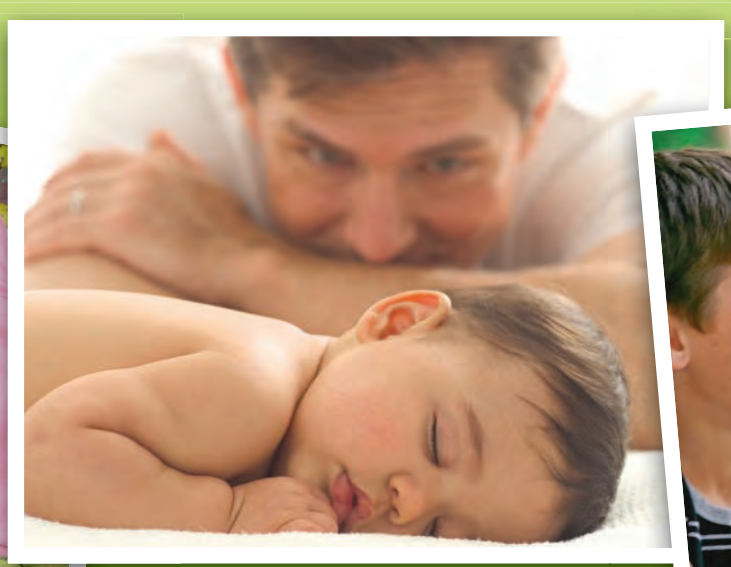
Montana Early Learning Standards

2014



The standards that guide the work of early childhood professionals to ensure that children from birth to age five have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning to reach their full potential in life

Acknowledgments

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Core Domain 1: Emotional and Social

Culture, Family, and Community

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Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Standard 1.2 - Family 20
Children develop an awareness of the functions, contributions, and diverse characteristics of families.

Standard 1.3 - Community 21
Children develop an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce.

Emotional Development

Standard 1.4 - Self-Concept 23
Children develop an awareness and appreciation of themselves as unique, competent, and capable individuals.

Standard 1.5 - Self-Efficacy 24
Children demonstrate a belief in their abilities.

Standard 1.6 - Self-Regulation 25
Children manage their internal states, feelings, and behavior and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments.

Standard 1.7 - Emotional Expression 26
Children express a wide and varied range of feelings through their facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words.

Social Development

Standard 1.8 Interactions with Adults 27
Children show trust, develop emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults.

Standard 1.9 Interactions with Peers 28
Children interact and build relationships with peers as they expand their world beyond the family and develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and showing empathy.

Core Domain 2: Physical

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Children develop small muscle strength, coordination, and skills.

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Standard 2.3 Sensorimotor 33
Children use all the senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.

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Children demonstrate personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice self-care routines.

Standard 2.5 Nutrition 36
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Standard 3.6 Print Development/Writing 46
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Standard 4.2 Initiative and Self-direction 52
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Standard 4.3 Persistence and Attentiveness 53
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Standard 4.4 Reflection and Interpretation 54
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Standard 4.5 Reasoning and Representational Thought 55
Children develop skills in causation, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, and representational thought.

Creative Arts

Standard 4.6 Creative Movement 57
Children produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation, with growing technical and artistic abilities.

Standard 4.7 Drama 58
Children show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation and imitation, and by participating in simple dramatic plots, assuming roles related to their life experiences as well as their fantasies.

Standard 4.8 Music 59
Children engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities with growing skills for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment, self-expression, and creativity.

Standard 4.9 Visual Arts 60
Children demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process as they use the visual arts to express personal interests, ideas, and feelings, and share opinions about artwork and artistic experiences.

Mathematics and Numeracy

Standard 4.10 Number Sense and Operations 61
Children develop the ability to think and work with numbers, to understand their uses, and describe numerical relationships through structured and everyday experiences.

Standard 4.11 Measurement 62
Children develop skills in using measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time.

Standard 4.12 Data Analysis 63
Children apply mathematical skills in data analysis, such as counting, sorting, and comparing objects.

Standard 4.13 Algebraic Thinking 64
Children learn to identify, describe, produce, and create patterns using mathematical language and materials.

Standard 4.14 Geometry and Spatial Reasoning 65
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Standard 4.15 Scientific Thinking and Use of the Scientific Method 67
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Standard 4.16 Life Science 68
Children develop understanding of and compassion for living things.

Standard 4.17 Physical Science 69
Children develop an understanding of the physical world (the nature and properties of energy, nonliving matter and the forces that give order to the natural world).

Standard 4.18 Earth and Space 70
Children develop an understanding of the earth and planets.

Standard 4.19 Engineering 71
Children develop an understanding of the processes that assist people in designing and building.

Social Studies

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Children develop an understanding of the concept of time, including past, present, and future as they are able to recognize recurring experiences that are part of the daily routine.

Standard 4.21 Places, Regions and Spatial Awareness (Geography) 74
Children develop an understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics. Children develop an understanding of how they are affected by—and the effect that they can have upon—the world around them.

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Standard 4.23 Technology 76
Children become aware of technological tools and explore and learn how to use these resources in a developmentally appropriate manner.

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The standards that guide the work of early childhood professionals to ensure that children from birth to age five have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning and reach their full potential in life

Alterations of Note

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines for Children 3 to 5 (2004) and Montana's Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers (2009) were incorporated into one document that represents a continuum of growth and development for children from birth to age 5. This integrated document is called the 2014 Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS). Major changes include:

- Instead of using the term "guidelines," the current document uses the term "standards." This wording aligns with similar documents used across the state to guide the education of Montana's children, most notably K—12 Standards.
- Changes were made to ensure that the MELS incorporate current research, particularly in the areas of brain development and cultural/linguistic diversity, including significant and meaningful integration of the Montana Indian Education for All Act. In addition, a crosswalk analysis of the MELS was conducted to highlight connections with other professional standards, including the Montana Common Core Kindergarten Standards for Language Arts and Math and the Next Generation Science Standards as well as the Head Start Framework.
- The MELS feature a continuum of developmental progression without listing specific ages. Children's development can be identified and observed over time on the continuum described in each developmental domain.

Applicable Settings

The Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) are applicable to children regardless of the setting in which they are cared for, nurtured, and educated. These settings may include their own homes; family, friend and neighbor homes; family and group child care homes; child care centers; preschool programs; Head Start; Early Head Start; and public schools.

Appropriate Use

In case there is any confusion about how, when, and where to use the MELS, the following lists of how they SHOULD and SHOULD NOT be used have been created. This information clearly defines the MELS as a tool to guide early childhood practice in a way that benefits an early childhood practitioner's decision-making and intentional teaching on a daily basis.

✗ 2014 Montana's Early Learning Standards (MELS) SHOULD be used to
Acknowledge the diverse value systems in which children learn and grow
Assist early childhood professionals in communication/collaboration with policy makers, community members, and key stakeholders
Develop training and education programs for adults working with children and their families
Emphasize the importance of early care and education to the community
Help teachers focus on what children CAN do and reinforce the idea that children are capable learners
Help teachers meet children's developmental needs, including those of children with disabilities, at the level they require and in an individual capacity
Help teachers recognize the critical need to meet children's emotional/ social needs and that meeting those needs serves as the basis for a child's future learning
Help teachers recognize their own value and abilities
Improve quality in early care and education programs and serve as a model for teaching and building secure relationships with young children
Increase the flow of information among early childhood teachers, professionals, and policy makers
Support teachers in learning more about child development

✗ 2014 Montana's Early Learning Standards (MELS) SHOULD NOT be used to
Diagnose or assess a child's development
Evaluate early care and education programs or parenting skills
Highlight differences between the core philosophies of early childhood and elementary education
Increase pressure on children and the adults who care for and educate them
Justify inappropriate assessment packages
Make decisions about funding programs
Mandate specific curriculum or practices or serve as rules and regulations for programs to follow
Place increased importance on academics and move adults away from the power of play and relationships
"Push down" curriculum meant for older children to young children
Screen children to determine school readiness and/or limit access to kindergarten
Suggest that preschool is more valuable than the home experience

Audience

The Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) are a tool for every early childhood and related service professional working with young children and their families, including early care and education practitioners, elementary school teachers, early interventionists, pre-service teachers, parent/family educators, family support specialists, home visitors, mental health providers, and child/family health practitioners. The MELS are also a tool for those who plan and provide early childhood professional and career development, including college instructors, high school teachers, professional development specialists, and Early Head Start/ Head Start training and technical assistance personnel.

Caution

The Montana Early Learning Standards are not intended to be used as a diagnostic or assessment tool. They are not mandatory standards nor are they a set of regulations.

Description

The Montana Early Learning Standards document is designed to guide the work of early childhood professionals in a variety of early childhood settings. Professionals who implement the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) help ensure that children from birth to age five develop the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning and reach their full potential in life.

Language

Throughout the MELS, the people that care for young children are referred to primarily as "teacher" as defined as "anyone who cares for or provides support and services to young children and families." Although those who provide direct services to children are often referred to as "caregivers" or "practitioners," adults cannot care for children well without teaching, and teaching is most effective when it occurs in a caring and nurturing context (ELS Task Force, August 2013).

Further, while adults are most often considered the primary teachers of young children, interaction, modeling, and playful experiences can be led—either formally or informally—by peers and older children, including the child's siblings.

Purpose

The MELS provide a structure that frames the amazing developmental process from birth to age five as the foundation for children's success in life and learning. They are meant to:

- Provide a common language and improve communication among the professionals who impact and provide services to young children and their families;
- Build upon early childhood professionals' understanding of the continuum of children's growth and development;
- Serve as a resource for ways to enhance children's early learning experiences;
- Describe the expectations for what young children should know and be able to do across different domains of learning;
- Support the transfer of child development knowledge to improve teaching and caregiving practices and encourage individualization;
- Provide information and context for the range of skills children develop from birth to age 5. They do not provide a comprehensive or exhaustive list of every skill children might achieve in the first years of life.

Organization: Core Domains ➔ Subdomains ➔ Standards

The MELS are arranged in multiple layers, reflecting the complexity of young children's development. Children's development is organized within 4 ***Core Domains***, which can be defined as broad categories or dimensions of development reflective of children's learning and growth. A basic description of each ***Core Domain*** is included along with an explanation of essential components across domains: teacher-child relationships, environment, and connection with other core domains. The ***Core Domains*** are:

1. Emotional/Social
2. Physical
3. Communication
4. Cognition

Although the MELS are organized within ***Core Domains***, it is important to note that each ***Core Domain*** is related to and influences the others. Children's growth and development occur, not as a series of isolated events throughout the first years of life, but through ebb and flow in a unique way for each child. Sometimes growth in one domain will result in a pause, or even regression, in another domain.

The four ***Core Domains*** are further expanded into 13 ***Subdomains*** that are described in more detail in 47 ***Standards***. The ***Standards*** are statements reflecting young children's growth and development and are accompanied by detailed descriptions. The chart below shows the relationship and the content of the ***Core Domains, Subdomains,*** and ***Standards***.

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Core Domains	Subdomains	Standards
1. EMOTIONAL / SOCIAL	Culture, Family, and Community	Culture Family Community
	Emotional Development	Self-Concept Self-Efficacy Self-Regulation Emotional Expression
	Social Development	Interactions with Adults Interactions with Peers
2. PHYSICAL	Physical Development	Fine Motor Gross Motor Sensorimotor
	Health, Safety, and Personal Care	Daily Living Skills Nutrition Physical Fitness Safety Practices

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3. COMMUNICATION	Communication and Language Development	Receptive Language Expressive Communication Social Communication English Language Learners: Dual Language Acquisition
	Literacy	Early Reading and Book Appreciation Print Development and Writing Print Concepts Phonological Awareness
4. COGNITION	Approaches to Learning	Curiosity Initiative and Self-direction Persistence and Attentiveness Reflection and Interpretation
	Reasoning and Representational Thought	Reasoning and Representational Thought
	Creative Arts	Creative Movement Drama Music Visual or Fine Arts
	Mathematics and Numeracy	Number Sense and Operations Measurement Algebraic Thinking and Operations Pattern Recognition and Reproduction Geometry and Spatial Reasoning
	Science	Scientific Thinking/Use of the Scientific Method Life Science Physical Science Earth and Space Engineering
	Social Studies	Awareness of Time (History) Places, Regions and Spatial Awareness (Geography) The Physical World (Ecology) Technology

Organization of Benchmarks, Indicators, and Learning Opportunities for Each Standard

The ***Standards*** can be further used to shape a continuum of behaviors expected in children from birth to 5 years old or ***Benchmarks***. For each ***Standard***, there are 10 - 17 ***Benchmarks*** with related ***Indicators*** and ***Learning Opportunities***. The ***Benchmarks*** explain key skills and behaviors representative of what we want the child to be able to do to achieve each ***Standard***.

For each ***Benchmark***, there is an associated ***Indicator***. ***Indicators*** describe behaviors we might see that demonstrate children have reached the ***Benchmark***.

For each ***Indicator***, there is an example of the type of ***Learning Opportunitie***s or experiences we might provide to support development. In other words, activities we might use to support children's development of the behavior described in the ***Benchmark*** and result in ultimate achievement of the ***Benchmark***.

The chart below illustrates one example from the MELS of how the layers or levels of development fit together into a useful framework for guiding early childhood practice.

Core Domain Four: COGNITION

Subdomain: Approaches to Learning

Standard 4.3: Persistence and attentiveness –
Children develop the ability to focus their attention and concentrate to complete tasks and increase their learning.

Benchmarks	Indicators	Learning Opportunities
What we want the child to be able to do	*Behaviors we might see*	*Experiences we might use to support development*
b. Hold the attention of a caregiver	The child may smile, babble and/or sustain eye contact.	Play with the child one-on-one and face-to-face.

Revision Process

Throughout 2013, drafts of the MELS were intensely reviewed, modified, and validated by a task force of early childhood leaders from across the state, representing various areas of expertise and service (see Acknowledgments). In addition, multiple stakeholders representing specific interests, such as Indian Education for All, reviewed the document and provided feedback. Other reviewers included early childhood providers, program directors, higher education faculty, special education practitioners, and Early Head Start/ Head Start personnel. Comments were received on the document's usability, readability, completeness, and attention to specific details. Additional information about the MELS Task Force members can be found at the end of this document.

