THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
**Quality Teaching
and Learning**

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND THE HEAD START FRAMEWORK: AN ALIGNMENT REVIEW TOOL

Purpose and Background: This tool is designed to help your program determine how well an early childhood assessment or curriculum aligns with the domains and domain elements identified in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (HSCDELF, revised, Sept. 2011).

The "Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework: Promoting Positive Outcomes in Programs Serving Children 3-5 Years Old" is a revision of the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. *"Head Start children, 3 to 5 years old, are expected to progress in all the areas of child development and early learning outlined by the Framework. Head Start programs also are expected to develop and implement a program that ensures such progress is made."* (p. 1).

The revised Framework reflects Head Start's integrated, comprehensive approach to child development and learning, emphasizing that, *"Given that the Framework addresses all areas of child development and early learning, the requirement to align is meant to ensure Head Start programming is not narrowly focused on certain domains, or that lesser attention is paid to some domains."* (p. 4).

The Framework is intended to guide decisions on all aspects of program development and implementation, including curriculum and assessment. *"The Framework is not a checklist to evaluate a child's development and learning. Rather, the Framework guides the choice of assessment instruments and serves as a way to organize the data collected from those instruments." (p.4).* Similarly, the Framework is not a curriculum describing what and how to teach. Rather, it describes the *"developmental building blocks that are important for a child's school and long-term success."* (p.1).

Suggestions for Use: The Alignment Review Tool does not yield a score. Rather, it is designed to help the team analyze an assessment or curriculum and make informed decisions about their use. This tool can be used in at least two ways: In Level 1 review, the decision-making team will consider how a curriculum or assessment reflects **coverage** and **balance** of the various domains and domain elements in the Head Start Framework. **Coverage** refers to how the curriculum and/or assessment addresses each of the HSCDELF domains and domain elements. **Balance** refers to a relatively even representation of all the domains and domain elements in the curriculum and/or assessment.

LEVEL 1: COVERAGE AND BALANCE

Step 1 – The team identifies the assessment or curriculum to be reviewed and makes it available for review. The team gathers other appropriate resources including the HSCDELF, and other resources on child development.

Step 2 – For each domain:

- Read and discuss the HSCDELF description of the domain.
- Read and discuss the domain elements. Do all team members have a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills included within that domain? If not, use your additional child development resources to understand what is meant by each domain element. The examples given for each domain element in the HSCDELF can help with this discussion. Remember, these are examples and are not meant to be comprehensive.

Step 3 – Review the selected assessment or curriculum. Does your review of all domains answer these questions:

- Coverage: Does this assessment/curriculum cover all or most of the domains?
- Balance: Does this assessment/curriculum provide balanced coverage within and across each of the domains?

LEVEL 2: DEPTH AND DIFFICULTY

The Level 2 review is a deeper analysis and looks at whether the assessment or curriculum provides sufficient **depth** and **difficulty** for the range of skills and developmental levels of the children served. **Depth** is the degree to which the curriculum and/or assessment provides a sequence of developmentally important skills that lay the foundation for later development and learning. **Difficulty** is the degree to which the curriculum and/or assessment identifies skills and expectations that are intellectually challenging for children at developmentally appropriate levels.

In addition to Steps 1-3 for assessing the coverage and balance, review depth and difficulty by completing steps 4 and 5.

Step 4 – Review the selected assessment or curriculum. Within each domain element, consider:

- Does the sequencing of assessment or curriculum items, objectives, or activities make sense? Is it ordered developmentally or in a way that makes instructional sense, i.e., from easy to more difficult?
- Will the sequences help teachers make good decisions about what a child needs to learn?
- Are there enough items, objectives, or activities for your group of children?
- Does the assessment or curriculum cover an appropriate range of developmental and cognitive challenge? Do items, objectives, or activities represent greater complexity or difficulty for developmentally older children?

