

For Children  
Birth to Three

# PARENT GUIDE

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION  
FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS : THE KENTUCKY  
EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS



A Publication of the  
Kentucky Governor's  
Office of Early Childhood

# Building a Strong Foundation for School Success

## The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards: Helping at Home

You are important! Whether you are a parent, guardian or caregiver, your child needs your help and support to be successful. This “Parent Guide” was designed to support you and your child’s success.

What is School Readiness?

In Kentucky, school readiness means that each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success. Families, early care and education providers, school staff and community partners must work together to provide environments and developmental experiences that promote growth and learning to ensure that all children in Kentucky enter school eager and excited to learn.

Kentucky schools will be using a common kindergarten entry screener to determine a child’s readiness for school in the five developmental areas listed below. However, the screener will **not be used** to determine whether a child is eligible to attend kindergarten.



Kentucky recognizes that there are five developmental areas for school readiness:

- Approaches to learning
- Health and physical well-being
- Language and communication development
- Social and emotional development; and
- Cognitive and general knowledge

Why does Kentucky screen for school readiness?

- To inform school districts, parents, and communities about early learning.
- To make informed policy decisions to support early learning experiences for young children.
- To establish local goals for program improvement.
- To begin collecting data for the Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Program Evaluation.

Look in the back of this Guide for more details.

This guide was created based on the Kentucky Early Childhood Core Content Standards. It provides information about the standards, what the standards mean and ways you can help your child develop important skills. Highlighted in this guide is “Approaches to Learning.”

## What is “Approaches to Learning”?

The way a child engages in learning experiences is referred to as their “Approaches to Learning.”

- Every child learns differently.
- Each child’s approach to learning is unique to each child.
- Some children may be reserved and thoughtful when first engaging in learning experiences while other children eagerly join in new activities.

Research identifies Approaches to Learning as one of the most “powerful predictors of later success in school.” This means that young children that develop an interest and joy in learning go on to have later success in school.



Approaches to Learning has three components:

Initiative and Curiosity – How curious is a child about learning? How does a child engage in and initiate learning experiences?

Persistence and Attentiveness – How persistent is a child when engaging in activities? Does a child continue in tasks that are challenging or frustrating?

Cooperation – Does a child play in groups or pairs based on interest?

Examples of Approaches to Learning using the three components:

Jillian looks intently at the top of a “jack in the box” as the handle is turned by her big brother. (Initiative and Curiosity)

Dakota tugs on his mother’s skirt when he wants to be picked up. (Persistence and Attentiveness)

Philip takes turns using cups, bowls and spoons in the sand. (Cooperation)

Throughout this guide, you will see suggestions on how you can recognize and foster your child’s Approaches to Learning in boxes just like this one. Each page includes activities that you can do with your child to encourage them to learn in ways that will keep them interested and engaged.

## Cognitive Standard

Explores the environment to gain information.

**Moving around and exploring helps your child to understand his/her world. It involves learning and problem solving.**



### What does it mean?

- Babies and toddlers want to actively explore their environment through all of their senses.
- Babies and toddlers are curious and like to investigate their surroundings.
- Babies and toddlers learn through play and exploration.
- Babies and toddlers watch and may try to imitate what they see and hear.
- Babies and toddlers develop preferences for people and things.
- Babies and toddlers begin to understand the purpose of objects and materials in their daily environment.





## What are some things you can do with your child?

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for children to explore (covered outlets, gated steps, and dangerous materials locked up).
- Provide children safe and interesting materials with which to play (pots and pans, rattles, shape sorters, blocks). Use materials that vary in texture, color, size, and shape. Use materials that let your child fill, dump and sort (rice/sand/water play).
- Encourage your child to explore – watch and comment as your child tries out new things.
- Watch and learn from your child about their interests. Provide materials in which your child seems to have an interest. For toddlers, check out picture books from the library on topics of interest such as animals, toys and family members.
- Support your child's preference for a special toy (such as a blanket or stuffed animal). Let them talk about their special toy on outings with the family.
- Allow children the opportunity to play and repeat activities (knocking over the blocks or reading the same book several times.)
- Have conversations with your child. Even before he/she can talk, he/she can communicate and learn from your words.
- Talk with your child about the function of objects as you and your child use them during the course of daily routines (cups, plates, cars, etc).
- Play games with your child (imitate sounds, peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake or I spy).
- Limit television. Very young children learn from playing with real objects that they can handle and explore. TV is not recommended for children under 24 months of age.
- For toddlers, provide pretend play materials, like telephones, play kitchens, and cars. Pretend with your child and use make-believe.
- Take your infant or toddler on outings. Talk about the things that you see at the grocery store and walking in the neighborhood.
- Engage in activities that involve a sequence of events (peek-a-boo) to allow your child to anticipate and predict.



### Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity

Providing your child with many toys, floor time, and for infants – tummy time when they are awake – helps your child to be curious about how toys work and about what is in the room they are playing in.

# communication

Birth to Three

## Communication Standards

**Demonstrates communication skills in order to express herself/himself.**

**Listening and observing skills and responds to the communication of others; and interest and engages in early literacy activities.**



**Your child's ability to express herself/himself as well as understand others. It involves speaking, listening, and is the foundation for later reading and writing.**

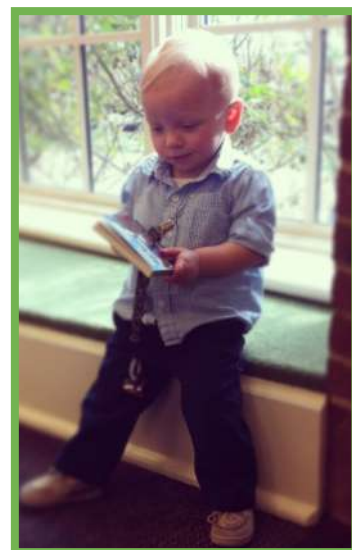
### What does it mean?

- Infants and toddlers learn about talking and communicating by interacting with their families and the other people who take care of them. They learn from playing games (like peek-a-boo) with others and "talking" with them even before they are able to speak.
- Infants and toddlers typically respond to language through making sounds (cooing and babbling) and eye contact. They express themselves in many ways, by using sounds, gestures, movement, and words.
- Infants and toddlers learn from listening and often understand much more than they can express.
- Toddlers begin to use simple gestures and then words to express themselves (such as bye-bye and mama). Eventually, they begin to use phrases to express their wants and needs.



## What are some things you can do with your child?

- Talk to your child throughout the day. Talk about the things that you see everyday. Babies really like to listen to people when they use high voices and short sentences.
- Respond to your child's attempts to communicate with you. Have conversations with your toddler about their day. Expand on your toddler's words by describing objects ("Let's play with the blue car") or events ("We are going for a walk in the neighborhood").
- Be patient and listen to your child as he/she "talks" to you – whether that be through sounds, gestures, or words. Give them time to let you know how they are feeling or what they need.
- Make eye contact with your child as you are talking with them so that they know that they are special and you are interested in talking with them.
- Use single words to label and describe objects.
- Avoid baby talk. Limit using words that are stated incorrectly (ba-ba for bottle or wa-wa for water). This can be confusing for children when they are learning new words.
- Read your child's cues. Talk when he/she is ready to listen and provide quiet time and time to rest when needed.
- Read to your child. Allow babies and toddlers to interact with books in a variety of ways. Babies may like to chew on books so provide safe, soft books like bathtub books. For toddlers, provide more durable board books with lots of pictures and few words.
- Cuddle your baby or toddler while you are reading with him/her.
- Talk about the stories that you read. Point to the pictures and describe them. For toddlers, ask them questions about the pictures or story.
- Sings songs with your child. Most children love music with interesting words and repetition, like "Wheels -on-the-Bus."
- Repeat and expand on the words your child uses. Toddlers often use one word to represent an idea ("Ball" for "I want the ball"). You can add to their words by stating a sentence such as "Yes, you want the blue ball."
- Use gestures (waving hand for bye-bye) accompanied by words when communicating with your child.
- When your child is able, provide him/her the opportunity to scribble. Use large crayons and plain paper. Talk about him/her work and display it in your home.



### Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

When you respond to your infant's eye contact, cry or babbling, you are gaining the trust and attentiveness of your infant. When you have a "conversation" with your toddler, you are letting him/her know that they are important. The longer these "conversations" are, the more attentive your child becomes.