Early Learning Principles

The following principles reflect the essential understandings and fundamental early childhood concepts that strengthen both development and implementation of the Montana Early Learning Standards. It is well documented that growth and development in the early years is essential to children's success in school and in life. There is also ample evidence linking high quality early care and education programs with future achievement and lifelong learning.

The Early Learning Principles include the roles and relationships of a number of critical issues, including assessment, brain research, and developmentally appropriate practice, to children's growth and development.

Alignment across Early Childhood Settings

The Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) were aligned to ensure flow between the foundations for learning and the standards set by Montana's Office of Public Instruction (OPI) for kindergarten through12th grade and the Head Start Framework. In the Joint Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education entitled "Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success," it is made clear that early childhood is a unique period of life. The Position Statement asserts that this period serves as the foundation for later learning and has value outside of preparation for elementary school.

The Position Statement further explains that early learning guidelines should be built forward, from their earliest beginnings, rather than being simplified versions of standards for older children. The result will be more powerful content and more valid expectations for early learning and skill development. With this process, early learning standards do align with what comes later, but the connections are meaningful rather than mechanical and superficial (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, 2002).

"Alignment works both horizontally, as the child experiences a single learning level, and vertically as the child moves up through grade [developmental] levels.

- *Horizontal alignment* highlights the coherence or inter-connectedness between standards (what children are expected to know and do), curriculum (what children are taught), instruction (how children are taught) and assessments (what and how children's progress is measured) within a single learning level. Learning is deepened.
- *Vertical alignment* highlights the continuous and progressive nature of learning and development. The skills and knowledge gained in one year serve not as an end point but as a foundation upon which to build additional skills and knowledge in the next year. Gains are sustained. In addition, aligned experiences include all areas of learning (social, emotional, physical and cognitive).

Aligned approaches require that such experiences are of high quality and ensure they are matched to the developmental abilities of individual children" (Education Commission of the States, 2010).

Assessment

Assessment is used to determine a child's growth and development across the developmental domains. Using the results of screening and assessment, teachers and families are prepared to meet the developmental and learning needs of each child.

The purpose of monitoring each child's development over time is to identify the interactions, activities, and environments that encourage the child to build on his or her existing

> **"When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become."**
>
> **— Louis Pasteur**

knowledge and skills, to work with all the people involved in the child's life, and to recognize when others may need to become involved to benefit the child's growth and development.

Most states stress that their early learning guidelines or standards are not intended as a "readiness checklist" or an "assessment tool." Rather, states often recommend that early learning guidelines and standards be used to help early care and education providers select the instructional tools and assessment instruments that are appropriate for young children at different stages of their development. In these states, the results of the assessment are typically used on an individual, child-level basis, to inform instructional practices or to guide discussions with parents about their child's skills and abilities. They are not used to monitor statewide percentages of children "ready for school" (Daily, Burkhauser, and Halle, 2010).

"Tools for assessing young children's progress must be clearly connected to important learning represented in the standards, must be technically, developmentally, and culturally valid and must yield comprehensive, useful information" (NAEYC, 2002).

Brain Development and Research

Children have the right to have their early experiences acknowledged and recognized as extremely important in their growth and development. Children come into the world ready to learn and actively engage in making sense of their world from birth. The early years in a child's life set the groundwork for a lifetime of brain development and must be taken into consideration when planning any further learning (Families and Work Institute, 1997).

The brain is made up of brain cells or neurons, connected to one another by synapses. It is by way of the connections between neurons that information is passed from cell to cell. Infants go through a critical period of neural growth immediately after birth and during the first years of life. Synaptic growth corresponds with whole branches of brain cells that receive and process signals in the brain. The greatest growth of branches and synapses occurs during the first five years of life. As a child's brain develops, it goes through several "critical periods," or developmental phases in which the brain requires certain environmental input or it will not develop normally (Murray, 2007).

The exceptionally strong influence of early experience on brain architecture makes the early years of life a period of great vulnerability as well as great opportunity for brain development. A growth-promoting environment with adequate nutrients, free of toxins, filled with social interactions, and an attentive caregiver, prepares the developing brain to function optimally (NSCDC, 2007). All domains of development and learning are closely related and critically important. To teach young children well involves fostering their development and learning in all domains (NAEYC, 2008).

Child Development Expertise

Each child has the right to expect that their early care and education practitioner has a solid knowledge of child development and continues to improve his or her practice through continuing education on the latest developments in the field. Teachers of young children need foundational knowledge in child development along with professional development in teaching practices that promote optimal outcomes for each child. Research shows that quality early care and education contributes to a child's readiness to learn, and that staff education and experience are determining factors in high quality programs (Pathways Mapping Initiative, 2002).

Connections among Domains

Children's development cannot easily be divided into separate domains because it occurs across domains and age ranges. That is, children are learning all the time and integrate their emerging knowledge in each area across everything they see and do.

The dynamic interaction of all areas and stages of development was considered in each MELS Domain and Benchmark. Research shows that learning is multidimensional and that children learn best through integrated, meaningful experiences. Individual development and learning is constructed on a continuum that builds on children's prior experience and knowledge, crossing over to other areas of development. Children's growth, development, and learning

should be incorporated into typical everyday routines and naturally occurring "teachable moments" as well as into carefully planned activities throughout the day.

Culture

Culture is a word for people's way of life, and children acquire cultural knowledge from the day they are born. Each child has a unique culture within their own family. Respect and appreciation for each child's cultural, racial, and linguistic heritage are a valuable and important part of his or her development. The MELS reinforce healthy partnerships between families, early childhood educators, and communities, in developing culturally and linguistically competent practices and services to support young children.
It is recognized by the National Education Goals Panel, based on research, that a child's learning is complex and is influenced by cultural and contextual factors (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995).

Curriculum

Curriculum is an educational plan that guides the teaching process - from lesson development - to implementation - to evaluation. Quality early childhood curriculum is grounded in research-based understandings of child development and developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers utilize curriculum to identify what to teach, to develop and organize learning experiences, and to assess what was learned. "The curriculum also needs to align with the program's and families' background knowledge and experiences" (Bullard, 2014), as well as individual and group outcomes and early learning standards.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Childhood is a unique stage in human development and must be appreciated as such (NAEYC, 2006). Each child has the right to be treated as an individual with distinctive strengths, interests, and approaches to learning. Early care and education must address the "whole child" and be consistently working with children on multiple levels. Learning opportunities must be provided that recognize that development is continuous and sequential across areas of growth and learning. Developmentally appropriate practice is, in the simplest terms, an effort to provide nurturing care and learning activities, materials, or toys that promote each individual child's development.

The pace and sequence of development and learning varies from child to child. The MELS acknowledge that children begin life as capable and confident learners with unique strengths, interests, and approaches to learning. Teachers have the responsibility to adjust their practice to support the growth and development of each child considering both the child's age and developmental stage.

Developmentally appropriate practice results when decisions about the well-being and education of young children are based on what is known about: a) child development and learning; b) the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child; and c) the social and cultural context in which each child lives.

It is essential for caregivers to know and understand the growth and development of young children, both as individuals and as a group, and provide a variety of rich and challenging age-appropriate learning experiences.

Dual Language Learners

The acquisition of language is essential to children's cognitive and social development. Regardless of what language children speak, they still develop and learn. (Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education, A position statement of NAEYC , 1995).

Dual language learners are children learning two or more languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language (Alliance for a Better Community, 2012). An English language learner is a child whose home language is not English who is learning to become proficient in English. The term "bilingual" refers to the skills of a person who has developed fluency in two languages…other experts use it to describe anyone who is in the process of learning to use a second language" (Nemeth, 2012).

Research indicates that developing and maintaining a child's first language supports and facilitates learning of the second language.

Emotional and Social Development

Healthy emotional and social development supports a child's emerging capacity to experience, manage, and express the full range of positive and negative emotions; develop close, satisfying

relationships with other children and adults; and actively explore their environment and learn (Zero to Three, 2005). It is the desire to connect with others that motivates the child to learn.

> **"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."**
>
> **— Nelson Mandela**

Developing emotional security and basic mental processes within the context of positive relationships and nurturing environments lay the foundation for all future learning (NCCIC, 2005). Young children's social and behavioral competence predict their academic performance in the first grade, over and above their cognitive skills and family background (Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Children with Challenging Behaviors, 2003). Children thrive in the care of familiar adults who play a significant role in their lives over time, adults that the child can count on for relative consistency of style, feelings of security, belonging, and love (WestEd,/PITC, 2007).

Environments

Early childhood environment plays a critical role in children's learning and development. "The environment we are in affects our moods, ability to form relationships, effectiveness in work or play - even our health" (Bullard, 2014). Effective learning environments are created with respect to each child's family and culture (Gandini, 2001) and include well-developed spaces that support play and exploration. Child-centered, stimulating, aesthetic, and thoughtfully planned environments support optimal development and can be emotionally nurturing (Gerber, 2013).

Ethics and Professionalism

Each child has the right to be cared for and educated under the protection of a professional Code of Ethical Conduct. Early care and education practitioners should understand and follow the profession's ethical guidelines at all times and in all situations (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998).

Working with young children requires a commitment to the field of early childhood education. Professionals gain knowledge of developmental theories and practices, promote quality in the services they provide, and take advantage of opportunities for growth and competence through continuing education and self-reflection. The resulting care and education they provide balances the evidence of the effectiveness of any given practice with accumulated wisdom and experience, standards and recommended practices, and current research in the field. The paramount responsibility of the caregiver is to provide a safe, healthy, nurturing, responsive setting for the child and, above all, cause no harm to children (NAEYC, revised 2005).

Ethically driven and evidence-based practice changes the way a person's knowledge of early childhood approaches is created, interpreted, shared, and applied (Zero To Three, 2006).

Teachers must use a decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence about teaching and learning with family and professional values and wisdom.

Family Engagement

Children have the right to the involvement of their families in all aspects of their care and education. Families are key partners in every young child's education and must be engaged and supported by the early care and education community. Effective communication and participation consistently lead to positive effects for the early development of young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2002). Families need access to information about what to look for in choosing quality early care and education programs, opportunities to learn about their child's strengths, and regular involvement in setting goals for their child.

Health and Well-being

Children, as our most vulnerable citizens, rely on parents and teachers to meet their needs. Basic human needs include love and emotional security, food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. When these basic needs are met, children can take full advantage of learning opportunities.

Teachers should be able to recognize when children's needs are compromised or neglected and employ the proper steps to ensure their safety and health. Research shows that general health is a critical indicator of a child's success in school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002 and Pathways Mapping Initiative, 2002).

Health and wellness means more than just being free from illness and injury. It means having personal needs met by dependable adults who are making and modeling healthy choices and teaching the child to make such choices for themselves over a lifetime.

Inclusion

Children are capable of learning, achieving, and making developmental progress regardless of their physical, emotional, or cognitive abilities, backgrounds, or experiences. Each child has the right to the supports, resources, and services he or she needs to participate actively and meaningfully in the early childhood setting. Because of the uniqueness of each child, the services and interventions provided must be responsive to the young child's needs and patterns of development, taking into consideration the whole child and family (DEC, 2005).

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports (DEC/NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, 2009).

Quality programs practice inclusion to address the needs of each child (the epitome of individualization). Teachers must be prepared to work together with families, following the parents' lead. They must make referrals when children's development appears delayed, collaborate with children's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Program (IEP) teams, modify/adapt program activities and routines (make reasonable accommodations), and implement appropriate interventions within the context of the early childhood setting (DEC/NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, 1993).

Indian Education for All

The Montana Constitution of 1972 (Article X, section 1:2) provides recognition for the state's obligations to Indian education (Montana Legislative Services, 2009). "It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state" (Montana OPI, 2013). In addition to the educational priority of ensuring full educational opportunities to all Montana students, the Montana constitution also recognized the importance of increasing Native and non-Native students' knowledge of Montana Indian histories and cultures (Montana Legislative Services, 2009).

For early childhood education, the implications of this legislative and constitutional promise is based upon the premise that early educators must help children to be aware of and demonstrate respect for differences amongst people, but more importantly, similarities amongst themselves, their communities, and the peoples of Montana. "Within our state, Montana Indians are recognized by individual tribes, and early learning experiences and activities can provide respectful inclusion and accurate portrayals of Native Americans" (OPI, 2013).

Individuality

Each child approaches life in a unique way based upon his or her temperament, prior experiences, and environmental circumstances. How the people around young children understand and respond to these individual differences has a significant impact on the young child's growth and development. Appreciating and understanding how individual children approach the world allows teachers to respond to his or her needs.

1. **Temperament:** Each of us is born with a unique set of characteristics that determine how we approach the world around us and build relationships with others. Researchers (Thomas, Chess, and Birch, 1968) have identified nine different temperament traits that are displayed from birth:

- Activity level—how much energy one needs or exhibits
- Biological rhythms—the regularity of patterns of sleeping, eating, or eliminating
- Approach/Withdrawal—how easily one reacts to a new situation or experience
- Adaptability—how easily one can adapt to changes in the environment
- Sensitivity threshold—how sensitive one is to potentially irritating stimuli
- Intensity of Reaction—the amount of energy one uses to express feelings
- Quality of mood—the amount of "cheerful, friendly" or "cranky, unfriendly" behavior
- Distractibility—how easily one can be distracted from an activity
- Persistence—the length of time one will stay at a difficult task

Knowing a child's temperament can help a teacher understand the child's behavior and adjust interactions accordingly. When a child is accepted as he or she is, he or she is more likely to build stronger relationships and be more open to learning and experimentation. Recognizing that these temperament traits may be with the child from birth, adults will be better able to respond to them in appropriate ways and maximize early learning.

2. **Environmental Circumstances:** Anything and everyone surrounding the young child contributes to his or her life experiences. Varied circumstances add to the uniqueness of the child's personality. These include family composition, living situation, and how many different people and places the child experiences in a day.

