

# INTEGRATED INSTRUCTION

## An Overview

The OEL's Prekindergarten Professional Development Needs Survey data indicated a strong interest in integrating all domains of early learning. While this overview includes examples related to prekindergarten, integrated instruction is a topic that spans all grade levels. Surprisingly, there is not a lot of empirical research on integrated instruction though it has been a topic of conversation for decades. This may be because integrated instruction is one of many terms that may be used to describe the overlapping of areas of study. Some may equate integrated instruction with cross-curricular, thematic or interdisciplinary instruction. Others may define each term differently.<sup>1,2</sup>

We do know from teachers' experiences that integrated instruction has the following advantages in the classroom:

- Integrated instruction provides meaningful learning experiences. If learning is meaningful, students are more likely to be engaged.
- An integrated curriculum allows students multiple opportunities to apply the skills they are learning.
- A curriculum that addresses multiple standards across content areas can help to alleviate the feeling that there is not enough time in a day (...week, month, or year).<sup>3</sup>

When planning for integrated instruction, keep these points in mind:

### Select a Theme

Themes should be interesting to students and be meaningful and substantive. A theme such as "Challenges" enables students to learn about people who have struggled and won. A theme on the environment helps students understand the importance of preserving and protecting the Earth. Themes like these offer the opportunity to explore important ideas that challenge students to seek information beyond what they already know.<sup>4</sup>

### Choose a Key Concept to Guide Instruction

Once themes are determined, the goal is to select tasks that encourage students to investigate, wonder, problem-solve, and ask questions that enable them to explore other topics more fully. Key concepts for a theme should provide a clear focus for all instruction and learning. For instance, the key concept for a theme on the environment might be: "We should respect and preserve the natural world because our lives are linked to it." This key concept guides all activities and lessons. It is expected that, by the end of the theme, all students will begin to internalize, build upon, and transfer this key concept to their own lives.

### Identify Skills and Strategies to Be Taught

Within integrated instruction, skills and strategies become the means for developing children's understanding of key concepts, rather than the end result of a lesson. For example, comparing and contrasting is not taught in isolation but through activities such as structured and carefully planned reading lessons, hands-on math and science activities, or purposeful play—all intended to enhance students' grasp of key concepts.

### Identify a Range of Appropriate Resources

Integrated instruction requires thoughtful and extensive planning. See the *New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core* (<http://www.earlychildhoodnyc.org/pdfs/PreK%20Common%20Core%202013-10-28.pdf>) for sample instructional unit planning templates. While planning, establish connections among the domains and identify a variety of purposeful materials and contextually-embedded activities.

### Be Reflective

Integrated instruction can help to maximize instructional time by addressing standards across content areas, but this should not be interpreted as "saving time." The length of time spent on a theme will vary based on teacher and student interests, individual strengths and needs, and quality of instructional planning. Along with teacher-directed activities and purposeful play, children should have opportunities and supports to inquire about related topics, extend activities, and test theories. Evaluate students' progress and engagement with the theme to determine next steps.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, C. and Henning, M.B. (2010). Planning, teaching, and assessing elementary education interdisciplinary curriculum. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22(2), 179-186. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov>

<sup>2</sup> Gavelek, J.R., Raphael, T.E., Biondo, S.M., & Wang, D. (1999). *Integrated literacy instruction: A review of the literature* (CIERA Report 2-001). Retrieved from University of Michigan, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement website: <http://www.ciera.org/library/reports/inquiry-2/2-001/2-001.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Lake, K. (1994). *Integrated curriculum* (Close-Up #16). Retrieved from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory:

<http://www.curriculumassociates.com/professional-development/topics/Integrated-Curriculum/extras/lesson1/Reading-Lesson1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Walmsley, S. (1994). *Children exploring their world: Theme teaching in elementary school*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

<sup>5</sup> NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute. (2012). *Core body of knowledge: New York State's core competencies for early childhood educators*. Retrieved from the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council website: <http://www.nysecac.org/resources/>

If implementing a structured curriculum, supplement or modify the curriculum to best meet the needs of students while addressing the standards. For example, teachers using the *Preschool Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)* curriculum may take ideas for activities from the curriculum and add their own ideas to integrate other early learning domains. A teacher may decide that a suggested small-group activity becomes a choice during free play. This process requires more planning than following the curriculum as presented. However, children will benefit from meaningful learning experiences and teachers can provide more opportunities for purposeful play.

