

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)

Overview

The development of the WMELS was guided by research in the field of early education and supported by content experts from institutions of higher education in the state. The WMELS provide a framework for families, professionals and policy makers to:

- Share a common language and responsibility for the well-being of children from birth to first grade;
- Know and understand developmental expectations of young children;
- Understand the connection of early childhood with K-12 educational experiences and lifelong learning.

The WMELS specify developmental expectations for children birth through entrance to first grade and address all the domains of a child's learning and development including:

- Health and Physical Development;
- Social and Emotional Development;
- Language Development and Communication;
- Approaches to Learning;
- Cognition and General Knowledge.

The developmental domains are highly interrelated. Knowledge and skills developed in one area of development impact the acquisition of knowledge and skills in other areas of development. Each domain is divided into sub-domains, which include developmental expectations, program standards, performance standards, and a developmental continuum, along with samples of children's behavior and samples of adult strategies.

The WMELS are intended to:

- Improve the quality of all early learning environments;
- Guide professional development activities and investments;
- Inform educators and caregivers in their decisions regarding approaches to curriculum development across all early learning environments;
- Guide communities as they determine local benchmarks at the district level. The local benchmarks assist to make decisions regarding curriculum and assessment that will determine instruction, interactions and activities.

The WMELS have been aligned with the Common Core State Standards: http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/ec_oelindex-0 (Scroll down to OEL Initiatives/Priorities and click on last bullet.)

WMELS History

- First edition published in 2003.
- Second edition re-written to include a developmental continuum, samples of children's behavior, samples of adult strategies and updating of resources in 2008.
- Third edition added a revised literacy section and an appendix section titled "Standards in the State of Wisconsin" in 2011.

WMELS State and Regional Steering Committee

Members of the WMELS Steering Committee represent the Office of Early Learning Department of Public Instruction (4K, 5K and Head Start), Department of Children and Families, Supporting Families Together Association, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Wisconsin Technical Colleges and Universities. The committee meets every other month throughout the year to strengthen lines of communication regarding the implementation of WMELS throughout the state of Wisconsin.

WMELS Training and Courses for Credit

More than 90 Approved WMELS Trainers are available to do training throughout the state of Wisconsin. WMELS Approved Trainers include: child care providers, teachers (classroom and higher education), program support personnel, training and technical assistance personnel, and administrators that represent the full-range of services offered to young children birth to first grade. The training is 15-18 hours and is offered over a period of days e.g. two whole days, three part days, five or more parts (2-3 hours) of days or in evenings. Training has been widely offered across the state and is incorporated into YoungStar quality rating evaluation criteria. WMELS Training is offered in both non-credit and for-credit delivery options. Many University, Private and Technical Colleges are utilizing the current WMELS Training Materials in early care and education coursework.

WMELS Communities of Practice

Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Community Collaboration Coaches assist communities as they partner to provide early childhood services. Each of the six regions has a WMELS Community of Practice that meets at least two times per year to support WMELS Approved Trainers within their region. A mentoring system has been established for new candidates who apply to be WMELS Approved Trainers.

WMELS Webpage: <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php>

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