   As with temperament, life experiences affect how individual children build relationships and approach learning. Each child's unique life circumstance can be discovered by talking with family members and others involved in the child's life. Truly understanding each child's situation may take time, and can only be accomplished as a trusting relationship is built. Ultimately, this information makes it possible for teachers to establish an environment that supports the child in meaningful ways.

Lifelong Learning

Each child has the right to be supported as a lifelong learner. Children should be recognized as capable individuals and competent learners. They must be allowed to develop a disposition and eagerness to learn in order to find success in their learning experiences. A positive approach to learning has been shown to be a critical determinant to mastering school skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Modeling

Teacher modeling is an element of explicit instruction that begins with setting the stage for learning, often followed by a clear explanation of what to do (telling), followed by modeling of the process (showing), followed by multiple opportunities for practice (guiding), and imitation until independence is attained. Modeling a love of learning and inquisitiveness about the world we live in is an important role for early childhood practitioners.

Open-ended Materials and Open-ended Questions

Objects and learning materials that are open-ended have multiple and infinite possibilities for exploration, creation, and ways of using them. Open-ended questions use language that encourages children's critical thinking, has no implied right or wrong answer, and leads to reflection. Open-ended questions typically begin with words such as "Why", and "How", or phrases such as "Tell me about". Often they are not technically a question, but a statement which implicitly asks for a meaningful response.

Play

Children build new knowledge and develop new skills through play and active exploration using open-ended, hands-on materials. Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child (General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of November 1989).

Children have the right to expect that their play is respected as a valuable learning tool. They need to have a rich learning environment to explore, and they need to be exposed to a variety of experiences that help deepen their understanding of the world around them.

Children learn best through a combination of teacher-guided and child-guided methods, through both guided play and open – ended activities. Play is how a child accesses the complexities of the world and is the primary way they learn about the world around them (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Dramatic or symbolic play is when children use props, plots, and roles in their pretend play to help them make sense of their world.

Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation, as well as promoting language, cognition, and social competence. Children of all ages love to play, and it gives them opportunities to explore the world, interact with others, express and control emotions, develop their symbolic and problem-solving abilities, and practice emerging skills.

Research shows the links between play and foundational capacities such as memory, self-regulation, oral language abilities, social skills, and success in school (NAEYC, 2008). Play offers individualized learning opportunities – meaningful experiences that engage children's interests, abilities and culture through self-discovery and challenging, but attainable, tasks.

The stages of play are:

- Unoccupied Play – child performs random movements that do not seem to have a goal
- Solitary Play – child plays alone
- Onlooker Play – child watches other children play
- Parallel Play – child plays separately from others but near other children; perhaps with toys like those the others are using or in a manner that mimics their play
- Associative Play – children's play that involves social interaction with little or no organization
- Cooperative Play – children's interaction in a group with a sense of group identity and organized activity

Policy-making

For children to grow and develop to their fullest potential they need safe, nurturing, and healthy environments. Collaboration of policy-makers, community leaders, professionals, and families is necessary to develop strategies to meet the needs of children.

Policy-makers must build an infrastructure at the community, state, and federal level which includes a professional development system; access to affordable health care and nutritional services; high quality care and education programs accessible to everyone; and services linked to health, mental health, and social services.

Decision makers have the responsibility to keep in mind the effects that their actions have on our youngest citizens (Children's Defense Fund, 2002).

Primary Caregiver

A primary caregiver is any adult primarily responsible for the care and education of a young child. Primary caregivers may include teachers, parents, guardians, foster parents, grandparents, or other significant family members.

Quality

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines quality as "degree of excellence." Programs that serve young children should continually be working to improve by showing a willingness to change and grow. This is critical to the children, families, and communities that rely on their services (NAEYC, 2006).

Research shows that quality early care and education contributes to a child's readiness to learn, and that staff education and experience are determining factors in high quality programs (Pathways Mapping Initiative, 2002). The responsibility for program quality rests with the leadership of the program and the teachers. Children and families should be able to expect that early childhood programs are prepared to meet their needs.

Research on child care has shown that small group size and appropriate adult to child ratios are also key components of quality care. The younger the child, the smaller the group size needs to be (PITC, 2007). An early childhood teacher should have a solid knowledge of child development, and continue to improve his or her practices through continuing education in the field.

Relationships

Children have the right to be cared for by adults who understand the importance of nurturing relationships. Positive social relationships are the foundations for healthy growth and development. The MELS reflect the belief that infants and toddlers who develop strong attachments with primary caregivers are better able to learn, play and

grow. "A secure attachment to a caregiver is where a young child recognizes a caregiver as a 'secure base' from whom exploration is possible, and who can be returned to if exploration leads to stress that the child cannot handle alone. This is not simply an emotional bonding, which emphasizes closeness, but is broader in scope and recognizes the need for children to develop their autonomy" (Oates, 2007). Relationship-based care should drive all other care-giving and teaching practices.

1. **Family Relationships**: When a young child is cared for outside the home, the child's home, community, and family life must be valued and respected. Responsive family partnerships grow from interpersonal relationships that reflect a mutual respect and appreciation for individual cultures, values, and language.

   Family partnerships are key in every child's care and education. Responsive teachers honor the values and practices within the families being served, as well as among the people providing the services (DEC, 2002).

   A child's home language must be respected as the basis for learning a second language. That fact is recognized by the National Education Goals Panel, based on research that a child's learning is complex, and is influenced by cultural and contextual factors (NAEYC, 1995).

   The results of the relationship between families, children and other adults last a lifetime. Effective family communication and involvement consistently lead to positive effects for the early development of young children (NAEYC and NAES/SDE, 2002).

2. **Teacher/caregiver Relationships:** As previously noted, the process of developing emotional security and basic mental processes within the context of nurturing relationships and environments lays the foundation for all future learning (NITCCI and NCCIC, 2005). The process of forming a strong positive identity should occur in a setting that offers security, protection, and intimacy (Zero to Three, 2007).

> **"All of life is education and everybody is a teacher and everybody is forever a pupil."**
>
> **— Abraham Maslow**

   Children thrive in the care of teachers who play a significant role in their lives over time, teachers that the child can count on for relative consistency of style, feelings of security, belonging, and love (WestEd, PITC, 2007.) Children's teachers need to be nurturing and clearly understand the importance—and practice—of respectful, responsive, and reciprocal care for the age group they are working with.

Research and Best Practice

Early childhood practice should reflect current research and be grounded in evidence-based practices. The MELS reflect the most recent available research about child development. Where research is not available, information in the MELS is supported by evidence-based practice and professional wisdom.

Virginia Buysse and Patricia Wesley from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill define evidence-based practice as "a decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values—in other words, a balance of scientific proof and professional and family experience and values."

Responsive Routines

Many learning opportunities for young children take place during and around routine care: feeding/eating, bathing/washing up, diapering/toileting, sleeping/quiet time, and dressing. Healthy growth and development occurs through developing "deep, meaningful, and satisfying" reciprocal relationships through verbal and nonverbal communication during these typical routines.

A loving and responsive caregiver uses every opportunity to help children grow and thrive (Zero to Three, 2007). Following the child's unique rhythms and styles promotes well-being and a healthy sense of self (PITC, 2007). Routines and activities should be performed with respect to the child's pace and viewed as opportunities to meaningfully connect and build positive rapport.

School Readiness

Children should be recognized as capable, competent learners and supported as such. They are born ready to learn. The experiences that children have in the early years are the foundation for growth and development, and what they learn through these experiences is shaped by each child's family, community, and school. Children have the right to expect that public schools, specifically kindergarten classrooms, will be prepared to meet their needs. Failing to meet the challenge to improve all children's readiness and achievement will perpetuate the inequities of achievement gaps and the low performance of the U.S. student population as a whole (NAEYC, 2009).

Screen Time

Screen time generally describes time spent using any category of electronic devices that include screens, such as televisions, tablets, and cell phones. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under the age of two and very limited access for preschoolers.

"Modern science confirms what the early childhood community has known for years that infants, toddlers, and young children learn through exploring with their whole bodies and need plenty of face-to-face interactions. Yet from infancy, children spend increasing amounts of time with screen technologies and studies show that the more time young children spend with screens, the less time they spend engaged in interactions with caring adults and in hands-on, creative play" (www.commercialfreechildhood.org/sites/default/files/EarlyChildhoodProfessionals.pdf).

Use of Technology

Understanding the appropriate use of technology in early childhood is essential as more programs use computers, the Internet, and other digital technologies. "Technological tools can support learner-centered and play-oriented early childhood curriculum and promote relationship-building among children, families, and the wider community. Not all programs have access to costly technology, but most do have more common tools, such as a computer or digital camera, for providing meaningful hands-on experiences for children" (www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200809/OnOurMinds.pdf). It is important for teachers and parents to make intentional and well-informed decisions about technology and how it can affect children's development and learning – both negatively and positively.

Core Domain 1: Emotional and Social

- Culture
- Family
- Community
- Emotional Development
- Social Development

Introduction to Core Domain One: Emotional and Social

Emotional Development is the emerging ability of children to become secure in their world. Emotional development refers to the way children learn about themselves and how they develop self-awareness, self-control (the ability to filter thoughts and impulses, stay on task, focus and to resist temptations and distraction), and self-expression.

Children are emotional beings. As they interact with others in their culture, family, and community, they come to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of their emotional experience. As they develop, children gain more control over their sometimes very strong emotions.

~ **Teacher-Child Relationships:** The relationships within which children grow and develop have a major impact on a child's personality, identity, social skills, and ability to explore and learn. When positive and healthy relationships between early educators and children exist, educators are better equipped to respond to a child's social and emotional needs while always being mindful of the child's family culture, race, and linguistic heritage.

Attachment refers to the relationship that develops between an infant or toddler and a parent or primary caregiver. Secure attachment relationships have a positive effect on every aspect of early development, from emotional self-regulation to healthy brain development. In fact, brain research indicates that for healthy brain development to occur, each child needs a secure, stable, consistent, nurturing relationship with a primary caregiver. The quality of this relationship depends on how the infant or toddler is responded to when requesting attention for basic needs to be met that include comfort, care, and security. Encouraging children to develop self-soothing techniques to calm self and settle emotional upsets is important.

Adults support healthy attachment in their relationships with infants and toddlers through meaningful interactions such as looking into their eyes, smiling and talking; physical closeness; interacting during daily routines (feeding, diapering, etc.); playing together; generally paying close attention to their wants and needs; and working to understand who they are as individuals.

~ **Environment:** Children's overall well-being is dependent on a nurturing and supportive environment with consistent teachers and adults. Parents and teachers make a lasting impression on children's feelings of "Who am I?" A child who develops strong bonds with nurturing adults and teachers is more likely to answer that question in a positive way.

When encouraged to do so, young children express themselves creatively through language, art, music, and dramatic play. Teachers play a significant role in supporting children's self-expression or restricting it. It is important for teachers to understand that when children seem to be "just scribbling" or "messing with paint," "fooling around with musical instruments and singing," or "dressing up and being silly," they are actually engaged in creative self-expression.

~ **Connection with Other Core Domains:** Children's evolving sense of security and well-being have a profound effect on all areas of development. For example, an emotionally secure infant will more readily explore and learn than an insecurely attached infant.

In a secure relationship, the child engages in meaningful back-and-forth interaction. The "dance" between the teacher and child fosters increasingly advanced communication and language development. Emotions drive early learning. For instance, the pleasure an infant experiences when making a discovery or mastering a motor skill inspires the child to continue to learn and to develop new skills. Emotional experiences affect the child's personal health, well-being, and school readiness.

Social Development is the increasing understanding that children gain of themselves and others. It includes their emerging ability to relate to other people and the environment in meaningful ways.

Attachment relationships are at the heart of social development. Just as healthy attachment relationships support emotional development, so do these relationships contribute to the development of the child's social understanding and skills. In an attachment relationship, the child looks to the adult for guidance.

~ **Teacher-Child Relationships:** Support and guidance from teachers are essential for children's positive social development. Teachers support social development by providing an appropriate environment, creating opportunities for responsive social interactions, and building stable relationships, including strong ties between a child's home culture, and any outside caregiving environment.

In secure relationships, children learn to show concern and empathy toward others. They also start to see themselves as belonging to social groups, in particular, their own families. As they grow, they also gain the necessary social skills to interact with others (taking turns, negotiating, etc.).

With proper support, children eventually develop the ability to participate in other social groups. Through play, they learn about working well with others and how to solve interpersonal conflicts. At first children play alone, then side by side with other children, and then engage cooperatively with them. When children interact well with one another, more learning can occur.

~ **Environment:** Continuity of care, ample time for teachers and children to be together, guidance from teachers, and consistent, predictable social experiences all contribute to stable, strong relationships and positive social development.

Continuity of care refers to predictable care provided by consistent teachers over time so that relationships can develop. Transitions between teachers should be minimized because caregiving alterations can be stressful for the child, caregivers, and parents, and can interrupt the development of social skills and other emerging abilities.

Teachers can promote and model social skills, such as empathy and being kind, which helps to foster solid relationships. They can also provide materials, opportunities, and support to promote collaborative and socio-dramatic play.

~ **Connection with Other Core Domains:** The ability to relate with adults and other children influences children's development in all of the other domains. The underlying motivation to learn and explore the world around them is the desire for social contact. Language learning, problem solving, fantasy play, and social games all depend on social skills.

As a child's interaction skills grow, they learn from others through imitation and communication. Through social guidance and modeling, the child learns safety rules and basic health procedures, such as hand washing before meals.

Language, both native and second, is learned through social context and close interactions. An understanding of how things work is fostered through shared discovery and observation of others.

Culture, Family, and Community

Culture may be broadly defined as the quality in a person or society that is based on shared behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and values. As children interact with their families and communities, they develop a feeling of belonging, become knowledgeable about their culture, and begin to recognize and understand the value of diverse cultures. This family, cultural, and community awareness leads to an appreciation for diversity and builds skills for interacting effectively with others.

Standard 1.1 – Culture

Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Standard 1.2 – Family

Children develop an awareness of the functions, contributions, and diverse characteristics of families.

Standard 1.3 – Community

Children develop an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce.

"There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One is roots; the other, wings."