Learning centers offer opportunities for teachers to integrate instruction and for students to apply what they are learning. Below is an example using the [Preschool CKLA Domain 5 - Habitats](#), but the activities could be used for any instructional unit that teaches young children about plants, animals, and the environments in which they live.

<p><b>Blocks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post pictures of animal habitats.</li> <li>• Encourage students to build animal homes and habitats. Discuss what animals would live inside of the homes.</li> <li>• Include animals, plants, and other objects that would belong in a woodland, pond, ocean, desert, or farm.</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.SS.3, PK.A.1</p>	<p><b>Dramatic Play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up Library Center (CKLA Teacher Guide pp. 27-31).</li> <li>• Create an animal home or habitat (e.g., a bear cave (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 182), pens for farm animals, an empty pool for a pond).</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.RL.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.SS.3, PK.A.5</p>
<p><b>Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Woodland, Pond, Ocean, Desert, and Farm Murals (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 15).</li> <li>• Trace around objects one would see in a given habitat and make a collage. Students might use paint and make prints with the leaves for the Forest Habitat.</li> <li>• Make leaf rubbings.</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.SS.3, PK.A.1</p>	<p><b>Science/Discovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Forest Mystery Box (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 181).</li> <li>• Conduct science experiments. See if objects float more easily in salt water or fresh water. Graph how many times a cactus must be watered versus ivy.</li> </ul> <p>PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.2, PK.S.4, PK.S.5</p>
<p><b>Toys and Games/Math Manipulatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play Sound Picture Fishing Game (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 218).</li> <li>• Sort animals by habitat.</li> <li>• Count objects related to habitat (e.g., cows on the farm).</li> <li>• Arrange objects from smallest to largest/largest to smallest (e.g. shells from the ocean habitat).</li> <li>• Use animals/habitat objects to make patterns.</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.CC.3, PK.OAT.2, PK.G.3, PK.S.4, PK.S.5</p>	<p><b>Sand and Water/Sensory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use water beads, animals, plants, and objects to create an ocean or pond habitat.</li> <li>• Use sand, animals, plants and objects to create a desert or ocean habitat.</li> <li>• Encourage students to use the props to act out a scene from a book you have read.</li> <li>• Discuss where the animals belong (e.g., does the fish belong on top of the water or under the water?).</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.SS.3, PK.A.1</p>
<p><b>Library</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Library Center in <b>Dramatic Play</b>.</li> <li>• Display a variety of informational and literary texts about animals, plants, and habitats (see CKLA Teacher Guide pp. 21-25 for suggested texts).</li> <li>• Display class books about animals and habitats.</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.RL.5, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.A.5</p>	<p><b>Cooking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make “ants on a log” (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 182).</li> <li>• Make “fish in a pond” (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 183).</li> </ul> <p>PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.A.1</p>

<p><b>Computers/Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take virtual field trips to different habitats.</li> <li>Listen to digital books about animals, plants, and places (at <a href="http://library.uniteforliteracy.com/">http://library.uniteforliteracy.com/</a>).</li> <li>See Online Resources for Teachers and Students (CKLA Teacher Guide pp. 25-26).</li> </ul> <p>PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.RL.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5, PK.T.5</p>	<p><b>Outdoors/Playground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go on a nature walk or collect leaves near your school or classroom. Use what you collect for <b>Art</b> activities.</li> <li>Play Lily Pad Red Light/Green Light (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 182).</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.6, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.S.4, PK.S.5</p>
<p><b>Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice writing sound pictures (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 320).</li> <li>Make handmade books about habitats (CKLA Teacher Guide p. 179).</li> <li>Write receipts in the <b>Library Dramatic Play Center</b>. Write students' names on their "library cards."</li> </ul> <p>PK.AL.1, PK.AL.3, PK.PDH.5, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.W.2, PK.SS.3, PK.A.1</p>	<p><b>Music and Movement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice moving like different animals.</li> <li>Listen and move to songs related to animals (e.g., <i>Over in the Meadow</i>, <i>I'm Going on a Bear Hunt</i>, <i>What the Animals Said</i>).</li> </ul> <p>PK.PDH.6, PK.SED.6, PK.SED.7, PK.AC.2, PK.AC.4, PK.L.1, PK.L.5, PK.A.7</p>

Notice the prekindergarten standards addressed through these centers alone! (The CKLA Teacher Guide also identifies standards that are addressed through the module's lessons.)

