

For Children
Three and Four

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 3rd 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.

arts & humanities

Three and Four



Arts and Humanities Standard: Participates and shows interest in a variety of visual arts, dance, music and drama experiences.

Your child's experiences with visual arts, music, dance and drama will enhance their problem solving skills, encourage relationships with others and extend their attention span with activities they enjoy.



What does it mean?

- Opportunity to engage in many types of creative art processes.
- Developing skills in creating various types of art, dance, music and drama (theater, dramatic play, puppets).
- Opportunities to participate in the creative art process through many activities that involve art (painting, drawing), music, dance and drama.



What are some things you can do with your child?

- Provide many different types of art opportunities for your child, including painting, play-doh and drawing. Provide your child with a variety of art materials (markers, paint, glue, blank paper, etc.) and space to engage in “messy art.”
- Comment on and display your child’s art. Be sure to let your child know how special these creations are.
- Expose your child to art created by others – take your child to museums and talk about the pictures, look at picture art books together and talk about them.
- Offer your child experiences with a wide variety of music, including jazz, country and classical.
- Sing along and dance with your child. Encourage your child to describe the music.
- Sings songs with movements together, such as “I’m a Little Teacup” or “Itsy-Bitsy Spider.”
- Attend different types of dance performances with your child and talk about these experiences.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with musical instruments.
- Provide props for your child’s pretend play such as dress up clothes or a play kitchen set.
- Pretend with your child and play different roles with them.
- Encourage your child to put on plays, puppet shows, and other types of performances for you and your family.
- Use different voice inflections as you read with your child. Help them act out the characters after a story is finished.

Approaches to Learning: Initiative & Curiosity

Encourage your child to explore different ways to make a collage (a collage is art work made of various materials) using paper scraps, ribbon, yarn, glue, tape and any other items you find lying around. This allows your child to take initiative in their planning and follow through with their artistic idea.

english/language arts

Three and Four

English/Language Arts Standard 1: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the communication process.

Your child's communication skills include the ability to express himself/herself, as well as understand others.

What does it mean?

- Ability to use gestures or symbols, such as pictures, to communicate with others.
- Ability to talk with others including expressing feelings and asking questions.
- Use of simple sentences to express themselves.
- Learning more and more words to describe and understand the world around them.



English/Language Arts Standard 2: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the listening and observing process.

Your child's communication skills include the ability to listen to others and learn by observing.

What does it mean?

- Ability to listen and understand the speech of others.
- Ability to follow simple directions.
- Ability to watch, listen and understand what is being said.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Encourage your child to draw. Ask your child to tell you about their picture.
- Respond to your child's gestures or movements.
- Have conversations with your child throughout the day. Be sure to listen and respond to your child's statements and questions. Introduce new words when appropriate.
- Patiently answer your child's questions even if you have answered them many times before.
- Ask your child about their feelings. Provide them words if they do not have the vocabulary needed to express their emotions. In addition to words like "happy" and "sad", use words like "frustrated", "relieved", and "angry."
- Ask your child questions about their environment ("Why do you think that happened?") or ("What do you think will happen next?"). These types of questions provide an opportunity for your child to add new thoughts and to lengthen conversations. Questions such as these do not have just one right answer so your child can really explore their own ideas.
- Model correct grammar when you talk with your child. Although your child will make grammatical errors, you do not need to correct them directly, but rather model the appropriate grammar.

Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

Responding to your child's gestures allows your child to be persistent in their communicating of their wants and needs with you.

What are some things you can do with your child?

- Have conversations with your child. Be sure to ask what, when, where, why and how questions.
- Ask your child questions about what they see around them. This includes asking questions while in the grocery store, standing in a backyard or riding the bus.
- Provide new experiences for your child to observe and learn new words, like taking a trip to the airport or to the children's museum.
- Let your child help with simple chores. Your child can help put their toys in a basket, put their shoes in the closet and help put the towels in the cabinet.
- Talk to your child as you work around the house. "I am going to put the clothes in the washing machine. Can you help me put them in?"