— Hodding Carter

Culture

Standard 1.1: Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Distinguish primary caregiver from others	The child may distinguish differences in caregiving and have a preference for how to be held and comforted.	Learn and practice caregiving strategies that match those familiar to the child at home.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Notice others' physical characteristics	The child may notice differences in people's features, such as a beard or glasses.	Speak openly, honestly, and respectfully to the child about differences she notices, and describe what she sees. Give her the message that she is safe and it is okay to notice and talk about differences.	
c. Interact with diverse groups and individuals	The child may interact with individuals who are a different gender, speak a different language, or have diverse abilities. The child uses these early interactions to develop friendships with people of varied cultures and backgrounds.	Promote play and interaction among peers by providing inherently social activities, such as a rocking boat or large cardboard box where two children can easily join together in play. Explicitly encourage play and appropriate interaction with peers who are different from the child without being intrusive.	
d. Know poems, songs, and stories from a variety of cultures and people, including his or her own family	The child may point to pictures, sing songs learned from home, or read/listen to stories from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Provide a variety of quality books, stories, songs, and poems from various cultures, homes, and ethnic backgrounds, such as "Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?" by Bernelda Wheeler. Encourage family members to share stories, songs, and poems.	
e. Explore gender roles through dramatic play	The child may explore gender roles when playing by dressing up in clothes different from his or her gender's typical dress/role, such as a boy puts on high heels and plays being the mom or a girl puts on a firefighter's hat/coat and acts as the fire chief.	Provide a variety of props and a respectful atmosphere for children to safely explore gender roles through dramatic play. Talk with children about their observations and listen to their comments as they explore gender roles.	
f. Demonstrate awareness and appreciation for own cultural background and heritage	The child may bring and show objects that represent his family, culture, or ethnic background and describes them with enthusiasm.	Provide opportunities for each child to describe aspects of his or her own cultural background through structured and unstructured experiences, such as a culture board (a bulletin board in which children bring items to highlight and share).	
g. Ask questions about other children and adults	The child may ask questions about people's unique personal characteristics as she becomes aware of differences and similarities, such as hairstyle, language, clothing, adaptive equipment, or ability.	Encourage the child to ask questions about people, and respond with respectful answers that do not make the child feel shamed for asking. Teach the child how to ask questions about people in a respectful way through stories and books, such as "Why Does That Man Have Such a Big Nose?" by Mary Beth Quinsey.	
h. Demonstrate respect for similarities and differences	The child may demonstrate a caring and kind attitude for all people, including people who are different from himself through behaviors of acceptance and respect, such as smiling or greeting politely and not laughing or making fun of people for their differences.	Model caring and kindness by upholding human dignity in all situations with all people. Encourage and acknowledge a child who helps another child in a self-care activity or program routine.	
i. Describe differences between people in different ages and stages	The child may describe differences between people of different ages and stages in terms of ability, strength, challenges, and interests, such as "She can't walk yet because she's just a baby" or "Grandma likes to play cards and take walks with me."	Read or provide quality children's books that depict people of varying ages, such as "Grandmother's Pigeon" by Louise Erdrich.	
j. Demonstrate knowledge as well as awareness and appreciation for own culture	The child may participate in a variety of cultural events and activities and can describe their purpose and context.	Ask family members to provide information, resources, stories, songs, and poems about their cultures that can be shared with the group and integrated into program activities.	
k. Recognize stereotypes that are culturally or linguistically unfair as well as other biased behaviors	The child may recognize and describe why an action, picture, advertisement, or story is unfair or biased against a particular culture or group, such as "That kind of picture might hurt someone's feelings."	Provide opportunities for the child to identify fair and unfair situations in pictures or actions, describe why they are fair or unfair, and problem-solve what can be done when something unfair is noticed.	
l. Demonstrate awareness, knowledge, and appreciation for another culture	The child may express through play, art, or interactions an understanding of a culture or language that is different from her own.	Introduce children to other cultures and languages found in the local community and state, including Indians, by using a reasonable balance of images that accurately reflect the people and families in the program and community. Invite people to the program to share their home language and to teach children and staff a few meaningful words that can be incorporated into the children's daily activities.	*Preschool*

Family

Standard 1.2: **Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for the functions, contributions, and diverse characteristics of families.**

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Focus on and respond to familiar voices or faces	The child may turn toward a family member's voice, stare intently at a caregiver's face, or kick legs and squeal when a familiar adult is seen.	Engage the child by responding to his or her facial expressions and vocalizations with intention and enthusiasm. This type of give and take may be as simple as a smile, sticking out the tongue, or repeating a cooing sound.	
b. Show preference for and seek comfort from a familiar adult	The child may smile or reach or in some way indicate that he wants to be picked up by a familiar adult.	Seek to consistently meet each child's needs in a way that is consistent with family practices.	
c. Exhibit separation anxiety or discomfort at the departure of a familiar adult	The child may cry or become agitated when a primary caregiver leaves. It is a developmental process for the child to discover that the adult will return after departure.	Establish and maintain consistent routines and when transition or separation is unavoidable, reassure the child by telling him what is going to happen next and when the person will come back; use familiar items/toys to comfort him or redirect his attention.	**Developmental Continuum**
d. Use gestures, words, or glances to stay connected with familiar adults	The child may glance from time to time toward a familiar adult when playing to check in, seek affectionate contact, and find reassurance.	Provide assurance to the child as she seeks to explore her environment that she is safe. Respond in positive ways whenever you see her checking in with you.	
e. Respond when approached by an unfamiliar adult	The child may demonstrate caution or "stranger anxiety" when an unfamiliar person gets too close.	Stay near the child in new settings and with new people; provide reassurance and comfort at the child's eye level (you may have to pick up the child or hold him on your lap).	
f. Identify family members verbally and through gestures	The child may name and point to family members when talking to or about them.	Display photos of each child's family at eye-level for the child or in photo albums placed around the room. Encourage the child to identify and talk about his family.	
g. Describe family members' roles and responsibilities and their contribution to the function of the family	The child may describe family roles and responsibilities in simple terms, such as "My mommy cooks" or "Daddy and I do dishes."	Provide children's books and props in the dramatic play area that reflect each child's home life.	
h. Describe family relationships	The child may begin to understand family relationships and describe them, such as "Mia is my sister and George is my brother." The skill will eventually include extended family members, such as cousins, uncles, and aunts, and more complex relationships, such as same sex parents.	Provide opportunities for each child to create an "All About Me and My Family" booklet with pictures, stories, and captions. Keeping this book current can be an ongoing process and the child can update it with new experiences. Talk with the child about family roles and relationships as he works on his book.	
i. Identify oneself as a member of a family and describe her family in a variety of ways	The child may tell stories about family routines or draw a family portrait that captures the unique features of his family.	Encourage children to draw family portraits and describe/tell stories about their pictures.	
J. Recognize similarities and differences between his family and other families	The child may describe how his family is alike or different from other families, such as "My family is just my Mom and me, but Ted has a Mom and a Dad and a Stepdad."	Read books about diverse families and varied family roles, such as "The Moccasins" by Earl Einarson. Along with discussing family similarities, encourage open dialogue about differences to assist each child in developing an appreciation for diversity.	*Preschool*

Community

Standard 1.3: Children develop an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Watch other children	The child may look at and watch other children.	Provide opportunities for the child to watch other children and adults as you simply describe who they are and what they are doing.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Interact with other children	The child may reach out to other children or try to take their toys.	Provide multiples of popular toys and play materials. Use dolls and soft toys to model caring behavior.	
c. Participate in parallel play next to another child	The child may play near another child without overtly interacting with that child.	Provide supported opportunities for the child to play with another child, such as rolling a ball back and forth or stacking blocks.	
d. Recognize and use the names of peers	The child may show recognition of peers and their names and eventually use them while playing.	Use each child's name when talking and interacting with them; sing songs that acknowledge and repeat children's names.	
e. Play the role of different family or community members	The child may try on various family or community roles during dramatic play, such as mommy, dentist, carpenter, or teacher.	Provide opportunities for the child to engage in dramatic play with props that promote role-play of community workers and their roles.	
f. Demonstrate a beginning awareness of the function of money and commerce	The child may pretend to pay for items while playing store or getting gas for the tricycle.	Set up pretend stores or restaurants to encourage children's dramatic play and emerging understanding of commerce. Take field trips to local businesses or invite the firefighter or musician to visit.	
g. Recognize community workers and describe their jobs	The child may label community workers and describe what they do.	Display pictures of community members in various roles, being mindful to portray men and women in both traditional and non-traditional roles.	
h. Demonstrate community-building skills	The child may play cooperatively and take an active role to help out in the program or group.	Assign children responsibilities that require cooperation, such as setting up a learning center, setting table for snack, cleaning up after an activity, or building a common structure in the block area.	
i. Describe what she wants to be when grown up	The child may draw or describe what she wants to do or be when she grows up.	Read books about different types of occupations, discuss occupations represented in the families of in the group, and give each child the opportunity to share career aspirations or dreams.	*Preschool*

Emotional Development

Emotional development is the increasing understanding children gain of themselves and their emotions as they develop competence and confidence in their own unique abilities as well as self-regulation.

Standard 1.4 – Self-Concept

Children develop an awareness and appreciation of themselves as unique, competent, and capable individuals.

Standard 1.5 – Self-Efficacy

Children demonstrate a belief in their abilities.

Standard 1.6 – Self-Regulation

Children manage their internal states, feelings, and behavior and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments.

Standard 1.7 – Emotional Expression

Children express a wide and varied range of feelings through their facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words.

"Every child needs someone whose heart beats a little faster at his first smile, his first step, his first words."

— Lillian Katz

Self-Concept

Standard 1.4: Children develop an awareness and appreciation of themselves as unique, competent, and capable individuals.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Explore hands and feet with fascination	The child may look at or mouth her hands and feet with interest and excitement.	Play simple games with the child as he explores his body, such as "Pat-a-Cake" and "This Little Piggy Went To Market."	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Notice and prefer people's faces	The child may spend more time or become more attentive when looking at people's faces or pictures of faces compared to other objects or pictures.	Spend time during caregiving routines, such as feeding and diapering, in face-to-face moments that include watching the child's face, smiling, and responding to the child's cues. Place photos or copies of photos of the child's family within view and reach of the child, such as on a picture board or in a child-safe booklet.	
c. React to hearing his or her own name	The child may turn his head or smile when hearing his name or seeing the sign for his name.	Use the child's name when talking to him and in playful interactions.	
d. Recognize own body as belonging to self	The child may demonstrate the understanding that parts of his body are parts of himself, such as pointing to his nose when asked, "Where is your nose?"	Encourage the child to locate and label parts of his body, such as pointing to your own chin and asking him, "Where is your chin?"	
e. Show pleasure or pride when achieving a skill	The child may wave her arms excitedly, smile, or her face may "light up" when accomplishing a skill, such as standing or walking. An older child may say "Look at me!"	Express delight and excitement to celebrate each child's accomplishments each day. Replace pat phrases, such as "Good job" with recognition of what the child accomplished, such as "You're standing up!"	
f. Use the words, "me" and "mine" to claim his or her property	The child may become possessive over toys, people, or objects and claim them with words and actions, such as "Mine!"	Offer time and support to the child as she develops skills and abilities and achieves readiness to take turns and offer toys. Be mindful that some cultures do not have a concept of "mine."	
g. Name different body parts	The child may name basic body parts, such as arms, shoulders, knees, waist, or hips.	Play games and sing songs about the parts of the body, such as "Eye Winker," "Head and Shoulders.,"	
h. Engage in play that he or she has chosen	The child may actively select an activity, toy, or play materials, and engage in play.	Provide a stimulating, well-lit, comfortable, and spacious environment with a variety of choices for active exploration and allow ample time for the child to become and stay absorbed in the play or activity.	
i. Describe personal preferences and interests	The child may tell others about her interests and preferences.	Offer the child meaningful choices throughout the day and encourage the use of language to describe the reasons for those choices and preferences.	*Preschool*

Self-Efficacy

Standard 1.5: Children demonstrate a belief in their abilities.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Respond to attention	The child may calm when held or massaged and become excited when talked to or tickled by a familiar adult, depending on the type of interaction.	Spend time with the child, gazing at each other's faces, cooing, talking, singing, and smiling.	
b. Smile at a mirrored image	The child may smile at her reflection, even before recognizing herself.	Provide child-safe mirrors close to the child so she can easily engage with his reflection.	
c. Show likes and dislikes	The child may communicate with gestures, facial expressions, and/or vocally when he likes or dislikes something.	Notice the 'language of the child"—what the child does in an attempt to communicate with you—and support the child's efforts to soothe herself, such as gently helping her to find and suck her fist as she has done before to calm down.	
d. Repeat an action to get an effect	The child may shake or drop a toy to get a desired effect from the toy or caregiver, demonstrating a beginning understanding of causality.	Provide toys and objects that produce different effects when the child acts upon them. Play games, such as retrieving the dropped toy or laughing whenever she shakes it, following the child's lead.	**Developmental Continuum**
e. Recognize self in a picture or mirror	The child may look at a picture and say, "Me" or "Baby" or even her name.	Talk to the child as she looks at herself in the mirror; label expressions and facial features. Sing and play games involving the recognition of self, such as "Where is Thumbkin?" or "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes."	
f. Accept and adjust when things do not go his way	The child may adjust to a disappointing event, such as spilling juice or falling down, showing accommodation or perhaps looking to caregivers for positive assistance.	Reframe potentially uncomfortable situations in a positive light to allow the child to see the options available to him to address the disappointment and restore things to the way they were.	
g. Act as though her experiences and needs are a priority to everyone or can be generalized to everyone	The child may act "egocentrically" in that his thoughts and feelings take precedence over everyone else's, such as speaking up in the middle of a story to point out a scraped knee or stating, "Can't you feel how my head hurts?"	Anticipate the child's actions at this stage of development and use these opportunities to describe, document, acknowledge, and delight in each child's actions, explorations, and accomplishments; share these experiences with the child and family members.	
h. Take risks to try new things	The child may climb higher on a play structure or engage in a messy activity, such as finger painting or touching the bread dough, for the first time.	Encourage the child to try new things and take risks by providing supervision and support (as needed), and expressing confidence in the child's abilities. This might mean providing implements or gloves for finger painting until the child is ready to choose to paint with his fingers.	
i. Exhibit independence	The child may state what he or she wants and claim "I can do it myself!"	Support each child's drive for independence by listening carefully to what they are trying to communicate. Provide multiple opportunities for the children to make choices as appropriate and practice emerging self-help skills.	*Preschool*

