

Pinecone Path: A Curriculum for the Year Before Kindergarten

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Collaborative Classroom is excited to expand our early childhood offerings with the forthcoming publication of *Pinecone Path: A Curriculum for the Year Before Kindergarten*.

Part of our SEEDS of Learning family of resources, the *Pinecone Path* early literacy curriculum builds on the proven success of the nationally recognized and evidence-based SEEDS Professional Learning Framework.

Rooted in the science of reading and aligned with research on early childhood development, *Pinecone Path* makes the most of the year before kindergarten to ensure that children develop the early literacy, executive functioning, and social skills they will need to thrive as they enter elementary school.

Pinecone Path functions on its own as a year-long, comprehensive early literacy curriculum. A flexible solution, the program can also serve as a powerful, easy-to-use literacy supplement for any multi-subject Pre-K or Transitional Kindergarten (TK) curriculum.

Designed for use by educators with a variety of professional backgrounds, *Pinecone Path* is intended for schools and districts offering Pre-K or TK programs, as well as public, private, and home-based preschools serving children in the year before kindergarten.

Key Features of Pinecone Path

Comprehensive early literacy instruction for the year before kindergarten

Flexible, playful, and easy to use with your current Pre-K or TK instruction

Rooted in the science of reading and the research on early childhood development

Built on the rigorously researched SEEDS professional learning framework

Supportive of early childhood educators with a wide range of backgrounds

Seamless instructional alignment with Being a Reader and Being a Writer (K–5)

About Pinecone Path

Pinecone Path: A Curriculum for the Year Before Kindergarten teaches early literacy, executive functioning, and social skills through a combination of playful learning and explicit instruction.



Whole-class lessons, small-group instruction, and play center activities provide a wealth of fun and engaging learning opportunities that cover the essential building blocks of early literacy:

- oral language development and vocabulary
- concepts of print
- phonological awareness
- letter names, letter sounds, and letter formation
- listening and speaking
- comprehension
- writing



Throughout *Pinecone Path*, children develop vital social skills, approaches to learning, and executive functioning skills that will help them thrive in kindergarten by:

- learning and practicing classroom procedures
- building and reflecting on the classroom community
- participating and handling materials responsibly
- practicing curiosity, initiative, persistence, attention regulation, and flexibility
- participating in conversations and guided and self-directed play; making choices; and remembering and following directions in songs with motions, activities, and games



The program fosters students' early literacy and social skills in developmentally appropriate ways through:

- play and games
- movement
- songs and chants
- poetry
- high-quality trade books



Pinecone Path is highly supportive of early childhood educators, providing:

- an engaging, asynchronous onboarding course
- instructional self-checks
- robust supports for discussion and reteaching
- easy-to-use assessments
- convenient digital resources and 24/7 wrap-around implementation support via the online Learning Portal, including CC AI Assistant, our generative AI-powered conversational agent

What's Included

10 Whole-Class Teacher's Manuals organized around themes:

- Unit 1: School and Me
- Unit 2: Family and Friends
- Unit 3: Feelings
- Unit 4: Birds
- Unit 5: Community Helpers
- Unit 6: Plants
- Unit 7: Transportation
- Unit 8: Folktales
- Unit 9: Caring for the Earth
- Unit 10: Our School Year

Small-Group Teacher's Manual with lessons focusing on:

- Letter Names and Letter Sounds
- Writing
- Oral Language Development (Optional)

Implementation Handbook that includes:

- Program Overview
- Instructional Support
- Planning Resources
- Assessment Support
- References



Alphabet, Vocabulary, and Oral Language Cards:

- 1 Set of Alphabet Wall Cards
 - 26 cards with picture mnemonics for the alphabet
- 1 Set of Handheld Alphabet Cards
 - 26 cards with picture mnemonics for the alphabet on one side and articulatory gestures (descriptions of how the mouth, tongue, lips, and vocal cords move to make particular sounds) on the other; designed to go with the small-group Letter Names and Letter Sounds and Writing lessons
- 6 Sets of Student Letter Cards
 - 52 cards in each set, one card for each capital and lowercase letter of the alphabet; designed to go with the small-group Letter Names and Letter Sounds lessons
- 1 Set of Picture Cards
 - 180 cards with vocabulary words and photos on the front and definitions on the back; designed to go with the whole-class Vocabulary lessons
- 1 Set of Oral Language Development Cards
 - 54 cards with vocabulary words and photos on the front; designed to go with the small-group Oral Language Development lessons

Additional Features

- 31 Trade Books
- A stuffed bear named Pinecone to use in selected activities
- Pocket chart
- What Is It? Bag
- 25 wipe-off boards and 25 dry-erase markers
- Access to digital resources via the Collaborative Classroom Learning Portal, including:
 - reproducibles, including take-home letters for families
 - professional learning videos
 - assessments
 - instructional media
 - in-the-moment implementation support from CC AI Assistant

Instruction

Whole-Class Lessons

Pinecone Path whole-class lessons are taught through ten topic-based units. Each unit lasts three weeks and has its own teacher's manual.