<b>Domain 1: Approaches to Learning</b>	
PK.AL.1	Actively and confidently engages in play as a means of exploration and learning.
PK.AL.3	Approaches tasks, activities and problems with creativity, imagination and/or willingness to try new experiences or activities.
<b>Domain 2: Physical Development and Health</b>	
PK.PDH.5	Demonstrates eye-hand coordination and dexterity needed to manipulate objects.
PK.PDH.6	Engages in a variety of physical fitness activities.
<b>Domain 3: Social and Emotional Development</b>	
PK.SED.6	Understands and follows routines and rules.
PK.SED.7	Adapts to change.
<b>Domain 4: Communication, Language, and Literacy</b>	
<i>Approaches to Communication</i>	
PK.AC.2	Demonstrates he/she is building background knowledge.
PK.AC.4	Demonstrates his/her ability to express ideas using a variety of methods.
<i>English Language Arts and Literacy</i>	
PK.RL.5	Students interact with a variety of common types of texts.
PK.W.2	With prompting and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating, or writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.
PK.L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
PK.L.5	With guidance and support, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
<b>Domain 5: Cognition and Knowledge of the World</b>	
<i>Mathematics</i>	
PK.CC.3	Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities to 10; connect counting to cardinality.
PK.OAT.2	Duplicate and extend simple patterns using concrete objects.
PK.G.3	Analyze, compare, and sort two- and three-dimensional shapes and objects, in different sizes, using information language to describe their similarities, differences, and other attributes.
<i>Science</i>	
PK.S.2	Tests predictions through exploration and experimentation.
PK.S.4	Observes and describes characteristics of earth and space.
PK.S.5	Observes and describes characteristics of living things.
<i>Social Studies</i>	
PK.SS.3	Demonstrates knowledge of the relationship between people, places, and regions.
<i>The Arts</i>	
PK.A.1	Expresses oneself and represents what he/she knows, thinks, believes and feels through visual arts.
PK.A.5	Participates in a variety of dramatic play activities to represent fantasy and real life experiences.
PK.A.7	Expresses what he/she knows, thinks, feels and believes through dance and creative movement.
<i>Technology</i>	
PK.T.5	Uses the knowledge of technology to increase learning.



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*The Office of Early Learning (OEL) is responsible for a wide range of educational programs and works closely with parents, early care and education agencies, schools and state agencies to coordinate programs and resources with the goal of making New York's early learning system as comprehensive and seamless as possible. The OEL is tasked with implementing over \$750 million per year in State grants for prekindergarten programs with the goal of providing high-quality programs for early learners to all children.*

For more information and helpful resources, please visit our website at:  
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/>

**Staff Addition:**

We welcome  
Gail Volk to the  
OEL team!

Is this resource helpful? While the OEL Newsletter is intended to be a quarterly publication, we hope to more frequently provide support via email, webinar, and on our website.

Our staff welcome feedback and suggestions for newsletter and resource content. Let us know what you might like to see included in future publications by emailing [OEL@nysed.gov](mailto:OEL@nysed.gov).

Please forward this resource to teachers, administrators, directors, families, and anyone else who may find the material useful. They can request to be added to our mailing list.

## March is National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month is a campaign sponsored by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses on developing healthy eating and physical activity habits.



Nutrition is an important topic for people of all ages, across all settings. These links contain resources to support the development of healthy habits:

**Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics -**

<http://www.nationalnutritionmonth.org/nnm/>

About National Nutrition Month, promotional resources, reading lists, and games

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) -**

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/NNM.html>

Resources for children, families, and professionals

**USDA -** <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/physical-activity.html>

Physical activity guidelines, tips, and resources