Self-Regulation

Standard 1.6: Children manage their internal states, feelings, and behavior, and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Fuss or cry when hungry, tired, wet, or over-stimulated	The child may make a different sound or cry for various needs, such as being hungry, tired, wet, or over-stimulated.	Learn to recognize the type of crying so that you can respond to the child's needs most appropriately. Establish consistent, trusting relationships with each child by responding to her appeals promptly.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Calm and relax when comforted	The child may have distinct preferences for what soothes and comforts her best and will eventually learn to calm herself with recognizable self-soothing techniques, such as sucking her thumb or pacifier.	Cuddle, snuggle, and physically nurture the child paying attention to her preferences; gentle touch throughout the daily routine is important to healthy development.	
c. Develop increasing consistency in sleeping, eating, and waking patterns	The child may develop a consistent schedule for eating, sleeping, and waking, depending on the child's temperament and the constancy of the daily routine and the consistency of the caregiver.	Notice and respect individual differences in each child's temperament and how each child achieves self-regulation. Matching the caregiving routines established in the home whenever possible provides a respectful and responsive continuity of care.	
d. Follow a few consistently set rules and routines	The child may anticipate routines when provided with cues and may follow simple directives, such as "Use your spoon to eat your applesauce, please."	Give the child multiple opportunities to meet her own needs, such as feeding herself or getting her sweater from her cubby.	
e. Rely on adults for reassurance and help in controlling feelings and behaviors	The child may look or move near to an adult when judging a situation or when needing verbal/physical assistance to guide his or her behavior.	Provide reassurance and support as the child explores her environment and develops skills for interacting appropriately with others. This can be done by making eye contact and nodding "go ahead," signing "stop," or moving toward the child while saying, "Let me help you."	
f. Strive for independence	The child may seek out her independence by testing a rule, such as running away, while attentive to a caregiver's response.	Create a few simple rules for daily routines, using children's words and simple picture cues that can be posted in the environment. Recognize and respect that a child's protests to limits are a normal part of development.	
g. Recognize own needs and take steps to fulfill them	The child may recognize her physical needs, such as "being hungry," and take actions to meet that need, such as getting in the cupboard for a cracker or asking for a snack.	Provide children with opportunities to identify and meet their own needs, such as open access to a water fountain and flexibility in snack time.	
h. Explore social cause and effect	The child may explore cause and effect in social settings, such as taking another child's toy and waiting to see what happens next or willingly giving up the red marker upon request and asking for it back when she needs it.	Read and discuss books about difficult situations that children may encounter and how the problems were resolved, such as "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" by Judith Viorst. Notice and encourage socially appropriate behavior.	
i. Show empathy for others when he or she sees the consequences of his or her actions	The child may reflect on and react to her own behavior, such as hitting a child, seeing the reaction, and then crying as she sees the consequences, perhaps even trying to comfort the child or express remorse.	Use the teachable moment – the child's personal experiences with social conflicts - as a guide for a one-on-one discussion with the child, when the child is in a thinking state, not an emotional state. Encourage the child to reflect on the problem, the possible solutions, and the emotions involved. Help the child to see how her actions had natural consequences.	
j. Participate in developing program rules and guidelines for group games and interactive play and pay attention when rules are not followed	The child may create and enforce rules for play and routines by saying such things as "You can't knock down someone else's blocks" or "You're 'posed to put your picture on the drying table." The child may even correct his own behavior with an "oops" and quick return when he forgets to take off his snowy boots by the door.	Encourage children to negotiate and compromise to create rules for the program and use group meetings to resolve challenges over rules when they arise. Encourage children to become positive advocates for themselves and others and to accept reminders graciously.	*Preschool*

Expression of Emotions

Standard 1.7: Children express a wide and varied range of feelings through their facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Release tension and get needs met by fussing, crying, babbling, yawning, laughing, or trembling	The child may cry, make sounds, and move his or her body to communicate the need for help, comfort, or attention.	Establish a consistent, caring, and trusting relationship with each child by creating a nurturing environment, using a steady, soft voice, and interacting calmly, gently, and confidently as you meet individual needs.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Calm self when upset	The child may develop preferred and consistent techniques for self-calming, such as sucking a thumb or rubbing a soft blanket.	Accept and accommodate a child's preferences, describe the child's feelings, and recognize opportunities for self-soothing.	
c. Shift attention away from a distressing event to manage emotions	The child may turn away or attempt to tune out distressing noises or too much stimulation as a way of preventing emotional overload.	Provide quiet space and calming routine to assist the child in developing skills for coping with stressful events.	
d. Use gestures, words, or facial expressions to communicate feelings and seek help in order to calm him or herself	The child may express negative emotions through words, facial expressions, or actions, such as hitting, biting, pulling away, or grabbing, and may turn to and need an adult to help calm and comfort.	Label and describe emotions observed during everyday interactions, such as "I feel happy you are here today" or "Sandy looks sad since her mommy said good-bye." Display pictures of people showing all types of emotions.	
e. Use words and dramatic play to describe, understand, and control impulses and feelings	The child may need assistance and support to use language and other positive strategies, such as play or social stories, when dealing with strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, or high anticipation.	Recognize that the young child may need assistance in expressing feelings appropriately and is likely to not be able to express emotions verbally. Offer the child appropriate choices to redirect the energy from strong emotions, such as rocking in a rocker, squeezing a stress ball, or yoga.	
f. Respond to another's emotional reactions	The child may notice and respond to another's emotions, such as offering a comforting blanket or a hug to a crying peer.	Model and give children ideas to encourage them to demonstrate empathy and offer acts of kindness or thoughtfulness towards others.	
g. Seek adult assistance for help resolving strong emotions	The child may seek to be near or be held by a caring adult when she is experiencing strong emotions, until she calms herself and becomes more relaxed and is able to manage the situation.	Respect the child's request for help and hold her or use other safe, respectful calming methods to help her resolve strong emotions and return with confidence to the group.	
h. Associate emotions with words and facial expressions and communicate his or her feelings	The child may label emotions, such as happy, sad, angry, or scared, when hearing a story, observing a situation, or seeing people's facial expressions, and express these feelings for himself, by saying, "I am happy!"	Encourage the child to recognize and label various emotions resulting from situations throughout the day.	
i. Express a deeper and wider range of emotions	The child may express more complex types of emotions, such as pride, disappointment, or embarrassment.	Read books to children and provide opportunities for dialogue about emotions and feelings that naturally occur during the day.	
j. Modify behaviors and emotions based on the environment and situation	The child may express differing levels of emotional intensity, depending on the situation or mood, such as more easily becoming frustrated when she is tired and hungry or displaying more difficulty cooperating with peers when there are limited play materials.	Pay attention to the various stressors each child may be experiencing when behavior challenges arise. Dealing with these stressors is often the best place to start, such as ensuring that the child is well rested or fed, providing enough play materials, or flexing the schedule.	*Preschool*

Social Development

Social development is the increasing understanding that children gain of themselves and others, and includes their emerging ability to build positive relationships with others.

Standard 1.8 – Interaction with Adults

Children show trust, develop emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults.

Standard 1.9 – Interaction with Peers

Children interact and build relationships with peers as they expand their world beyond the family and develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and showing empathy.

"Childhood is the one story that stands by itself in every soul."

— Ivan Doig

Interaction with Adults

Standard 1.8: Children show trust, develop emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Show preference for and seek comfort from a familiar adult	The child may turn toward the sight, smell, or sound of a familiar adult, smile or look intently at familiar faces, and eventually may reach to be picked up.	Establish and reinforce healthy partnerships between the child's family and other caregivers. Be responsive to the child's cues.	
b. Establish and maintain positive interactions with caregivers	The child may initiate and maintain interactions with adults through behaviors, such as imitating familiar gestures and sounds or pointing to an object.	Build a trusting relationship with the child by consistently and promptly responding to her needs for comfort, reassurance, and attention.	
c. Demonstrate feeling safe with familiar adults	The child may seek out familiar adults in uncomfortable or dangerous situations. Separation anxiety (crying at the departure of a familiar adult) and stranger anxiety (discomfort when approached by an unfamiliar adult) are common behaviors during the first few years of a child's life.	Provide continuity of care through consistent caregiving practices from one or two familiar caregivers. Limit the child's transitions among adults.	**Developmental Continuum**
d. Respond appropriately to familiar adults' greetings	The child may wave, smile, or verbally express acknowledgement when greeted by a familiar adult. The actions may vary due to the child's temperament and family cultural practices.	Respond to the child as she communicates by displaying attention and enthusiasm, imitating her actions, and giving words to the actions, such as "Let's wave good-bye to Sammy!" or "You see your Mommy coming, don't you!"	
e. Respond to requests made by familiar adults	The child may follow simple directions, such as "Give me the block, please" or "Go get your boots."	Provide opportunities, support, and encouragement for the child to follow simple, familiar directions.	
f. Use pretend play as a way of making sense of relationships	The child may engage in role-playing, taking on pretend roles, such as the mommy, daddy, or teacher.	Provide dramatic play props that encourage pretend play and respectfully represent the families and cultural backgrounds of the children in the program.	
g. Initiate and maintain interactions with adults using conversation or play	The child may initiate interactions, ask questions, and use strategies to maintain conversation or lengthen play with a familiar adult.	Observe with interest and listen carefully to what the child says or does, and expand on the message.	
h. Express appropriate affection for significant adults	The child may carry out actions to please adults or express feelings about adults, such as "I love my teacher."	Provide opportunities for the child to identify significant people in her life and arrange simple activities to show appreciation, such as making a thank you card for the new cook. Include familiar elders and visitors in the program as volunteers or helpers.	
i. Seek adult affirmations	The child may seek adult attention and affirmations by saying, "Watch me!" or "I made a picture for you."	Celebrate each child's accomplishments by using descriptive and encouraging words and displaying children's work for others to appreciate.	*Preschool*

Interaction with Peers

Standard 1.9: Children interact and build relationships with peers as they expand their world beyond the family and develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and showing empathy.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Show interest in other children	The child may show interest in other children by watching or following their movements with her eyes.	Provide multiple opportunities for the child to be near and in a safe position to watch other children.	Developmental Continuum
b. Respond to the emotions and actions of other children	The child may cry or show discomfort when seeing or hearing another child cry or may smile spontaneously at another child. Older children may attempt to comfort another child.	Talk to the child about what other children are doing and what they might be feeling.	
c. Interact with familiar peers	The child may babble back and forth with a familiar peer or may explore another child's face and body by touching or patting.	Provide opportunities for the young child to actively interact with other children for short periods of time.	
d. Play side by side with another child	The child may engage in parallel play (playing next to another child using similar materials, but not sharing materials or interacting directly with the peer).	Provide multiples of favorite toys and play materials to allow children to play in the same space when they have not yet developed the skills to take turns or play cooperatively with the same toy.	
e. Participate in turn-taking when assisted by an adult	The child may engage in a turn-taking activity, such as rolling a ball back and forth, with support from a teacher. Supervision and support is needed less as the child gains experience and develops the ability to wait patiently for short amounts of time until it is her turn again.	Provide simple turn-taking games with two or three children, such as taking turns shooting balls in a basket or taking turns washing hands.	
f. React to another child's attempts to take away a toy, and look to an adult for assistance	The child may react to another child trying to take her toy by pulling it away, crying, requesting an adult's help, trading the toy for another, or just giving up the toy, depending on her temperament.	The skill of sharing needs to be supported by sensitive adults who recognize that it is a complex, developmental skill that is nurtured by providing opportunities and encouragement and not forcing it upon children. Willingly giving up a desirable toy is more developmentally advanced than is sharing an apple where everyone gets a few pieces.	
g. Prefer certain playmates and develop warm bonds with peers	The child may ask about another child when they are absent from the group or talk about a best friend.	Acknowledge and help children express their feelings of friendship, such as helping them draw a picture or write a letter to a friend.	
h. Negotiate play with small groups of children	The child may engage in group play with a few peers and demonstrate emerging social skills, such as inviting other children to play and showing a preference for playing with certain peers.	Provide opportunities for children to play in small groups; acknowledge interdependent play and other positive social behaviors. Respect peer preferences while, at the same time, promoting acceptance and belonging of each child to a community of learners.	
i. Cooperate with others	The child may engage in cooperative play (playing with other children around a common goal) or may volunteer to help another child complete a task.	Provide thematic props and assistance for children to engage in cooperative play, such as creating a farm in the block area or taking a pretend trip to the post office or grocery store.	
j. Use problem-solving strategies when conflicts arise with peers	The child may negotiate with peers to solve problems, using increasingly less support from adults.	Teach children the steps for solving problems, such as identifying the problem, brainstorming solutions, choosing a solution, trying it out, evaluating how it went, and making adjustments.	*Preschool*

Core Domain 2: Physical

- Physical Development
- Health, Safety, and Personal Care

Introduction to Core Domain Two: Physical Development

Physical Development is the emerging ability of children to use their bodies with increasing purpose, skill, and control, as well as the progression of bodily growth and health. As children gain muscle strength and coordination, they use their bodies to connect with people and objects in the environment. This development follows a natural sequence. Locomotor skills involve gross motor movements in which the feet and legs move the body from one place to another. Roughly in order of how children learn them, these skills are:

- Creeping
- Crawling
- Walking
- Running
- Jumping
- Hopping
- Galloping
- Sliding (a sideways gallop)
- Skipping
- Leaping

www.yorku.ca/.../Fundamental%20Movements%20in%20Childhood%20

~ **Teacher-Child Relationships**: Teachers give children a strong base from which to grow and learn when they provide an appropriate environment for physical exploration and model safe and healthy practices. As infants develop emotional security based on their primary relationships with adults, they become increasingly confident about using their emerging motor abilities (small and large) to explore the environment, try out new skills, and learn about the world of people and things.