Approaches to Learning: Cooperation

When your child helps with work around the house, such as gathering dirty laundry and loading the washing machine, and you do it together, you are teaching cooperation skills needed when working towards a common goal.

english/language

Three and Four

English/Language Arts Standard 3: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Your child's increasing skill and interest in books, letters and sounds will help him/her become a better reader in elementary school.

What does it mean?

- Enjoys and participates in storybook reading.
- Beginning to understand the basic concepts of pre-reading including learning that reading is left to right on the page, reading is from the top to bottom of a page, reading a book goes from the front to the back of a book and that words have meaning.
- Know about and able to identify some letters of the alphabet, especially those letters in his/her name.
- Pays attention to how words sound, including rhyming and playing with words.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Read to your child every day. Make reading part of your bedtime routine. Be sure to cuddle with your child and make reading together enjoyable for both of you.
- While reading to your child, ask your child questions about the story, the pictures, and what he/she thinks will happen next. Talk about the events in the story. If there are people, places or events in the story that relate to your everyday experiences, talk about these connections. For example, when reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”, talk about the story as well as those times that you have seen caterpillars outside or have eaten similar foods.
- Provide your child with a wide variety of books. Take them to the library and let him/her choose different types of books and stories.
- Use books-on-tape/CDs as a way to read stories in a different way. Typically, you can check these out from the library. Help your child to learn to use the book and tape/CD, and follow the instructions.
- Encourage your child to read to you. Ask your child to look at the pictures and tell you the story.
- After you have read a story, act it out with your child with each of you playing different roles. Talk about the events in the story with your child and do art activities together that illustrate events in the story.
- Read yourself. Children are more likely to read if they see their family members and caregivers reading the newspaper, magazines and books.
- Talk to your child about the letters of the alphabet but make it fun! Use alphabet books, puzzles or just the letters in your child’s name. Talk about the letters that you see in your environment – on signs, books and notes that you write.
- Have fun rhyming with your child. Sing rhyming songs and read rhyming books together.

Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

Include reading a story as part of your child’s bedtime routine. Even if you do not finish the story in one sitting, reading a little more each day helps your child to be more attentive in listening and talking about the book.

english/language arts

Three and Four

English/Language Arts Standard 4: Demonstrates competence in the beginning skills and strategies of the writing process.

Your child is using crayons and other writing utensils with increasing skill.

What does it mean?

- The understanding that writing is an important part of communication. Letters and words have meaning and can be used to let other people know things.
- Early abilities to write begin with scribbles and eventually leads to the ability to write letters and words.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Encourage your child to write. Provide many different types of writing supplies to make writing interesting, such as different types of paper, markers, pencils and crayons. Do not worry if your child is not writing all the letters right yet. Those scribbles are good practice for all of the writing he/she will be doing later on in school.
- Ask your child to tell you about their writing. Often times children will tell you their intention and then you can write their words next to their writing.
- Give your child something to write about. Making a birthday card for Grandmother or writing a note for the teacher are meaningful experiences.
- Encourage and praise your child for their writing efforts. Be sure to display his/her work.
- Comment on the writing and print that you see in your home on cereal boxes, recipes and on the computer. Point out and read this print to your child as you are going throughout your day.
- Encourage your child to write his/her name. Help with the spelling as needed, and you can write it out as well.

Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity

When your child “writes” their thoughts on paper and then tells you their “story,” he/she is taking initiative.

health/education

Three and Four



Health and Education Standard: Demonstrates health/mental wellness in individual and cooperative social environments.

Your child is learning about self-care routines, such as hand washing. It also includes your child's social skills, such as getting along with others and playing together.

What does it mean?