Step 5 – Does your review of depth and difficulty of all the domains answer these questions:

- Depth – Does this assessment/curriculum provide a sequence of items? Is it a useful sequence? Does it provide enough items?
- Difficulty – Does this assessment/curriculum provide appropriate challenge or complexity?

Name of assessment or curriculum:_____

Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Physical Health Status – The maintenance of healthy and age appropriate physical wellbeing.	
▶ Domain Element: Health Knowledge & Practice – The understanding of healthy and safe habits and practicing healthy habits.	
▶ Domain Element: Gross Motor Skills – The control of large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance.	
▶ Domain Element: Fine Motor Skills – The control of small muscles for such purposes of using utensils, self-care, building and exploring.	

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

Level 2: Depth and Difficulty – does the curriculum or assessment provide for a sequence of increasingly complex skills and are the activities intellectually challenging at a developmentally appropriate level?

KEY: ▲ = Domain ▶ = Domain Element

Name of assessment or curriculum:_____

Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Social Relationships – The healthy relationships and interactions with adults and peers.	
▶ Domain Element: Self Concept & Self Efficacy – The perception that one is capable of successfully making decisions, accomplishing tasks, and meeting goals.	
▶ Domain Element: Self Regulation – The ability to recognize and regulate emotions, attention, impulses, and behavior.	
▶ Domain Element: Emotional and Behavioral Health – A healthy range of emotional expression and learning positive alternatives to aggressive or isolating behaviors.	

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

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4

Name of assessment or curriculum:_____

Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: APPROACHES TO LEARNING	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Initiative & Curiosity – An interest in varied topics and activities, desire to learn, creativeness and independence in learning.	
▶ Domain Element: Persistence and Attentiveness – The ability to begin and finish activities with persistence and attention.	
▶ Domain Element: Cooperation – An interest and engagement in group experiences.	

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Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: LOGIC & REASONING	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Reasoning & Problem Solving – The ability to recognize, understand, and analyze a problem and draw on knowledge or experience to seek solutions to a problem.	
▶ Domain Element: Symbolic Representation – The use of symbols or objects to represent something else.	

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Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Receptive Language – The ability to comprehend or understand language.	
▶ Domain Element:Expressive Language – The ability to use language.	

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

Level 2: Depth and Difficulty – does the curriculum or assessment provide for a sequence of increasingly complex skills and are the activities intellectually challenging at a developmentally appropriate level?

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Name of assessment or curriculum:_____

Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: LITERACY KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Book Appreciation & Knowledge – The interest in books and their characteristics, the ability to understand and get meaning from stories and information from books and other texts.	
▶ Domain Element: Phonological Awareness – An awareness that language can be broken into words, syllables and other smaller pieces of sound.	
▶ Domain Element: Alphabet Knowledge – The names and sounds associated with letters.	
▶ Domain Element: Print Concepts & Conventions – The concepts about print and early decoding (identifying letter-sound relationships).	
▶ Domain Element: Early Writing – The familiarity with writing implements, conventions, and emerging skills to communicate through written representations, symbols and letters.	

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

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Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: MATHEMATICS KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Number Concepts & Quantities – The understanding that numbers represent quantities and have ordinal properties (number words that represent rank order, particular size or position in a list).	
▶ Domain Element: Number Relationships & Operations – The use of numbers to describe relationships and solve problems.	
▶ Domain Element: Geometry & Spatial Sense – The understanding of shapes, their properties, and how objects relate to one another.	
▶ Domain Element: Patterns – The recognition of patterns, sequencing, and critical thinking skills necessary to predict and classify objects in a pattern.	
▶ Domain Element: Measurement & Comparison – The understanding of attributes and relative properties of objects as related to size, capacity, and area.	

Summary/Notes

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Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Scientific Skills & Methods – The skills to observe and collect information and use it to ask questions, predict, explain and draw conclusions.	
▶ Domain Element: Conceptual Knowledge of the Natural and Physical World – The acquisition of concepts and facts related to the natural and physical world and the understanding of naturally-occurring relationships.	