Young children depend on teachers and other adults to make healthy choices for them. They also need teachers to help them learn how to make good choices for themselves. Teachers can model positive health and well-being activities. They should support families in their pursuit of the same, for example, by encouraging and accommodating a breastfeeding mother through the first year, or by referring a family to a primary care physician, dentist, or specialist.

~ **Environment:** Children learn as they play. They need to be able to move freely in their environment to develop to their full potential. They are filled with energy and should be encouraged to use their bodies to explore the world around them, both indoors and outdoors.

Teachers need to create a safe space for unstructured exploration of movement with appropriate levels of challenge. Because children learn through moving, adaptation of the environment may be necessary to support the movement of a child, particularly one with a disability or other special need.

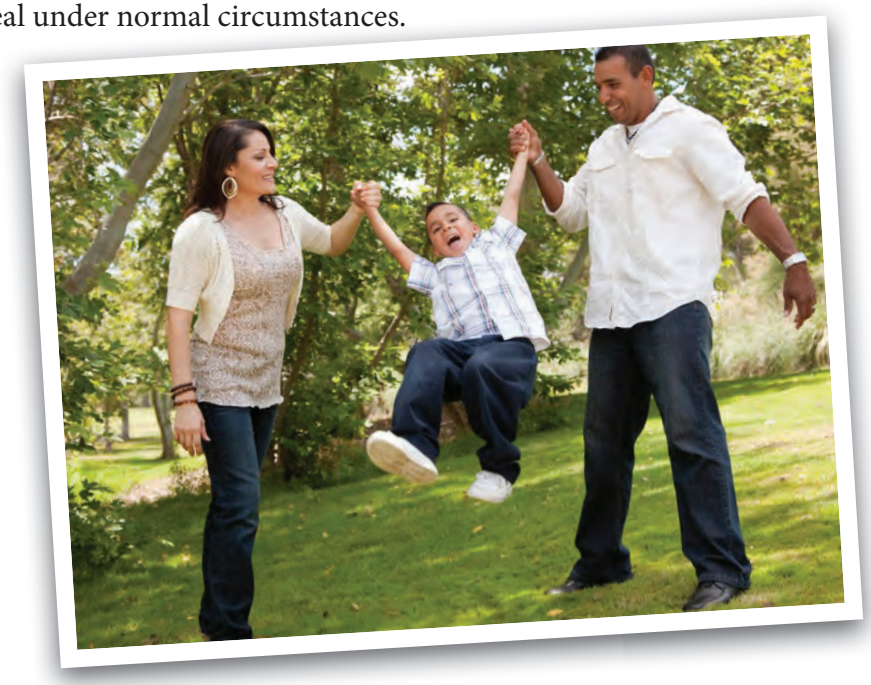
Children benefit from adult support. It encourages them to take on new challenges and to strengthen their developing sense of security and self-confidence. A teacher is in the position to observe what a child's current abilities are and set him or her up for the next challenge that will, with time and effort, provide the child with a successful accomplishment. For example, a non-mobile infant who can support weight on his or her arms might be ready to start reaching for things when placed on his or her stomach. A teacher can place interesting objects just out of reach and spend time laying on the floor with the infant to share in the exciting challenge. Further, a preschooler who is attempting to string beads or cut with scissors can be supported to learn these skills through structured activities and daily routines.

~ **Connection with Other Core Domains:** Physical development affects development in all other domains. For example, control of their arms and hands enables infants to communicate by gesturing and pointing. Fine motor development is necessary to participate in simple action songs like the Eensy-Weensy Spider and eventually to handle and turn the pages of a book, grasp a marker to scribble, or make marks. These are the first steps to later drawing and writing.

In the area of cognitive development, fine and large muscle development allows very young children to explore the environment and choose activities. A child's ability to move plays a big role in his or her interactions with peers.

Proper nutrition also plays a critical role in overall development. The lack of good nutrition has not only immediate effects, such as too little or too much energy, but also has long term effects on health and brain development.

Eating to fullness refers to eating until the stomach is comfortable and satisfied, without fear or worry and free of any external influence, control, force, bribe, or reward. It is the healthy feeling that is the result of eating a meal under normal circumstances.



Physical Development

Physical development is the progression of children's bodily growth and health as well as the emerging ability to use their bodies with increasing purpose, skill, and control.

Standard 2.1 – Fine Motor Skills

Children develop small muscle strength, coordination, and skills.

Standard 2.2 – Gross Motor Skills

Children develop large muscle strength, coordination, and skills.

Standard 2.3 – Sensorimotor

Children use all the senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

— Benjamin Franklin

Fine Motor Skills

Standard 2.1: Children develop small muscle strength, coordination, and skills.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Grasp a person's finger	The child may curl her fingers around a finger placed on her palm.	Provide a variety of interesting and safe objects for the child to hold and explore.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Explore toys and objects with hands and mouth	The child may use her hands and mouth to learn about toys and other items, such as sucking on her hands and fingers and reaching for toys, objects, and people.	Provide a variety of objects and offer a wide range of sensory experiences for the child to reach for, touch, grasp, and hold.	
c. Exhibit a variety of small motor skills	The child may clap or wave goodbye, transfer objects from one hand to the other, use thumb and forefinger to pick up food or small objects (pincer grasp), and let go of a toy to watch it fall.	Provide opportunities and safe materials that allow for play and practice using small motor skills and eye-hand coordination, such as blocks, shape sorters, and toys and materials (water or sand) for pouring, mixing, and scooping, and containers for filling.	
d. Scribble with a crayon or marker	The child may draw, paint, or explore emergent writing with a variety of tools, such as markers, crayons, pens, or pencils, and different mediums, such as paint, ink, or water.	Model writing and drawing in everyday activities and provide a variety of materials and opportunities for children to freely practice these skills.	
e. Engage in self-help skills	The child may eat using a spoon or other utensil, pour liquid from a small pitcher into a cup, or put on and take off clothing.	Provide opportunities and ample space for children to practice and develop self-help skills, such as feeding, dressing, and hand-washing.	
f. Perform increasingly more sophisticated actions requiring eye-hand coordination	The child may glue a small collage piece with accuracy, string beads onto a piece of yarn or pipe cleaner, turn the pages of a book, or open and close blunt scissors with one hand.	Involve each child in planned and daily activities that promote fine motor skills, such as setting the table, preparing food, or using zippers or large buttons.	*Preschool*

Gross Motor Skills

Standard 2.2: Children develop large muscle strength, coordination, and skills.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Experiences we might provide to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Exhibit physical reflexes in response to stimulation	The child may startle when surprised by noise or sudden movement, close his fingers around a finger stroking his palm, or start sucking when his mouth is touched.	Pay attention to a child's natural reflexes and appreciate their role in normal brain and nerve development.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Develop muscle tone and strength in trunk, neck, head, arms, and legs	The child may hold his head up or use his arms and legs to move forward or backward when on his tummy.	Provide tummy time on a safe and soft surface and a variety of objects to explore.	
c. Use developing motor skills to move more independently	The child may sit without assistance, roll from front to back, and eventually take steps with assistance.	Provide opportunities for the child to move freely and practice using large muscles. Plan outdoor play time daily.	
d. Develop coordination to use motor skills with toys	The child may use motor skills with toys and objects, such as throwing, rolling, pushing or pulling them.	Provide extended play time with a variety of objects to be touched, explored, pulled, and pushed.	
e. Demonstrate skills to move in the environment	The child may demonstrate a variety of mobility skills, such as crawling, walking, and eventually running.	Provide opportunities and ample space with a variety of elevations and surfaces for children to practice motor skills.	
f. Refine motor coordination and skills to play with toys and people	The child may squat to pick up an object, carry objects while walking, or throw objects at a target.	Provide safe toys for throwing with appropriate targets, such as bean bags thrown into a plastic tub.	
g. Demonstrate increased ability to use skills requiring balance	The child may walk up stairs, walk backwards, stand or hop on one foot, or walk on a balance beam.	Introduce a variety of surfaces both indoors and outdoors for the child to explore and use to balance on.	
h. Perform large motor movement alone or with others	The child may march, kick a ball, jump forward with feet together, walk, hop, gallop, slide, skip, leap, or run with control.	Make sure children have daily outdoor time. Visit parks or playgrounds to allow the child greater space and a variety of equipment to encourage movement of his entire body.	
i. Manipulate objects with large muscles	The child may throw or catch a ball or swing a bat at a ball on a tee stand.	Provide activities and materials that support the use of hands and arms in different positions that build upper body strength, such as painting at an upright easel or another vertical surface.	*Preschool*

Sensorimotor Development

Standard 2.3: Children use all the senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Respond to touch, movement, and sound	The child may turn towards a sound and look for its source.	Respond to the child's simple explorations and discoveries with quiet enthusiasm and gentle encouragement.	Developmental Continuum
b. Focus eyes on near and far objects	The child may focus on objects both near and eventually farther away, such as tracking an object with her eyes.	Place an attractive mobile out of reach but within the child's view, and mount child-safe mirrors for use during floor play and near the diapering area.	
c. Calm with assistance	The child may become calm when given a familiar blanket or a gentle massage on the skin.	Imagine yourself in the child's place, taking time to understand what is calming for the child and what is stimulating. Describe your observations of the child during daily routines and activities, such as "I see that you are getting tired. Would you like me to sing a lullaby?"	
d. Explore the environment with mouth and hands and respond to different textures	The child may seek out and explore new textures, shapes, and materials within the environment.	Provide objects and materials with a variety of textures, shapes, colors, smells, and sounds.	
e. Manipulate materials to explore sound	The child may bang on a pan with a spoon to make a noise.	Expose children to a variety of musical sounds, patterns, and rhythms, while encouraging them to make their own music.	
f. Demonstrate an awareness of her body in space	The child may walk around a table without bumping into it or stand an appropriate distance when talking with another person (not too close or too far).	Provide opportunities for children to explore spatial relationships, such as climbing over and under things, and using spatial terms as they play.	
g. Practice sensory integration	The child may push objects, pull a wagon, climb a short ladder, or swing or spin around, roll, or do somersaults.	Provide physical activities that integrate a child's movements with all of the senses, such as pulling a wagon full of blocks, swinging, spinning, or finger or feet painting to music.	
h. Adapt movements to specific situations	The child may bend his knees when jumping to soften the landing or move quickly to avoid a moving obstacle.	Create an obstacle course that allows exploration of movement, direction, and surfaces.	
i. Demonstrate concepts through movement	The child may imitate an animal through drama, sound, movement, and dance.	Play word games, such as "Charades" or "Simon Says" and sing songs that encourage full body movement.	*Preschool*

Health, Safety, and Personal Care

Children demonstrate healthy and safe behaviors that contribute to lifelong well-being.

Standard 2.4 – Daily Living Skills

Children demonstrate personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice self-care routines.

Standard 2.5 – Nutrition

Children eat and enjoy a variety of nutritional foods and develop healthy eating practices.

Standard 2.6 – Physical Fitness

Children demonstrate healthy behaviors that contribute to lifelong well-being through physical activity.

Standard 2.7 – Safety Practices

Children develop an awareness and understanding of safety rules as they learn to make safe and appropriate choices.

"The solution to adult problems tomorrow depends on large measure upon how our children grow up today."

— Margaret Mead

Daily Living Skills

Standard 2.4: Children demonstrate personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice basic care routines.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. React to participation in daily routines	The child may smile and vocalize during feeding and diaper changing.	Find ways to positively engage children during routines, such as singing and tickling toes during diaper changing and verbally describing various routines as they are happening.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Demonstrate increased ability to self-soothe and fall asleep	The child may establish associations for falling asleep, such as holding a special blanket or being rocked.	Provide consistent, dependable, and safe routines based on the child's preferences. Communicate with parents regarding sleeping patterns and strategies.	
c. Indicate needs and wants	The child may communicate hunger, sleepiness, or need for a diaper change by asking for his bottle, rubbing his eyes, fussing, or crying.	Recognize each child's behavioral cues and provide words to describe them, such as "You look hungry! Are you ready for a bottle?"	
d. Take an interest in meeting physical needs	The child may demonstrate a growing independence in eating, dressing, bathing, and toileting.	Provide opportunities, supervision, support, and sufficient time for the child to learn and participate in self-help skills.	
e. Participate in healthy routines	The child may wash and dry his hands, wipe his nose with a tissue, and brush his teeth with assistance.	Provide adequate time, encouragement, and opportunities for the child to participate in his own care routines and encourage efforts in dressing, eating, hand washing, brushing teeth, and bathing.	
f. Communicate with an adult when not feeling well	The child may begin to verbally provide information on her health status, such as telling the teacher when she is not feeling well.	Model words to describe symptoms of illness, such as "Jordy's tummy hurts" or "Your face feels hot."	
g. Participate in bathroom routines with growing independence	The child may indicate need for toileting and complete the task independently.	Collaborate and communicate with parents regarding their toileting preferences. Create an environment that supports each child's success and intentionally teach skills needed to support independence in toileting.	*Preschool*

Nutrition

Standard 2.5: Children eat and enjoy a variety of nutritional foods and develop healthy eating practices.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Eat to satisfaction	The child may indicate when hungry and full by squirming, pulling away from the nipple, or fussing.	Plan feeding times and practices around the individual cultural and feeding needs of each child—if breast-feeding, use/care of breast milk or if bottle feeding, use/care of formula. Talk to the child about fullness cues, such as asking, "Are you full" or "Is your tummy satisfied?"	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Explore foods with fingers	The child may begin to use hands and fingers to pick up and hold foods and put them in her mouth.	Treat meal times as opportunities to help children enjoy tastes and smells of food and become independent in eating.	
c. Consume a variety of healthy foods from all five food groups	The child may have favorite foods, try new foods and begin to recognize types of foods, such as vegetables or fruits.	Model nutritious eating habits; eat and talk about healthy foods with the children. Encourage trying new foods from all food groups, recognizing that the child may have established favorites.	
d. Consume appropriate amounts of healthy beverages	The child may express that she is thirsty and ask for water or milk.	Talk with children about the importance of water for their bodies, and provide independent access to drinking water throughout the day.	
e. Participate in meals	The child may help to set the table, select foods, and serve himself.	Allow children to participate in meal planning and preparation to their ability with respect for familial and cultural practices.	
f. Identify healthy foods options	The child may select healthy foods but may often need assistance.	Engage children in planting, growing, and choosing nutritious foods, such as having them pick out the type of fruit for snack or harvest and prepare a vegetable for lunch.	*Preschool*