# creative expression

Birth to Three

## Creative Expression Standard

**Demonstrates interest and participates in various forms of creative expression.**

**Your child's interest, enjoyment, and participation in musical and artistic activities is important to building their language, in making decisions, and in communicating with others.**



### What does it mean?

- Babies and toddlers enjoy the natural beauty around them.
- Toddlers enjoy creating their own art using crayons, chalk and other materials.
- Babies and toddlers enjoy listening and participating in musical activities, such as singing songs and dancing.
- Toddlers learn from pretending and “play acting” their experiences.
- Participating in art activities provides children an opportunity to be creative and develop important thinking skills.
- Very young children show preferences for music and respond to music with their body.
- Children express themselves using their bodies (stomping their feet for "no" or "flying" like an airplane with their arms).





## What are some things you can do with your child?

- Talk about the natural beauty in your environment, such as flowers and trees.
- Provide your child with opportunities to use art materials – like large crayons, markers, plain paper, glue and sidewalk chalk. Talk about your child's creations and praise his/her work.
- Expose your child to a variety of different kinds of blocks, soft blocks for infants and wooden blocks for older toddlers. Encourage your child to build and create things.
- Draw your child's attention to art. Point out pictures in children's books. Talk about and describe the pictures.
- Play music for your child. Use more than children's music; expose them to jazz, country and classical.
- Sing songs throughout the day. Repeat familiar songs that your child particularly likes. Sing songs with movements ("Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes"). Dance and sing with your child playfully. Do not worry if you do not know words – make them up and your child will sing along.
- Provide your child with opportunities to play with musical instruments. Make your own instruments (an old coffee can as a drum), these are just as interesting as toys you can buy in the store.
- Hold your baby or toddler in your arms and move with your child to music. Gently bounce your child in time to the rhythm. Babies love being held and moving along with you.
- Dance to music. You can dance with your infant and also teach fun dances to your toddler (such as the Hokey-Pokey).
- For toddlers, play pretend. Ask your child to play the mommy or daddy while you play the child.
- Provide pretend play toys such as telephones, dolls and hats.
- Give your toddler opportunities to create and build things including crayons and paper, blocks, and paint.



### Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity

When your infant or toddler uses paint or markers on plain paper and you comment on how the colors changed when they overlapped, your child will try to make that happen again. They will be curious to see if they can make the color change again!

# physical/motor development

Birth to Three

## Physical/Motor Development Standard

Demonstrates motor skills in daily activities and adaptive/self care routines.



Your child's body uses large muscles to walk and run. Your child uses small muscles when they draw with crayons or markers and cut paper with scissors or tear the paper with their hands.



## What does it mean?

- Babies and toddlers grow steadily in height, weight, muscle strength and coordination, and head size.
- Babies and toddlers eagerly explore their surroundings using the large muscles in their body.
- Babies and toddlers gradually develop strength and coordination in the small muscles of their hands and fingers to grasp and handle objects.
- Babies and toddlers gain more and more ability to use their eyes, hands, and fingers together to reach out and take hold of objects they want.
- From about three months of age, babies put everything in their mouths. They are using hand-eye coordination as well as exploring with their other senses.

## What are some things you can do with your child?

- Feed your baby or toddler nutritious liquid or solid food for His/her age so their body will grow strong and healthy. Breastfeed if possible for the first four to 12 months.
- Check with your health care professional for advice on the right kinds of foods to give your child at various ages. Avoid foods with too much fat and sugars.
- To ensure your baby or toddler's good health, give him/her plenty of water to drink throughout the day. Avoid sugary drinks and sodas.
- Let your toddler feed themselves with their hands and then with a spoon. Gradually they will learn to be less messy. Make clean-up easier with newspaper or plastic under their chair.
- Take your baby or toddler for regular medical check-ups and immunizations to promote healthy development and prevent illness.
- Provide a safe, clean, flat floor space for your child to freely squirm, roll over, crawl, and walk.
- Use safety gates, electrical outlet plugs, and pads on sharp edges of furniture to prevent injuries.
- Provide a few simple toys for gross motor play, such as lightweight balls and push-pull toys.
- Compliment your child on the skills they are learning. They will want to do even more when they see your smile and hear your approving words.
- Make sure your baby or toddler has interesting playthings to handle. Clean, safe household objects such as plastic sets of measuring cups, spoons, and mixing bowls work as well as more expensive toys.
- Be patient when your baby playfully grabs your hair, your eyeglasses, or earrings. Your child is trying out their new ability to grasp what they see with their small hand and finger muscles. Take off your personal items that might attract their curiosity. This stage will pass!
- Give your toddler playthings that help their small muscle coordination such as shape-sorting toys, child books with stiff cardboard pages, wooden puzzles with knobs, large crayons and paper for drawing, and plastic or wooden blocks to stack.
- Always be on the lookout to remove small items that your child could pick up, put in his/her mouth, and cause choking. If an object fits inside a toilet paper tube, it is too small for your baby or toddler under the age of three years to have. Examples of dangerous food items are whole grapes, nuts, uncooked vegetable pieces, and whole hot dogs.
- Let your child feed their self, even though he may be messy at first. Coordination between your child's hand and the spoon, their eyes, and the dish improves with practice.
- Give your toddler simple clothing with easy fasteners that he/she can practice taking off and putting on.