Each day of instruction provides three types of 12-minute whole-class lessons:

- Morning Meeting
- Reading
- Vocabulary

Whole-class lessons include teaching tips, multilingual learner and accessibility support, discussion ideas, assessment with instructional support, and instructional self-checks.

MORNING MEETING LESSONS (12 minutes)

Morning Meeting lessons include letter name and letter sound instruction and songs, chants, games, and community-building activities connected to the unit's theme or foundational skills practice.

Starting in Unit 2, Morning Meeting lessons include a Daily Message:

- 1–3 sentences about the day, written in front of students
- Teaches early literacy skills, including letter names and sounds and concepts of print
- Educator and students read the daily messages aloud together

Today we will begin reading about birds. We will read a book called *A Bird is a Bird*. What do you want to know about birds?

READING LESSONS (12 minutes)

The first three Reading lessons in the week (Days 1–3) are repeated read-alouds based on fiction or nonfiction trade books with a focus on developing comprehension skills, listening and speaking skills, and social skills. The lessons include shared writing experiences.

The last two Reading lessons in the week (Days 4–5) are shared reading lessons based on songs and poems. These lessons focus on concepts of print and phonological awareness, as well as listening to, discussing, and saying or singing poems or songs. They often incorporate movement and, in Units 3–10, they provide opportunities for the students to echo and chorally read songs and poems.

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Whole-Class Lessons

READING LESSONS *(continued)*

Repeated Read-Alouds (Days 1–3)	Shared Reading (Days 4–5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> text-to-self connections inferences retelling responding to literature wondering about a topic sharing information learned about topics shared writing experiences predictions fiction and nonfiction trade books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concepts of print phonological awareness movement songs and poems shared reading charts echo and choral reading



VOCABULARY LESSONS *(12 minutes)*

Vocabulary lessons provide opportunities for the students to learn and use new words through games, activities, movement, and whole-class and partner discussion, as well as practice their speaking and listening skills.

Days 1–3	Day 4	Day 5 (Weeks 2 and 3 only)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach two new words per day from the trade books used in Reading lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the week's words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review words from across the unit

Play Centers

Play Centers provide developmentally appropriate, play-based learning experiences connected to the whole-class and small-group lessons. Centers include Art, Blocks, Dramatic Play, Math, Reading, Science & Sensory, and Writing.

Each unit offers activity ideas for each center to engage students in learning while promoting creativity, critical thinking, and social interaction. The activities each include “Strive for 5” conversation ideas that build students’ oral language skills through conversations involving five exchanges between an educator and a student or multiple students.

Each unit includes 3–4 suggested Play Center activities related to the unit’s theme for each of these centers. Here are some examples.

Art	Dramatic Play	Blocks
<p>Add small mirrors to the center and encourage the students to look at their faces and draw self-portraits.</p> <hr/>	<p>Model how to play “school” and encourage the students to play school on their own. For more information, see “Modeling Dramatic Play” in the Instructional Support section of the <i>Implementation Handbook</i>.</p> <hr/>	<p>After teaching the Week 1, Day 1 Reading lesson, encourage the students to work together to build a castle like Lola, Julia, Ali and Tien do in <i>Lola Goes to School</i>.</p> <hr/>
<p>Invite the students to draw different things they see in the classroom.</p> <hr/>	<p>Set up a post office with paper, markers, envelopes, stamps/stickers, and a list of students’ names next to their photographs. Encourage the students to draw pictures for or write letters to their friends. (The students’ writing may be scribbling or letter-like symbols rather than conventional letters or words.)</p>	<p>After taking the students on a tour of your school or center (see “Extending the Learning” in the Week 1 Do Ahead), encourage the students to build a school with blocks.</p> <p>Tape photos of the students on blocks. Encourage the students to use them as students who attend the “block school” they build.</p>