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

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Name of assessment or curriculum:_____

Reviewer(s)_____ Date(s) _____

Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: CREATIVE ARTS EXPRESSION	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Music – The use of voice and instruments to create sounds.	
▶ Domain Element: Creative Movement and Dance – The use of the body to move to music and express oneself.	
▶ Domain Element: Art – The use of a range of media and materials to create drawings, pictures, or other objects.	
▶ Domain Element: Drama – The portrayal of events, characters, or stories through acting and using props and language.	

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Review and analyze the selected assessment or curriculum. For each domain, indicate whether the domain and domain elements are appropriately covered, balanced, deep and difficult (see examples on pages 15 and 16).

△ DOMAIN: CREATIVE ARTS EXPRESSION	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Self, Family & Community – The understanding of one's relationship to the family and community, roles in the family and community, and respect for diversity.	
▶ Domain Element: People and the Environment – The understanding of the relationship between people and the environment in which they live.	
▶ Domain Element: History & Events – The understanding that events happened in the past and how these events relate to one's self, family, and community.	

Summary/Notes

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△ DOMAIN: ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT The English Language Development domain applies only to children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs). These children speak a language other than English in the home.	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Receptive English Language Skills – The ability to comprehend or understand the English language.	
▶ Domain Element: Expressive English Language Skills – The ability to speak or use English.	
▶ Domain Element: Engagement in English Literacy Activities – Understanding and responding to books, storytelling, and songs presented in English.	

Summary/Notes

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SUMMARY PAGE

This assessment or curriculum (circle one) does provide appropriate coverage, balance, depth and difficulty. If the team decision is yes, list examples:

There are areas of concern for this assessment or curriculum in: (list examples in all areas)

Coverage:

Balance:

Depth:

Difficulty:

The team recommends considering other assessment or curriculum or supplemental assessment or curricula to address these concerns. If so, list examples:

(SAMPLE REVIEW OF A HYPOTHETICAL ASSESSMENT)

△ DOMAIN: LITERACY KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	⬤ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
▶ Domain Element: Book Appreciation & Knowledge – The interest in books and their characteristics, the ability to understand and get meaning from stories and information from books and other texts.	Items address talking about pictures and print conventions. Do not address interest or motivation to read or story retell.
▶ Domain Element: Phonological Awareness – An awareness that language can be broken into words, syllables and other smaller pieces of sound.	Good coverage of rhyming and first sound skills. Does not address syllable segmentation.
▶ Domain Element: Alphabet Knowledge – The names and sounds associated with letters.	Good coverage of important skills.
▶ Domain Element: Print Concepts & Conventions – The concepts about print and early decoding (identifying letter-sound relationships).	Limited coverage. Emphasis on recognizing numbers, letters, and words. Does not address understanding of the link between spoken language and print.
▶ Domain Element: Early Writing – The familiarity with writing implements, conventions, and emerging skills to communicate through written representations, symbols and letters.	Limited coverage. Only one item that addresses copying letters.

Summary/Notes

Level 1: Coverage and Balance – does the curriculum or assessment appropriately cover the domain elements and are they evenly balanced?

The assessment provides basic coverage of all HSCDELF domain elements. Alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness and book knowledge are emphasized over book appreciation (interest in books/motivation to read), print concepts and early writing. Some important skills are not addressed e.g, retelling stories, understanding the link between spoken and written language, writing, and syllable segmentation.

Level 2: Depth and Difficulty – does the curriculum or assessment provide for a sequence of increasingly complex skills and are the activities intellectually challenging at a developmentally appropriate level?

Items within domain elements are organized according to skill areas and do not provide a clear sequence in order of difficulty. Skills address age appropriate expectations but are slanted towards younger age levels. There is a lack of more complex and challenging skills in some domain elements (e.g., writing, book appreciation and knowledge).

