

Building a Strong Foundation for School Success

The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards

Parent Guide for Children Birth to Three



This document 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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The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards: Helping at Home

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.

Parents and other family members play an important role in supporting their child's growth and development. When a child is cared for by someone outside the home, like in a child care or preschool program, it is also important that family members and the person(s) caring for the child share information about the child on a regular basis. Sharing ideas about what your child needs, how the day or evening went, and exciting events in your child's life can help both you and your child's caregiver provide the best care for your child.

The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards can provide a method for helping you and your child's caregiver talk about your child. This document can assist you in understanding the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and how you can support your child's growth and development in partnership with your child's caregiver. This brochure provides information about the child standards, what the standards mean, and examples of some ways you can help your child develop important skills.

There are several ways you can use this document. As a family, you can use the information to:

- Help you understand how your child is growing and learning.
- Help you plan special activities for your child that can assist in growth and learning.
- Think about your typical day and how you can use your family routines to support your child's growth and development.

With your child's caregiver, you can use this document to help you:

- Talk with your child's caregiver about the skills they are working on with your child.
- Share ideas about how you can work together to help your child develop new skills.
- Develop learning goals and plans for your child.
- Make sure that all areas of your child's development are being addressed.

c o g n i t i v e

Standard –
Explores the environment and retains information.

**Your child's ability 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?

- 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, shape, etc. Use materials that let your child fill, dump and sort (rice/sand/water play).
- Encourage your child to explore – watch and comment as she tries out new things.
- Watch and learn from your child about their interests. Provide materials in which she seems to have an interest. For toddlers, check out picture books from the library on topics of interest – animals, toys and family members.
- Support your child's preference for a special toy (such as a blanket or stuffed animal). Let her talk about her special toy on outings with the family.
- Allow children the opportunity to play and repeat activities (knocking over the blocks, etc.).
- Have conversations with your child. Even before she can talk, she can communicate and learn from your words.
- Talk with your child(ren) about the function of objects as you and your child(ren) use them during the course of daily routines (cups, plates, cars, etc.).
- Play games with your child (imitate sounds, peek-a-boo, etc.).
- 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.

c o m m u n i c a t i o n

Standards –
Demonstrates

- observation and listening skill and responds to the communication of others;
- communication skills in order to express herself/himself; 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 serves as 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?

- 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 toddlers about their day. Expand on toddlers' 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 "talks" to you – whether that be through sounds, gestures, or words. Give him time to let you know how he is feeling or what he needs.
- Make eye contact with your child as you are talking with him so that he knows that he is special and you are interested in talking with him.
- 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 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 them.
- 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 "Yes, you want the blue ball."
- Use gestures (waving hand for bye-bye) accompanied by words when communicating with your child.
- After 12 months or so (after your child stops putting most things in his mouth), provide him the opportunity to scribble. Use large crayons and plain paper. Talk about his work and display it in your home.

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.