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Play Centers *(continued)*

Reading	Science/Sensory	Writing	Math
<p>Place books about school in the center. Encourage the students to read the books and talk about what they see in the illustrations or photographs.</p> <hr/>	<p>Hide plastic letters in sand or rice and have the students search for them using scoops, plastic tweezers, or small brushes. Encourage the students to circle the letters they find on the copies of “Alphabet Chart” (R).</p> <hr/>	<p>After teaching the Week 1, Day 3 Reading lesson, place the shared writing chart from the lesson and booklets of unlined paper stapled together or loose sheets of unlined paper into the center. Invite the students to refer to the charts and draw pictures of something fun they have done with their family. Ask them about their drawings and write down what they say (take dictation).</p> <hr/>	<p>After teaching the Week 1, Day 4 Reading lesson, add number lines with the numbers 1–10 to the math center. Hide plastic numbers in bins of rice, shredded paper, or sand. Have the students find the numbers and place them on the number lines.</p> <hr/>
<p>Place alphabet books in the center. After the Week 2, Day 4 Reading lesson, encourage the students to talk about what they know about any letters, and say the letter names and letter sounds.</p>	<p>Hide plastic letters that correspond to the students’ first names in sand or rice and have the students search for them. Support students in arranging the letters they find to spell their names.</p>	<p>After you teach the small-group Letter Names and Letter Sounds lessons, add the bags of student letter cards you used to the center. Have the students sort the cards and/or play the matching game.</p>	<p>After teaching the Week 2, Day 3 Vocabulary lesson, place the linking cubes and other non-standard measurement tools, like linking chains, in the math center. Place items for the students to measure in the math center. Invite the students to measure their friends, too.</p>

Small-Group Lessons

Pinecone Path Small-Group Teacher’s Manual contains three sets of 27 lessons:

- Letter Names and Letter Sounds
- Writing
- Oral Language Development

These small-group lessons start once the whole-class lessons in Unit 2 Family and Friends begin. The lessons include teaching tips, multilingual learner and accessibility support, assessment and instructional support, and instructional self-checks.

The chart below explains the instructional focus of each small-group lesson set. The Oral Language Development lessons are specifically designed for students who need additional language support, particularly emergent multilingual learners and those who might benefit from extra practice with foundational oral language skills and common vocabulary words.

Letter Names and Letter Sounds	Writing	Oral Language Development (Optional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning letter names and letter sounds• identifying capital and lowercase letters• understanding the relationship between letters and sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pencil grip• tracing lines, circles, and own name• writing own name• letter names and letter sounds• formation of capital and lowercase letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• everyday vocabulary• speaking in complete sentences

Instructional Support for Whole-Class Lessons

Morning Meeting or Reading (whole-class)	Vocabulary (whole-class)
<p>Weekly class assessments help educators identify target skills to observe during the lessons (for example, skills related to behavior, interactions, and engagement).</p> <p>Instructional support that suggests strategies for supporting students with the target skills are provided.</p> <p>Suggestions for supporting students who need additional or alternate instruction are provided in the class assessments.</p>	<p>Ongoing class assessments helps educators monitor the students as they review the unit’s vocabulary words. Instructional support that suggests strategies for supporting students with the target vocabulary skills are provided.</p>

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Instructional Support for Small-Group Lessons

Letter Names and Letter Sounds	Writing	Oral Language Development
<p>In all odd-numbered lessons starting in Lesson 3 of the Letter Names and Letter Sounds set, group assessments help educators monitor the students as they engage in the lessons.</p> <p>In Letter Names and Letter Sounds, ideas for supporting students who need more practice are included in the group assessments.</p>	<p>In Lessons 3–27 of the Writing set, group assessments help educators monitor the students as they engage in the lessons.</p> <p>In Writing, ideas for supporting students who need more practice are included in the group assessments.</p>	<p>Every third lesson reviews the words taught in the past three lessons and has a group assessment to help educators monitor the students. The group assessments include suggestions for additional practice.</p>

Optional individual assessments track students’ social and academic growth, including comprehension skills and letter names and letter sounds.

Onboarding Course for Educators

The *Pinecone Path* onboarding course is included with purchase of the program. This engaging, asynchronous course provides guidance and recommendations on effectively using the print and digital curriculum materials to implement meaningful whole-class and small-group lessons that nurture literacy and social skills development.



Learn more



With a publication date of June 2026, *Pinecone Path: A Curriculum for the Year Before Kindergarten* will be available for implementation in the 2026–2027 school year.

Complete this form to get in touch with your local Collaborative Classroom manager of educational partnerships: info.collaborativeclassroom.org/connect-with-your-local-rep