(SAMPLE REVIEW OF A HYPOTHETICAL ASSESSMENT)

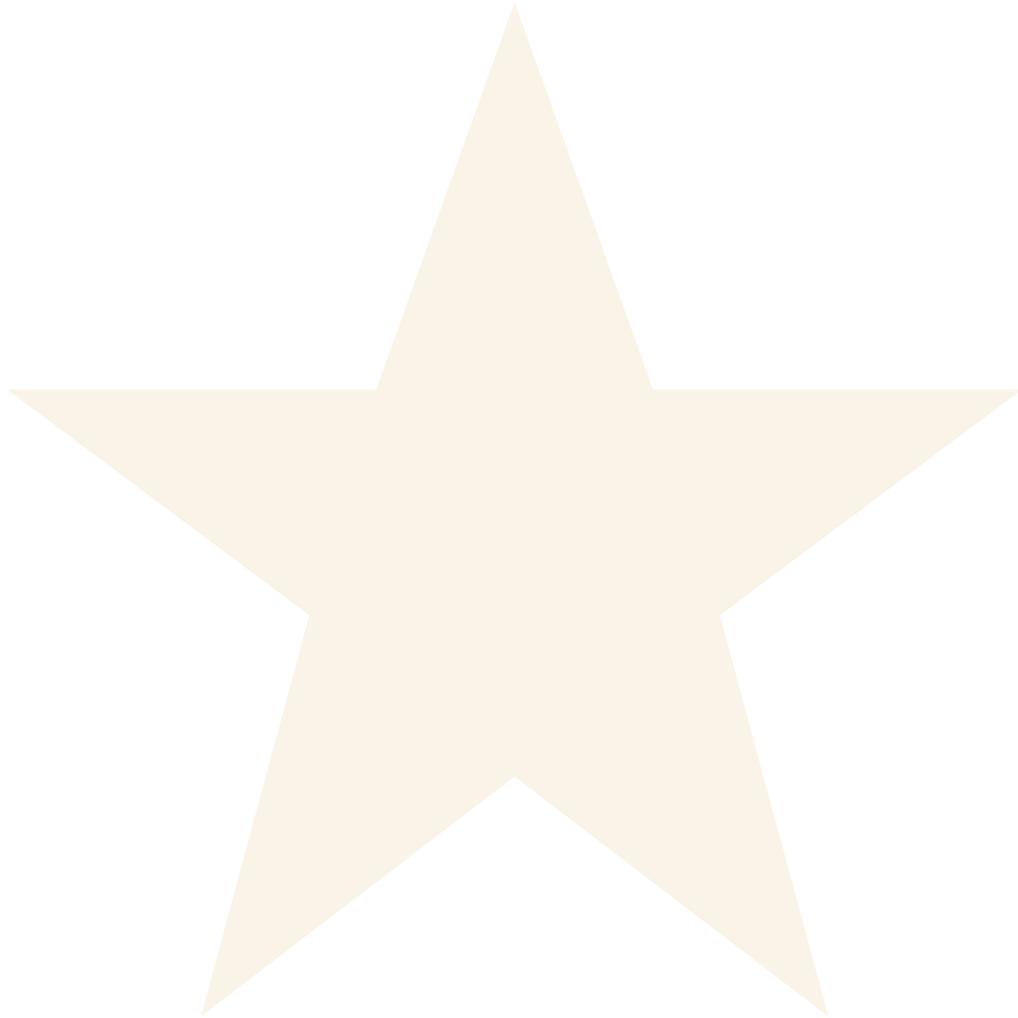| △ DOMAIN: LITERACY KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	ASSESSMENT OR CURRICULUM (circle one)
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Items within domain elements are organized according to skill areas and do not provide a clear sequence in order of difficulty. Skills address age appropriate expectations but are slanted towards younger age levels. There is a lack of more complex and challenging skills in some domain elements (e.g., writing, book appreciation and knowledge).