Physical Fitness

Standard 2.6: Children demonstrate healthy behaviors that contribute to lifelong well-being through physical activity.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Attempt new large and small motor activities	The child may crawl, stand up, or eat with fingers and may need adult assistance as she tries out these skills.	Respond to the child's efforts with enthusiasm and encouragement, and provide support only as needed using the behavior of the child as a guide.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Participate in simple movement games	The child may imitate simple motions to songs, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or "Pat-a-Cake."	Engage the child in simple, fun, and interactive movement games, such as "So Big" or "Itsy, Bitsy, Spider." Make adaptations as needed to engage the child.	
c. Initiate active play, exploration, and engagement with the environment	The child may engage in active play as he moves around and explores the environment and his own capacity.	Provide ample space and materials for the child to safely explore and practice newly developing skills. Make small changes in the environment to encourage exploration, such as putting out pillows to climb over and around.	
d. Participate in simple games, dance, outdoor play, and other forms of movement	The child may actively engage in physical games and activities that build stamina, strength, and skills.	Integrate a balance of structured and unstructured fun and vigorous physical activities into daily routines.	
e. Engage in activities requiring new skills, without adult assistance	The child may engage in activities that are challenging without needing adult assistance, such as climbing to the top of the slide.	Model physical fitness. Play, dance, and move with the children. Take advantage of opportunities to modify the environment to help individualize the experience for each child, such as raising the basket for children who are able to throw the ball higher.	
f. Participate in physically active games with peers	The child may play physical games—both with and without rules—with peers, such as "Ring Around the Rosie" or "Duck, Duck Goose."	Provide opportunities and materials for active, noncompetitive games that encourage positive social and physical skills, such as "Follow the Leader" or "Hide and Seek."	
g. Recognize the positive feelings experienced during and after physical activity	Child may express how greats she feels after playing an active game, looking down from the top of the slide, or running across the playground.	Discuss the positive benefits of an active life with the children as they reflect on their engagement in movement activities, such as "Doesn't it feel great to stretch your muscles like that?" or "Wow, that fresh air sure feels good!"	*Preschool*

Safety Practices and Awareness of Rules

Standard 2.7: Children develop an awareness and understanding of safety rules as they learn to make safe and appropriate choices.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Show a preference for familiar people and recognize the difference between familiar people and strangers	The child may cry or turn away from someone new or unfamiliar.	Provide patience and support as the child develops an awareness of others. Puppets, role-playing, and songs can help older children learn who is safe to trust.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Respond to cues from a caregiver regarding obvious signs of danger or previous warnings	The child may pause before trying to pick up a cup full of water or look back at the teacher as she crawls toward the wall socket for cues before proceeding.	Provide constant supervision and positive guidance as the child explores his environment.	
c. Respond to warnings and redirection for unsafe behaviors and situations, although not consistently	The child may avoid danger and accept redirection but cannot be relied on to keep herself safe without supervision.	Consistently enforce simple, clear, and consistent boundaries regarding harmful objects and unsafe situations, such as moving the crawling baby away from the rocking boat when in use and always buckling a child in a safety seat in the car.	
d. Recognize rules and follow basic safety instructions	The child may follow simple rules and may also experiment with the consequences of not following the rules.	Develop a few simple program rules, with the children's participation whenever possible. State safety guidelines in a positive manner, such as "The sand needs to stay in the table" instead of "Don't spill the sand."	
e. Identify who has hurt or made him or her feel bad	The child may identify another child who has hit or pinched him either by name or gesture.	Teach children that they are strong and capable and can also count on you to keep them safe. Help children resolve conflicts by providing empathy, support, language, and choices, such as "Can you tell him how that made you feel when he pinched you?"	
f. Understand and anticipate potential consequences of disregarding rules	The child may be able to describe the consequences of breaking the rules, but may still not follow some of them.	Help children assess the consequences of their actions/choices by asking questions, such as "How did that choice work out for you?" or "What would you do differently next time?" and begin to teach a simple process of problem-solving.	
g. Recognize and describe the reasons for rules	The child may identify program rules and provide a reason why each rule is important.	Allow children the opportunity to create rules, modify them based on group discussion, and post them as a reminder.	
h. Make choices about behaviors or activities when presented with alternatives	The child may choose to play in the block area versus the book area or decide to walk or hop to her chair at circle time.	Offer each child meaningful choices throughout the day, such as "Do you want to sit next to me or next to Sierra?" or "Which book would you read if you were the teacher today?"	
i. Control or appropriately express intense emotions most of the time	The child may express intense emotions verbally or with understandable body language, such as exclaiming, "I am mad at you" and/or scowling, or waiting patiently to receive his party treat.	Teach children appropriate and safe ways to express their feelings and emotions, such as running around the playground to burn off frustration or quietly singing a favorite song until it is their turn. Read stories or books in which the characters resolve difficult problems, such as "Swimmy" by Leo Lionni.	*Preschool*

Core Domain 3: Communication

- Communication and Language Development
- Literacy

Introduction to Core Domain Three: Communication

Language Development is the emerging ability of children to communicate successfully with others in multiple ways to build relationships, share meaning, and express needs. Infants from every culture come into the world ready to communicate with sounds, words, and gestures. Their earliest cries let adults know that they are hungry, wet, or need attention. Their facial expressions and body language communicate pleasure and discontent. They coo and babble when others talk to them to continue a "conversation." As they grow, their babbles turn into words and soon after that, sentences. Communication may be verbal or through other forms of expression, such as sign language.

Literacy Development is the developing ability to speak, listen, read, write, and think. Language and literacy are an integral part of development for young children, and happen in a sequential manner. A strong foundation in the development of language proficiency is the key to developing literacy skills, thus a pre-requisite in learning to read.

> **"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."**
>
> **— Mother Theresa**

In building a foundation for speaking for a variety of purposes, young children need many opportunities to formulate language rules and communicate their ideas to others. Teachers help children develop language by promoting the child's self-esteem, responding to information, questions, requests, and interests. Adults provide these experiences in a playful manner with authentic activities reflecting everyday life. Encouragement, positive feedback, and access to a wide variety of writing materials are critical for children to acquire a sense of being a writer.

~ **Teacher-Child Relationships:** There are two benefits for a child who sits in a lap to listen to a story. The first is the enjoyment of looking at the pictures and hearing the story. The second is the pleasure of snuggling with the nurturing person who is reading. Both prepare children to be lifelong readers.

The period from birth through age five is a time for young children to learn what reading and writing are all about and to enjoy, explore, and experiment with aspects of both. It may not be developmentally appropriate for all children of this age to be expected to read letters and words, or write letters and numbers. Reading comes later, after they have had plenty of exposure to pictures, books, and stories. Writing follows after they have had experiences that not only strengthen the muscles in their hands and fingers but encourage them to draw and scribble. Many children come from families with a home language other than English. Learning their home language is an important part of maintaining relationships at home and their ability to develop concepts and thinking skills. Dual language learners face extra challenges as they learn to communicate.

~ **Environment:** Children are surrounded by the messages of language. Some messages come from spoken sounds and words, others from gestures and observations that are seen but not heard, and still others come from pictures and written materials. A print-rich environment is one in which written words or print are prevalent in the environment (e.g. books, labels, lists, posters, signs, literacy materials for reading and "writing"), and used in everyday ways.

When children are surrounded by spoken language or other meaningful forms of communication, they repeat the sounds and words they hear or see, and learn how to put sentences together and ask questions. When they see people reading and are exposed to many books, they learn that reading is enjoyable and valuable.

Writing is learned similarly, through a print-rich environment. Children observe others writing and imitate them. At first the marks on the page look like dots and squiggles. Eventually, they begin to look like shapes that will later become letters and numbers.

Young children need an environment filled with rich language and many opportunities to hear language and use language for a variety of purposes. The best preparation in the early years is to expose children to a broad range of experiences and to help them anticipate, participate, and recall what is experienced with as much verbal and written language as a child is developmentally able to absorb and produce. The more often this happens, the better able the child is to acquire the concepts and language that contribute to learning to read.

~ **Connection with Other Core Domains:** The development of communication and language skills supports growth in all of the other domains. It helps children learn about healthful routines, regulate their actions and thinking, understand their emotional experiences, and get along with others socially. It also lays the foundation for the acquisition of skills necessary to learn to read, write, and communicate effectively with others in school.

By the end of the toddler period, a young child's ability to understand and express spoken language or use sign language prepares him or her to hear and understand the sounds of spoken language (phonological awareness); continue to understand and use new words (vocabulary acquisition); and communicate through listening or watching (receptive language) and speaking or signing (expressive language).

Communication and Language Development

Communication is the process of exchanging information through a common system of signs, gestures, symbols, and behaviors. Language development is the emerging ability of children to communicate with others to build relationships, share meaning, and express needs.

Standard 3.1 – Receptive Communication (Listening and Understanding)

Children use listening and observation skills to make sense of and respond to spoken language and other forms of communication. Children enter into the exchange of information around what they see, hear, and experience. They begin to acquire an understanding of the concepts of language that contribute to further learning.

Standard 3.2 – Expressive Communication (Speaking and Signing)

Children develop skills in using sounds, facial expressions, gestures, and words for a variety of purposes, such as to help adults and others understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and ideas, and solve problems.

Standard 3.3 – Social Communication

Children develop skills to interact and communicate with others in effective ways.

Standard 3.4 – English Language Learners: Dual Language Acquisition

Children develop competency in their home language while becoming proficient in English.

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."

— John Whitehead

Receptive Communication (Listening and Understanding)

Standard 3.1: Children use listening and observation skills to make sense of and respond to spoken language and other forms of communication. Children enter into the exchange of information around what they see, hear, and experience. They begin to acquire an understanding of the concepts of language that contribute to learning.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. React to familiar voices, sounds, words, facial expressions, and gestures	The child may gaze at a familiar face, turn her head toward a familiar voice, or become quiet when she hears a comforting sound.	Surround—without overwhelming—the child with soothing music, pleasant sounds, and gentle, familiar voices. Talk to the child about everyday things when the child is attentive.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. React to simple, familiar words and actions	The child may look at or turn towards an object in response to a request, such as "Look at the ball," imitate an action, such as clap her hands when you do, or make a vocalization when someone walks near.	Name and describe sounds, noises, and voices that the child hears. Follow the child's lead by describing her actions along with simple imitation and expansion of the sounds she makes.	
c. Respond to simple "where" questions with words, gestures, or actions	The child may look at, point to, or retrieve a familiar object when the object is named or the child is asked, "Where is daddy?" or "Where is your blanket?"	Play word games with the child, such as "Where is your chin?"	
d. Follow simple one-step directions related to her immediate and visible context	The child may follow a single step command or instruction, such as "Cover your baby doll" offered as the child lays the doll in the bed.	Give simple and relevant directions to the child, adding visual and physical prompts when needed, such as pointing to the doll as you speak.	
e. Use one or two words to respond to "what," "who," "whose," and "where" questions in context	The child may correctly answer simple questions, such as: "What is this picture?" with "Dog" or "What are you doing?" with "Eating a cracker"; "Who is this?" with "Mommy"; "Whose coat is this?" with "Mine"; and "Where is the ball?" with "Here it is!"	Use simple questions in the process of facilitating conversations, without "drilling" the child. Open-ended questions, such as "What do you think might happen next?" encourage children to stay engaged.	
f. Respond to songs, rhymes, or stories	The child may show interest, laugh, and/or smile when told a silly rhyme or an engaging story.	Provide a language-rich environment by sharing stories, nursery rhymes, and picture books that are fun and interesting to look at, repeat, talk about, and read together.	
g. Follow a two-step interrelated direction	The child may follow a two-step direction, such as "Get the ball and roll it to me, please."	Present opportunities for children to follow simple directions, using visual and physical prompts when needed.	
h. Demonstrate an understanding of words that describe spatial concepts	The child may understand words such as "in" and "on"; "on" and "off"; "top" and "bottom"; "over" and "under"; and "beginning" and "end."	Use these terms naturally when playing with the child to encourage him to develop an understanding of positional words, such as asking "Where is the block?" and then describing his actions, such as "I see you put the block under the horse."	
i. Use and respond to "how," "why," and "when" questions appropriately	The child may ask and respond to more complex questions in the exchange of information.	Be responsive to the child's inquiries and interests, being careful to answer simply and wait for further inquiry from the child.	
j. Follow three and four-step directions	The child may—often with cues and supports—follow a three or four-step interrelated command, such as "Put on your boots, get your coat, and stand by the door, please."	Provide opportunities and necessary support for the child to follow three and four-step directions related to a single context, such as getting ready to go outside.	
k. Focus on the meaning of words to enhance understanding and build vocabulary	The child may ask and answer questions about the meaning of words related to her discoveries, actions, and inquiries as a way to build deeper understanding and vocabulary.	Provide accurate words and definitions for the child at an appropriate developmental level, using the child's interest and inquiries as a guide. Take advantage of opportunities to "look it up" or "try an experiment."	*Preschool*

Expressive Communication (Speaking and Signing)

