpose?
  - Do current developmental screening practices provide the necessary information?

- If new assessments are considered for use as a universal screening, what questions should be asked about each potential tool?

Universal screening for Early Childhood SRBI targets key skills and helps to determine which students need instructional supports.

- Does this tool measure the application of skills or just look at identification and labeling of items?
- Will this tool require that additional information be gathered so that supports can be appropriately targeted toward understanding of concepts instead of rote memorization?
- How will staff be trained on the use of this tool?

Collaborative Problem Solving

After a universal screening, it is important to bring together a team to review the results of the assessment. This process is often referred to as collaborative problem solving. It may take place in a data team, a child study team or another appropriate collaborative group. In a preschool setting, this team may include caregivers from other settings, teachers and specialists from the preschool program and professionals from the local school district or other community agencies. If the structures are not yet in place to support a large group collaborative meeting, a child's teacher may consult with another teacher or outside experts to discuss the needs of individual children, as appropriate.

Collaborative problem solving supports teachers by providing an opportunity for teamwork and shared decision-making.

Initially a team will examine the information gathered for the whole class and/or program.

Questions to be asked at this time include:

- What do the results of the universal screening tool show?
- Is the core curriculum effective for most children?
- Which children require additional supports based on the universal screening?

When planning for individual children, the following questions should be asked:

- What additional information is needed to understand this child's needs and determine appropriate intervention strategies? How will this information be gathered?
- In what ways will this child's family be involved in gathering additional information, making decisions and monitoring progress?
- Who else should be included on the team?
- After gathering and discussing additional information, what supports are appropriate for the targeted skills, who will implement these supports and how will we monitor progress?

-Tier II-

The school or program provides help for children who need more support than they are receiving from the core curriculum.

Children who are in need of more support continue to participate in the high-quality core curriculum.

Individualized Support

Children who are not making expected progress toward specific performance standards need additional targeted learning opportunities as determined through the collaborative problem solving process. Effective intentional teaching strategies may be used as interventions in preschool and can usually be embedded into daily classroom routines. They may occur in small or large group settings. An intervention may consist of planning additional opportunities to address a targeted skill in multiple areas of the classroom. Other evidence-based strategies include teacher modeling, prompting and peer modeling. The use of such embedded strategies must be intentionally planned and individualized for each student.

Assessment

Children who are receiving Tier II supports continue to be a part of a program/classroom's general assessment plan. In addition, progress on the targeted skills should be assessed to determine if the individualized support is working. This is often referred to as progress monitoring. Progress monitoring occurs more frequently in Tier II than in Tier I.

Collaborative Problem Solving

The decision-making team will meet to discuss the child's progress after supports have been in place for several weeks.

Tier II considerations for the collaborative problem solving team are included below:

- Does the information collected show evidence that the child has made progress with the current support?

- Does this child now exhibit the skills considered appropriate for his or her age range? Should Tier II support be faded or discontinued?

- Does this child continue to need the same level of support? If so, are the current strategies appropriate or should new Tier II strategies be considered?

- If the information collected shows that this child is making limited progress, does he/she require more frequent individualized support in order to make additional progress? If so, this is referred to as Tier III.

-Tier III-

The school or program provides more intensive interventions for children who need the most support.

Children who are in need of more individualized support continue to participate in the high-quality core curriculum.

Individualized Support

Children who have not made sufficient progress with Tier II intervention require more intensive supports. In Early Childhood SRBI, the same strategies are generally appropriate for use as either Tier II or Tier III supports. The difference is that for Tier III, these strategies occur more often or for a longer duration. For example, a teacher may include additional strategies targeting the skill of relating number to quantity at snack and transition time, while continuing to address these skills during center time.

Assessment

As the frequency and duration of the intervention increases, progress is monitored more often. At Tier III, it may be appropriate for the teacher to check on a child's progress every couple of days or even several times a day. The frequency of progress monitoring will be determined by the collaborative problem solving team and may vary depending on the targeted skill and the staffing patterns.

Collaborative Problem Solving

It is important that the decision-making team meet regularly to review information collected regarding the child's progress. Tier III considerations for the collaborative problem solving team are included below:

- Does the information collected show evidence that this child has made progress with current supports? Is it appropriate to discontinue Tier III support?

- Does this child continue to need intensive support? If so, are the current strategies appropriate, or should new Tier II or III strategies be considered?

- If the information collected shows that this child is making limited progress despite these supports, is it suspected that this child may have a disability? Is a request for evaluation to determine if this child requires special education appropriate? (Note: A referral for an evaluation to determine if a child requires special education is appropriate any time a teacher or family suspects that a child has a disability. Early Childhood SRBI should not be used to delay or deny this type of evaluation.)

Vignette:

The following is an example of how Early Childhood SRBI might be applied in a preschool classroom. While this example focuses on a literacy skill from the cognitive domain, it is critical that educators consider the progress children are making across all domains of development.