- Ability to care for some of their own needs, such as hand washing and eating healthy foods.
- Developing relationships with other children, including the ability to play together and to work together in a group.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Assist your child (if needed) in meeting his/her basic health needs like tooth brushing and hand washing.
- Provide opportunities for your child to make healthy choices. (“Would you like apples or peaches with your lunch today?”)
- Plan things together with your child. Talk about how you will spend your day and what is going to happen next. Plan trips together, such as to the library or to church.
- Provide your child with opportunities to play with other children. Be sure to supervise these play experiences and help children resolve their own conflicts that may come up. Help children use words to solve their problems rather than hitting or pushing.
- Talk to your child about their friends. Provide opportunities for your child to spend time with his/her selected friends.
- Model cooperation for your child and talk about how you help your friends and family.
- Encourage your child to be helpful and assist others. For example, picking up their toys when playing at a friend’s house or helping to do the laundry at home are ways children show cooperation.

Approaches to Learning: Cooperation

When children work together and complete a task, such as picking up toys or helping with the laundry, they are showing cooperation.

mathematics

Three and Four

Mathematics Standard: Demonstrates general skills and uses concepts of mathematics.

Your child is growing in their understanding of numbers, shapes and patterns in their daily environment. This will help them with math skills needed in elementary school.

What does it mean?

- Understanding numbers and how they can be used for counting.
- Understanding shapes and how things are organized in space.
- Making comparisons and recognizing patterns and the very beginning understanding of measurement.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Count with your child during daily activities. Count the number of towels to be folded or the number of cookies you need for your friends.
- Have your child help with activities at home like setting the table.
- While playing with your child, provide opportunities for him/her to make comparisons. For example, ask your child who has the most paper or who has the least amount of juice.
- Point out numbers in your environment and talk about how they are used. This includes speed limit signs, clocks, and prices on a menu or on items in the grocery store.
- Talk about shapes with your child. Concentrate on shapes that you see in your home (the door is a rectangle and the window is a square). Shape books can also be fun!
- While talking with your child, use words that deal with spatial relationships like “under”, and “over” as well as words that deal with time like days of the week, yesterday, or tomorrow.
- Play matching games with your child. Games like “Memory” help your child to build his/her matching skills.
- Encourage your child to describe objects and sort them. For example, sorting pennies and nickels into different piles or sorting the blue and red cars into different play garages.
- Provide your child with opportunities to explore measuring - using measuring cups and scales can be enjoyable and a learning experience. Also let your child “measure” things in fun ways. For example, “How many shoes long is your bed?” or “How many hops does it take to get to the kitchen?”

Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity

When your child completes different and fun ways to measure things, this shows an interest and persistence in the use of math concepts, such as asking your child how many hops it takes until he/she gets to the kitchen or how many shoes long the bed measures.

physical education/gross and fine motor skills

Three and Four

Physical Education/Gross and Fine Motor Skills Standard:
Demonstrates basic gross and fine motor development.

Your child's ability to move his/her body. Includes moving large muscles, such as walking and running, as well as gaining control of small muscle movements, such as scribbling and cutting.

What does it mean?

- Coordination skills that help your child run, jump and skip.
- Using hands and fingers to do small tasks, such as buttoning, grasping, zipping or writing.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Provide daily opportunities for your child to play outside. Take your child to the park or local playground and encourage him/her to climb on the play structures, with your supervision.
- Provide your child with opportunities to play with balls, ride trikes and bikes, and play outdoor games that include hopping, skipping, and galloping.
- Provide daily opportunities for your child to develop small muscles in activities such as creating things with Play Doh, Legos, and scissors and paper.
- Encourage your child to dress themselves, including zippers, buttons and snaps. Provide assistance when needed.

Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

When your child keeps trying to button, to zip or to snap, they are using their small hand muscles that are also used to write. They are being persistent in doing this task on their own.



science

Three and Four

Science Standard: Demonstrates scientific ways of thinking and working (with wonder and curiosity).