## Approaches to Learning: Cooperation

When your child helps put their own clothes on, he/she is not just cooperating with you but also using their large and small muscles to put on the clothes and button, zip, or snap.

# Social/Emotional

Birth to Three

## Social/Emotional Standard

**Demonstrates trust and engages in social relationships; and sense of self.**

**Your child's feelings about themselves, as well as developing relationships with others will be very helpful in all other areas of his/her development.**



### What does it mean?



- Infants recognize and prefer the adults in their life that care for them the most.
- Infants may become upset when unfamiliar people approach them.
- Infants and toddlers want to be with their primary caregivers and often go to them when they need emotional support.
- Infants and toddlers develop relationships with other adults and children. They enjoy interacting and playing with them.
- Infants and toddlers experience a wide array of feelings and emotions. Infants often express these through facial expressions and body movements. Toddlers may use words.
- Young children learn ways to calm themselves. Infants may use a pacifier while toddlers may have a special stuffed animal.
- Toddlers recognize their own accomplishments. For example, they may clap when they go to the potty by themselves.
- Toddlers begin to understand rules and will follow simple ones most of the time.





## What are some things you can do with your child?

- Respond to your infant's cries and soothe them. Do not be afraid of spoiling infants, they need your attention.
- Calm your child if they become upset by an unfamiliar person. Use soft tones and reassure him/her that everything is okay.
- Encourage your toddler to try new things. Let your child know that you will be there if he/she needs you.
- Provide your child with opportunities to interact with other children and assist them in doing so. Be sure to provide guidance (gentle hands) and adequate supervision for these play times.
- Be sure that any type of out-of-home child care experience is of high quality.
- Ask your infant or toddler questions about themselves ("Where's your nose?") and encourage them to respond.
- Encourage your child to express feelings. Provide your child with the words to label her emotions "You are mad!"
- Support your child's efforts to calm down. Provide special stuffed animals or toys when you are leaving to help keep them calm.
- Acknowledge your child's accomplishments ("Wow-look at that tower!") and celebrate the successes.
- Provide simple, straightforward rules for your toddler to keep them safe (Feet on the floor). Too many rules can be confusing and frustrating to a young child.
- Give toddlers simple choices ("Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue one?").

### Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

Help your child continue to build relationships with others by responding to their points, eye gazes, cries, and words. Your child's persistence in communicating builds his/her relationship with those important people in their life. This is the basis for all other learning as your child grows older.



This Parent Guide is developed using the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.