Terry is a teacher in a classroom of four-year-olds. In her preschool program, classroom staff observe and document children's progress toward early learning goals using *Connecticut's Preschool Assessment Framework* (PAF). The staff targets several key skills for universal screening three times a year. Because this program uses the PAF to assess all children, the staff decide to tie their universal screening process to this assessment tool. In order to make sure they can compare their observations across classrooms, the staff set up a simple process with common materials planned to elicit a specific skill. The results of this process serve as a universal screening to identify children in need of additional support. The observations of children also serve as documentation for the ongoing cycle of intentional teaching using the PAF.

At a collaborative problem solving team meeting, the results of the universal screening are examined. The results show that most children are performing within developmentally appropriate ranges. The data also show that the educational experiences and instructional strategies are generally effective, and that most children show growth in their ability to recognize similar sounds in speech over the course of the year. However, the assessment information on two students indicates a different pattern of learning.

Using the simple screening procedure, Terry finds that when given three familiar items, Bobby and Sophia are not able to identify which names rhyme or have similar beginning sounds. Terry's classroom observations also indicate concerns in this area for both children. Hearing issues are ruled out since the program has conducted a hearing screening that both children passed. A collaborative team meeting is scheduled for each child. The team includes the children's family members, the teacher,

the program's curriculum coordinator, another classroom teacher who specializes in early literacy and the program director.

Each team discusses the results of the screening and additional information that Terry has gathered, including classroom observations and information shared by the children's families. The teams identify strategies to support the children's skill development and ideas for supporting these skills at home. They agreed that transition times are a great opportunity to introduce additional learning opportunities and that Terry can sing songs with rhyming and alliteration during all transitions. They also outline a routine of breaking down the names of the snack and lunch foods, stressing the initial sound (e.g., "P, p, p…. pizza"). Then the small group of children thinks of other foods with the same initial sound (e.g., "Does anyone know of another food that starts with 'p'?"). Finally, Terry will include in the sensory table objects with rhyming names or similar beginning sounds, a favorite area for both Bobby and Sophia. This intentional placement of items allows classroom staff to take advantage of learning opportunities in a favorite environment.

The teams also decide that, in order to monitor progress, Terry will repeat the screening procedures for rhyming and beginning sounds with different words once a week. She will track the children's progress, and the teams will meet again in three weeks to review the data.

When the team later meets to discuss Bobby's progress, Terry reports that Bobby is now able to identify rhymes. After one week of providing support, she shares that he stressed rhyming words when repeating a favorite story; however, he was not yet able to complete the task decided upon for monitoring progress. The following week, he was able to complete the task. He is now beginning to separate the beginning sound of a word but does not notice similar sounds. The team decides to continue using the same strategies for another two weeks to see if Bobby will make additional progress. When the team meets again two weeks later, Bobby is beginning to generate rhymes of his own and the team decides that the additional support can be reduced.

Terry has also implemented these strategies with Sophia, and her team meets at three weeks and six weeks into the intervention. The data shows that Sophia had not demonstrated significant progress. Terry notes that Sophia is experimenting with words and listens to the sounds more intently, but she is still not able to identify rhymes and/or similar initial sounds. The team decides to continue the same strategies but adds an additional one: Once a day, the assistant teacher will have Sophia choose one book from a selection of rhyming books. The assistant teacher will read the book to Sophia and other interested children, repeating the rhyming words after each page. The book Sophia has chosen will also be sent home so her family can read it with her. Given the more intensive support, the team decides upon a more frequent schedule for monitoring progress. Terry will monitor Sophia's progress twice a week.

When the team meets again, the documentation shows that Sophia has begun to notice rhyming words during the daily routine and is able to complete the rhyming portion of the screening prompt with a variety of objects. Although Sophia is still not able to complete the activity with similar beginning sounds, her mother reports that a day earlier, after playing with her friend Sarah, Sophia had said, "Sarah and Sophia sound the same." The team decides to continue the Tier II supports for a few more weeks. They will then convene and decide if Sophia needs additional intensive support to help her begin to notice similar beginning sounds.

RESOURCES

A Family Guide: Connecticut's Framework for RTI
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/family_guide_to_srbi.pdf

Using Scientific Research-Based Interventions:
Improving Education for All Students
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/srbi_full_document.pdf

Additional information about early childhood
learning standards and curriculum

CT Preschool Curriculum Frameworks
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/Preschool_framework.pdf

CT Preschool Assessment Frameworks
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PEPS/Early/Preschool_Assessment_
Framework.pdf

CT State Department of Education
Prekindergarten to Grade 8 Curriculum Standards
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=320954

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Bureau of Teaching and Learning
www.sde.ct.gov • 860-713-6740

State Education Resource Center (SERC)
www.ctserc.org • 860-632-1485