Your child's growing understanding of the natural world and how to solve problems. This includes curiosity about how objects in their environment work as well as how living things grow and thrive.

What does it mean?

- Fostering your child's growing understanding of the world around them.
- Supporting children's natural curiosity about how things work.
- Ability to solve simple problems.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Provide many different rich experiences for your child. Spend time with your child in the garden, at the grocery store, outside going for a walk and at the petting zoo. Talk about these experiences and encourage your child's curiosity.
- Ask your child about how things they see, smell or touch are alike or different. Ask your child about how their favorite colors, their toys and art supplies might be alike or different.
- Help your child in finding answers to their questions about nature and how things work ("What's thunder?" or "How do you think we make ice?"). Use dictionaries, the internet or books as ways to answer these questions.
- Provide your child with opportunities to play with and examine a wide variety of tools, such as magnets, scales and magnifying glasses.
- Encourage your child to go out and explore nature. Take walks, catch bugs and dig in the dirt. Talk to your child about these experiences, encourage them to ask questions and help them in finding answers to these questions. Have children document these experiences through drawing or writing. For example, "Draw a picture of the bugs that you found in the dirt last night."

Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity

When your child spends time digging in the dirt and making "discoveries" or spends time catching bugs and talking about them, your child is being curious about the world around them and taking the initiative to learn something new.

social studies

Three and Four

Social Studies Standard: Demonstrates basic understanding of the world in which they live.

Your child's understanding of the roles of the people in the environment (family, community helpers, etc.) as well as your child's understanding of time is important in order for them to understand their community.

What does it mean?

- Ability to identify family, friends and strangers.
- Understanding time as related to the past, present and future.
- Understanding that people come from different places.
- Ability to understand simple rules.





What are some things you can do with your child?

- Spend time with your child reflecting on their past and future experiences. Talk about what they did at grandma’s house last week and their plans for a play date with a friend the next week.
- Point out changes in the environment to your child and talk about them with your child – talk about the changing leaves in the fall and the heat in the summer.
- Introduce your child to maps. Let your child play with your maps and help them draw maps of their world, like a map of their room or a map to the backyard.
- Expose your child to money and its function. Have your child help you pay for the groceries at the grocery store and play with “fake money” in their room.
- Set reasonable limits for your child and help your child to follow the limits. Help your child understand that their behavior has consequences. “You’ll need to pick up the blocks that you’ve knocked off the table because we won’t have room for the game on the floor.”
- Help your child understand and follow the rules in different settings. For example, “We use quiet voices in the library.”
- Provide predictable routines for your child. Predictability helps your child to understand what is going to happen next.
- Have conversations with your child about your family. Drawing pictures of family members and talking about the relationships that exist such as father, mother, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, etc.
- Use everyday opportunities to talk about how people are the same and different. Consider differences in food choices (“I like pizza and you love hamburgers.”) as well as differences in skin color, language and ability.

Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Attentiveness

When your child follows a map of the backyard to find the “treasure” waiting, he/she is being persistent and attentive in following the “clues” to the “treasure.”

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 and ability to be **Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn & Ready to Succeed.**



The skills listed in the diagram above are helpful for children to know before entering Kindergarten. The indicators included represent the hopes and aspirations for incoming students, not the expectations. Kentucky recognizes that children develop and learn at different rates and times. Not every child will master all of the skills and behaviors listed above prior to Kindergarten. These skills and behaviors are NOT USED to determine school eligibility. In Kentucky, all children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to enter public school.

Families, early care and education providers, schools and community partners must work together to provide developmental experiences that promote growth and learning, to ensure that all children enter school eager and excited to learn. The purpose of this definition is to give parents, child care and preschool, and communities an overview of the expectations of schools for incoming students and to help families and communities prepare children for school. In addition, a readiness profile provides teachers, child care providers, and parents a tool to better inform them on the specific strengths and needs of each individual child.



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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



Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn & Ready to Succeed



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

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