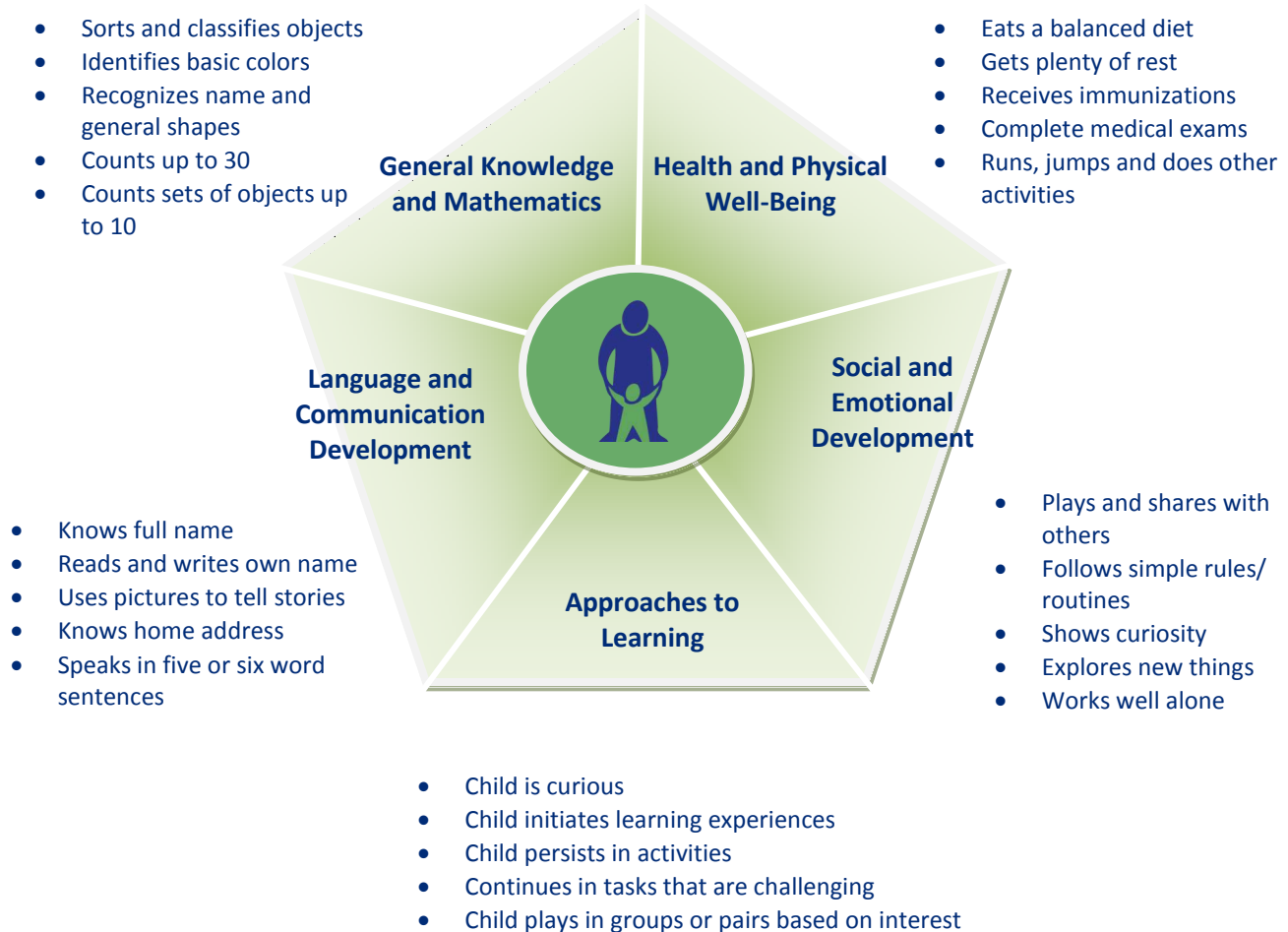
The standards are designed to help educators prepare your child for kindergarten. This parent guide enables you to prepare your child for kindergarten and ensure they are Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn and Ready to Succeed!

**In Kentucky School Readiness means that a child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success.**

Families, early care and education providers, school staff and community partners must work together to provide environments and developmental experiences that promote growth and learning to ensure that all children in Kentucky enter school eager and excited to learn.

### School Readiness Domains

These are some of the skills that are helpful for children to know before entering kindergarten. Kentucky recognizes that children develop and learn things at different rates and times. These are recommended skills.



In 2003, Kentucky released the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards. These standards were developed to help early childhood programs across the state understand appropriate expectations for young children from birth to age five. Using the standards as a guide, programs can improve the quality of their services by providing children with appropriate experiences that support their overall growth and development.

The development of the Early Childhood Standards led to the creation of this document that was originally submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education by a subgroup of the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards Workgroup. This Parent Guide is designed to support families in understanding and using the document, *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards* (Summer, 2003).

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A complete and detailed list of the early childhood standards can be found at <http://kidsnow.ky.gov>

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# KENTUCKY GOVERNOR'S OFFICE of EARLY CHILDHOOD



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