



Approaches to Learning

School readiness includes a variety of skills children display before kindergarten to help them get off to a great start in school. Skills in the General Knowledge and Math domain, like counting or naming colors, are easy to spot. However, other indicators, like Approaches to Learning, are not as easy to check mark. This School Readiness domain includes soft skills like the ability to finish a task and having a curiosity to learn. Each child's approach to learning is unique. Some children are reserved when trying new things while others are eager to try new experiences.

3 Components of Approaches to Learning:

Initiative and curiosity - Initiates learning experiences and is curious.

Persistence and attentiveness- Finishes tasks that are challenging and has the ability to focus and listen.

Cooperation – Plays in groups or pairs based on interest. Can work together to accomplish a goal.



The way a child “learns how to learn” is a powerful predictor of later success in school. As a caregiver, you can nurture a love for learning at an early age. Playing with your child is one of the best ways to spark learning. Your encouraging words help motivate your child to continue to explore. To be an engaged play partner, take an interest in the activity, ask questions and make comments about what you see your child doing. Let your child direct the play. This helps him or her take initiative and practice creativity. Try not to rush activities. Children need more time to get engaged and involved in an activity. If you have to end the activity to move on to something else, give your child a warning first to help avoid tantrums.

In this issue, we will offer some ideas of how you can help develop your child's Approaches to Learning skills. For more age-specific ideas, download a Parent Guide or request your free hard copy at <http://kidsnow.ky.gov>. Based on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, this guide offers practical ways families can encourage learning at home. It's also available in Spanish.

Early learning is fostered by engaged adults through play.

Persistence and Attentiveness

Children who read more, know more. That's why reading from birth is encouraged. Find a way to make story time a part of your child's daily routine. Infants and toddlers have short attention spans but as they grow, you'll notice your child can focus on the story for longer periods of time.

Tasks like learning how to button or zip clothes can be frustrating for little hands at first. They require coordination and fine motor skills. Let your preschooler help with the dressing routine to practice. In kindergarten, children go to the restroom alone and play outside. Both require the skills of dressing and undressing.

Winter idea: Building a snowman outside is a great way to practice persistence and attentiveness. First, have your child help you zip or button his or her jacket before going outdoors. Next, let your child choose how to decorate a snowman and offer to help. Building a snowman may take some time and patience but your child will feel proud to finish the task.



Initiative and Curiosity

The arts are a natural way to develop your child's curiosity and work on his or her attention span. Try activities like pretend play (dress up or playing with props), acting out stories, drawing or making a collage.

Math and science are great ways to develop curiosity in children. Making comparisons, predictions and conducting experiments are fun ways to engage your child in learning. For example, try asking your preschooler how many hops it will take to get to the kitchen or whether certain objects will sink or float in the bath.

Exploration can be messy. Let children dig in the dirt, play in the rain, and feed themselves. Activities like nature walks create opportunities for children to ask questions. Providing items like magnets or magnifying glasses help children learn how things work and see the world from a different view.

Winter idea: Go outside and scoop some snow into 3 cups. Put one cup in the kitchen, one in the garage and one in the fridge. Ask your child to guess which one will melt the fastest. Monitor the cups together to see if your predictions were right.



Cooperation

Learning how to play well with others is an important skill. Cooperation and sharing may not come naturally to young children but these skills can be developed with practice. Having your child help at home with chores like sorting the laundry or putting away toys teaches how to work together toward a common goal. Provide your child opportunities to play with other children. Parks, libraries, or United Way Born Learning® Academies are a few places your child can interact with other children outside of early childhood programs.

Winter idea: Baking together is a fun and memorable activity children enjoy. It's also a great way to introduce math concepts like measuring or identifying shapes.