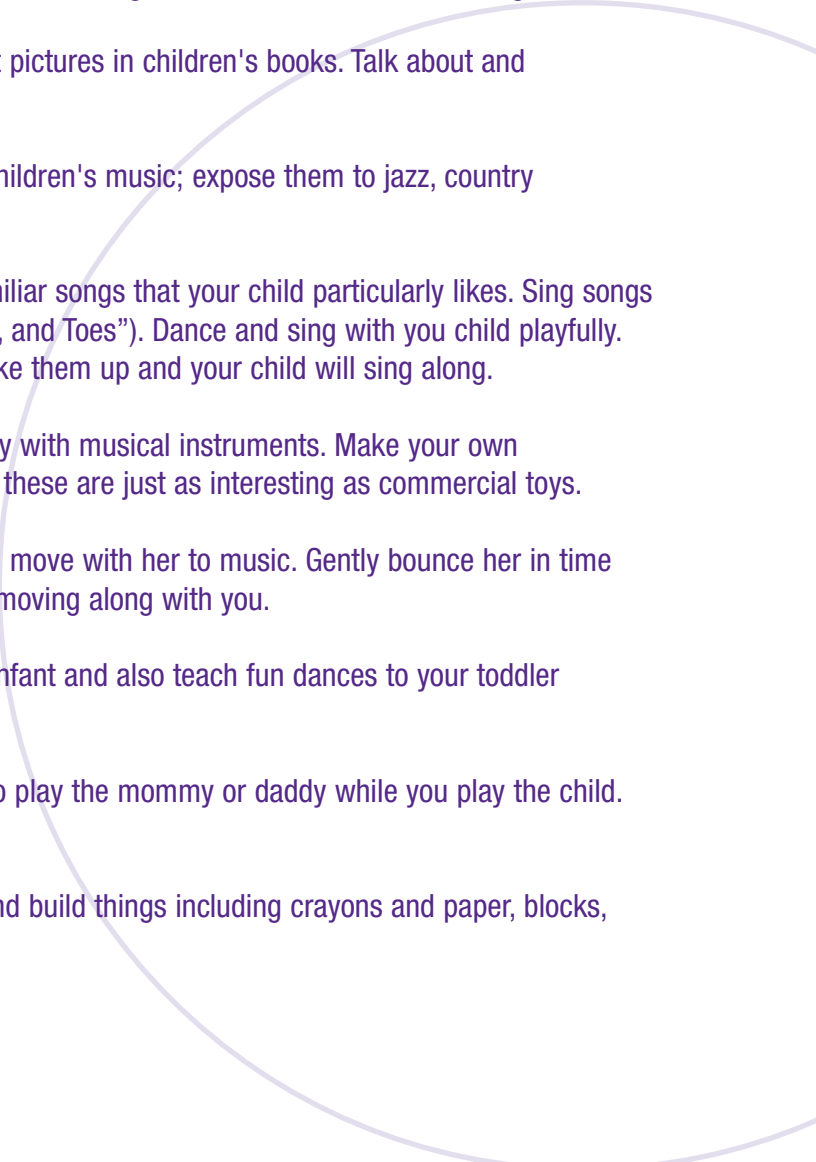
What does it mean?

- 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?

- Talk about the natural beauty in your environment, such as flowers and trees.
 - As toddlers stop putting objects into their mouths, provide them with opportunities to interact with art materials – like crayons and sidewalk chalk. Talk about their creations and praise their work.
 - Expose your child to a variety of different kinds of blocks, soft blocks for infants and duplo blocks and wooden blocks for older toddlers. Encourage them 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 you child playfully. Don't worry if you don't 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 commercial toys.
 - Hold your baby or toddler in your arms and move with her to music. Gently bounce her 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.
 - Give your toddler opportunities to create and build things including crayons and paper, blocks, and paint.
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physical/motor development

Standard –

Demonstrates fine and gross motor skills and body awareness.

Your child's ability to move her or his body. It includes moving large muscles to walk and run as well as gaining control of small muscle movements, such as scribbling and cutting.

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 to nearly a year of age, babies put everything in their mouths. They are using eye-hand coordination as well as exploring with their other senses.



What are some things you can do?

- Feed your baby or toddler nutritious liquid or solid food for his age so his 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 plenty of water to drink throughout the day. Avoid sugary drinks and sodas.
- Let your toddler feed himself with his hands and then with a spoon. Gradually he will learn to be less messy. Make clean-up easier with newspaper or plastic under his 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 he is learning. He will want to do even more when he sees your smile and hears 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. He is trying out his new ability to grasp what he sees with his small hand and finger muscles. Take off your personal items that might attract his curiosity. This stage will pass!
- Give your toddler playthings that help his 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 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 himself, even though he may be messy at first. Coordination between his hand and spoon, his eyes, and the dish improves with practice.
- Give your toddler simple clothing with easy fasteners that he can practice taking off and putting on.

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.

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?

- Respond to your infant's cries and soothe them. Do not be afraid of spoiling infants, they need your attention.
- Calm your child if she becomes upset by an unfamiliar person. Use soft tones and reassure her that everything is okay.
- Encourage your toddler to try new things. Let her know that you will be there if 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 her with the words to label her emotions "You are mad!"
- Support your child's efforts to calm herself. Provide special stuffed animals or toys when you are leaving to help calm her.
- Acknowledge your child's accomplishments "Wow-look at that tower!" and celebrate the successes.
- Provide simple, straightforward rules for your toddler to keep her 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?").



Important People in my Child's Life

Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Notes: _____



**If you have concerns about your child's development,
contact First Steps at (800) 442-0087 or TTY: (502) 564-5777.**