Standard 3.2: Children develop skills in using sounds, facial expressions, gestures, and words for a variety of purposes, such as to help adults and others understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and ideas, and solve problems.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Use a variety of sounds to communicate	The child may use distinguishable sounds or cries when he is hungry, uncomfortable, sleepy, gassy, or afraid.	Pay attention to the child's fussing and crying, and respond appropriately.	
b. Make sounds or signs in response to people and the environment	The child may make gestures or sounds in response to people or the environment.	Introduce simple and new sounds, signs, gestures, and words to the child.	
c. Experiment making different sounds	The child may coo—"oo," "ah," or "oh"—or babble—"bababa," "dadada," or "mamama."	Imitate sounds and gestures the child makes and allow time for the child to repeat so you are going back and forth, taking turns talking and listening.	
d. Combine words and gestures	The child may wave "good-bye" while saying, "Bye-bye" or hold her arms out while saying, "Up."	Respond to the child's verbal and physical efforts to express needs and wants; provide opportunities for the child to experiment with words. Describe everyday things, routines, and play as well as what you are doing or what the child is doing, such as "I see you kicking your legs—that makes your muscles strong!"	
e. Use consistent combinations of sounds or signs to indicate specific objects or people	The child may say "dada" to mean daddy or sign "apple" by making a fist, placing the knuckle of the right index finger against his cheek, and pivoting his hand back and forth.	Read picture books, sing songs, and play name or word games with the child, including those from Montana Indian tribes, such as "Red Parka Mary" by Peter Eyvindson.	
f. Respond to simple requests or comments with non-verbal or verbal answer	The child may respond verbally or with simple gestures to comments, such as "I wonder where the ball went."	Value children's attempts to communicate whether verbally or nonverbally and encourage a child who has challenges communicating verbally to use nonverbal ways to express herself.	
g. Use single words to communicate	The child may use single words for a variety of communicative purposes both in play and in daily living.	Build the child's vocabulary by using his interests and spontaneous interactions to introduce new words and ideas, such as when the child says, "Milk" and offers you a cup or bottle, you say, "Thank you, I'm going to drink this good milk!"	
h. Ask others to label unfamiliar objects.	The child may frequently ask "What is that?" in her quest to build vocabulary and understanding.	Respond to the child's questions, requests, and interests.	
i. Produce two-word phrases	The child may imitate or produce a two-word sentence with meaning, such as "Daddy go" or "My turn."	Listen to and talk with the child, frequently encouraging the sharing of ideas and experiences throughout the day and building on their efforts, such as "Daddy goes to work" or "Yes, it is your turn to choose the book."	**Developmental Continuum**
j. Talk or vocalize to self during play	The child may talk to objects, toys, or imaginary people while playing.	Try not to interrupt the child's play experience; provide additional opportunities for the child to practice language and communicate his ideas through frequent opportunities for natural social interactions and peer play.	
k. Use multi-word phrases and full sentences	The child may communicate using correct sentence structure, such as "I'm wearing my birthday shoes."	Model correct sentence structure, and use the child's statements as conversation starters.	
l. Express feelings with words	The child may use words appropriately to express emotions, such as happy, excited, sad, tired, or scared.	Encourage children to label their emotions, make verbal requests, and/or use alternative forms of communication, such as picture cards or sign language.	
m. Initiate and participate in conversations with peers and adults	The child may listen to conversations, stories, and ideas of others, and share his own stories and ideas in discussion.	Provide opportunities for children to engage in conversations with others, such as at mealtime or before, during, and after a field trip.	
n. Use increasingly longer sentences	The child may use descriptive words for objects and actions, such as the red ball and running fast, resulting in longer, more complex sentences.	Foster a rich communication environment where children's efforts to communicate are heard and valued, such as writing down their descriptions of their art work or a story they are telling.	
o. Demonstrate correct grammar usage more consistently	The child may use pronouns, such as "I," "he," "she," or "they" and verb forms, such as "run," "rolled," or "kicking," correctly. At this stage, some grammatical rules may be over-generalized, such as using the "ed" for all past tense verbs as in "He runned."	Continue to model correct language usage and expanded sentence structure in conversation and story-telling; respect the child's determination to communicate by not correcting his or her efforts.	
p. Use new words	The child may spontaneously use newly acquired vocabulary after seeking its meaning, such as stating, "the tiger looks ferocious!"	Play games with words and rhymes; create a "word wall" to record the new and interesting words the children find in reading stories and listening to others communicate.	
q. Relate a story or event with increasing detail and coherence	The child may repeat or add to a story, relate a well-developed story of his own experience, or accurately repeat a familiar rhyme or song.	Provide opportunities for the child to tell a story or retell an event in a variety of ways, such as a story board, computer, or tape recorder.	*Preschool*

Social Communication

Standard 3.3: Children develop skills that help them interact and communicate with others in effective ways.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Gaze at familiar adults	The child may keep his eyes on the faces of familiar adults.	Spend time face to face with the child, smiling, talking, or singing in a soft, gentle voice.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Respond when name is said	The child may turn her head or look at the caregiver when she hears her name.	Use the child's name when talking to her and in songs and finger plays.	
c. Use gestures and sounds to communicate and interact with others	The child may use social conventions for greeting another, such as waving "hello" or "good-bye" or smiling.	Respond with pleasure and excitement at the child's attempts to communicate with you and others.	
d. Engage in give-and-take interactions	The child may maintain eye contact and use sounds, facial expressions, gestures, or words to engage in a back and forth exchange one-on-one with another person, each waiting for a response before replying, often in imitation.	Provide opportunities for the child to interact with other children and adults in playful activities, such as "Peek-a-Boo." Attend to the child's cues and respond appropriately to help encourage and maintain the back and forth exchange until the child loses interest.	
e. Respond to speech by attending to who is speaking	The child may listen while others are speaking or singing and engage verbally or non-verbally.	Frequently talk about what you or the child is doing or feeling and sing to the child often.	
f. Laugh, smile, or giggle at something funny	The child may laugh, smile, or giggle at things she finds funny or silly.	Tell or read funny stories or rhymes, and play fun language games, such as "Anna Banana."	
g. Initiate communication with others	The child may initiate communication with other people for a variety of purposes, such as making a request for something she wants using words or gestures.	Demonstrate active listening when the child is communicating by taking time and offering encouragement.	
h. Demonstrate turn-taking in play and conversation	The child may engage in back and forth conversations with a peer or adult, and cooperate in simple games or activities that require turn-taking.	Provide many opportunities for child-directed dramatic play where children are encouraged to use language to negotiate, explain, describe, etc. Provide props and activities that naturally promote conversation, such as play phones or working with a peer on a long-term project.	
i. Use language appropriately with different audiences	The child may use different words and communication styles depending on who is listening, such as using a higher pitched voice to engage a baby.	Provide opportunities for the child to participate in a variety of conversations with people of varying ages and backgrounds.	
j. Use language appropriately depending on the situation	The child may make a relevant comment during group planning, relate a story, or ask for information about something that interests her. The bilingual child may adjust her language choice and communication style to fit the situation or the person with whom she is communicating.	Offer time and opportunities for children to meaningfully participate in program activities. Value and celebrate the child's home language, as well as the community language, and find meaningful ways to bridge the two.	
k. Adjust intonation and volume of speech for a variety of settings	The child may whisper around a sleeping baby but call loudly to a friend across the playground.	Provide playful opportunities and encouragement for the child to learn and practice socially and culturally appropriate etiquette, including courtesies important to American Indians.	*Preschool*

English Language Learners: Dual Language Acquisition

Standard 3.4: **Children develop competency in their home language while becoming proficient in English.**

Please note that the stages of English language learners are not attached to specific ages, but rather are tied to a) when children are first exposed to a second language, b) their skills in their home language, and c) the support available to learn a second language.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy* Developmental Continuum *Preschool*
a. Use home or first language	The child may predominantly—and sometimes exclusively—use her home language for some time as she becomes acquainted with the new language. She may continue to respond spontaneously to familiar words in the home language, such as clapping her hands when she hears the word for "clap."	Prepare a welcoming environment, such as adding the new language to shelf labels and providing books, music, and other play materials in the child's home language. Encourage peers to learn words, phrases, and songs, in the child's home language	
b. Demonstrate a period of adjustment to learning a new language	The child may stop talking in either language as he listens to the new language and focuses on learning the meaning of unfamiliar sounds and words.	Establish a predictable daily schedule and post a picture schedule of routines and activities. Monitor the child's language use and communicate with family members to ensure that the period of silence is just a time of adjustment and not a developmental concern.	
c. Follow simple directions in home language or in English	The child may follow verbal directions in either the home language or in English when accompanied by gestures and cues, such as coming when the teacher signals with her hand while saying, "Come here, please."	Provide a picture/symbol communication board or booklet with pictures that represent common actions, transitions, or objects. Encourage both the child and his peers to use the tool to reinforce accurate communication.	
d. Speak in short phrases in English	The child may use short phrases or groups of words in English while still using the home language for longer sentences or more detailed explanations.	Provide opportunities for the child to practice English in natural and meaningful conversations, songs, and rhymes.	
e. Use English for informal purposes and rely on home language for formal learning	The child may use English in conversations, but for deep learning and complete understanding, still prefer the use of the home language.	Provide opportunities for the child to develop reasoning and cognitive skills in the home language.	
f. Adjust communication form for the audience	The child may use the home language with family members and use English with English-speaking peers.	Help English-speaking children understand the English speech patterns and vocabulary used by their bilingual peer.	

Literacy

Early or emergent literacy develops as children become aware of the relationship between the written and spoken word. Young children develop skills in using symbols, language, and images to become interested and competent in learning to read, write, and represent information.

Standard 3.5 – Early Reading and Book Appreciation

Children develop an understanding, skills, and interest in the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language as they also develop interest in reading, enjoyment from books, and awareness that the printed word can be used for various purposes.

Standard 3.6 – Print Development / Writing

Children demonstrate interest and skills in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication.

Standard 3.7 – Print Concepts

Children develop an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words and that there is a connection between sounds and letters (the alphabetic principle).

Standard 3.8 – Phonological Awareness

Children develop an awareness of the sounds of letters and the combinations of letters that make up words and use this awareness to manipulate syllables and sounds of speech.

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."

— Victor Hugo

Early Reading and Book Appreciation

Standard 3.5: Children develop an understanding, skills, and interest in the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language as they also develop interest in reading, enjoyment from books, and awareness that the printed word can be used for various purposes.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Focus intently on a book	The child may look at a book with no attempt to touch it.	Read to and talk with each child daily. Point out and talk about the illustrations when you show them to the child as you read and turn the pages.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. React when being read a book	The child may smile or coo when being shown the pictures in a book.	Choose books with fewer words and engaging illustrations for younger children. Use the child's cues to guide how you "read" the book to the child.	
c. Explore books with mouth and hands	The child may grasp and bring the book to her mouth to suck and chew on it. The child may shake, bend, or wave a book, or pat the pictures.	Provide easy access to a variety of cloth and board books throughout the environment and integrate looking at them with the child into the routine.	
d. Maintain attention when being read a book	The child may gaze at the page or point to illustrations while someone is reading a book to her.	Provide quality children's literature that includes the range of authors, illustrators, and genres.	
e. Vocalize when being read a book	The child may make vocalizations while pointing to pictures and may eventually ask, "What's that?" or use "book babble" imitating the sound of reading.	Encourage verbal exchange by responding to vocalizations, such as "Yes, the cow says moo."	
f. Choose familiar books and repeat words or vocalizations in books	The child may seek out familiar books and repeat vocalizations and words heard when she was previously read the book.	Use facial expressions, gestures, and varied voice tones and tempos as you read to children. Encourage their active participation as they learn sounds, words, phrases, and rhymes in familiar stories.	
g. Point at or name objects, animals, or people in pictures, books or drawings	The child may point to pictures and label or describe them either independently or when prompted.	Point to and describe what is going on in pictures in books.	
h. Indicate that the pictures on a page are related to the text	The child may pretend to read books she has memorized, using the pictures as cues, or use pictures to predict and "read" the storyline.	Have a conversation with the child as you read books, promoting her to say something about the book and then responding to her comments. This process is called dialogic reading and has been shown to enhance language skills.	
i. Purposefully explore books with respect to proper position and use	The child may open and close the book carefully, study the pictures, make sounds, and position the book correctly for reading.	Guide the child in how to handle a book gently, turn it right side up, and turn the pages as small motor skills develop.	
j. Demonstrate interest in books and reading	The child may bring a favorite book to be read, carry books around, or listen attentively when a book is being read.	Ensure that there is a variety of quality children's books located in child-accessible locations throughout the environment.	
k. Repeat simple songs, rhymes, or stories	The child may sing familiar songs, recite simple poems, or relate relevant aspects of a story.	Ask children to choose books or songs for program activities, and plan to read favorite books, sing selected songs, share finger plays, and retell rhymes repeatedly as requested.	
l. Use books, magazines, and other printed materials to enhance play	The child may pretend to read the newspaper or a cookbook while playing house in the dramatic play area.	Provide relevant reading materials throughout the play areas. Use books to enhance children's play themes, such as offering books about farms and farm animals when you observe the child playing with farm animals in the block area.	
m. Recognize print or symbols in the neighborhood, community, and environment	The child may read familiar signs, such as a favorite restaurant or food label.	Point out, read, and create booklets or murals filled with print and signs naturally occurring within the program and community environment. Encourage children to add to these collections and read them to one another.	
n. Demonstrate an understanding that print progresses from left to right	The child may follow the text on a printed page by moving her finger from left to right while reading or following along as someone else reads.	Follow the text with a finger as you read aloud.	
o. Identify the title of a book	The child may point to the title of the book or spontaneously say the title when the book is presented.	Point out the title, author, and/or illustrator on the cover of the book with each reading.	
p. Demonstrate an understanding that letters make up words, words make up sentences, and sentences make up stories	The child may point to or label letters in words, or identify similarities and differences among words, such as "My name starts with a "T" like Tara's.".	Model reading and writing for various purposes both in group and individual activities, such as writing a group "thank you" note after the field trip or recording the story the child tells about his drawing.	
q. Sustain attention to increasingly longer books and stories	The child may attend to longer stories or books, especially when there is animation and dramatic presentation or when the child is actively involved, such as imitating a phrase, word, or sound that is repeated in the story.	Introduce longer stories and books as children indicate the ability to attend and remain engaged, such as reading a chapter every day before nap/rest time.	*Preschool*

Print Development/Writing

Standard 3.6: Children develop interest and skills in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Experiment with grasp	The child may grip a rattle or other toy and later a variety of drawing and writing tools using her fist and fingers.	Provide safe and interesting objects for the child to hold, mouth, and visually explore.	
b. Watch others write and draw	The child may watch with interest as an adult or another child draws, paints, or writes.	Model writing and drawing with purpose, and connect meaning to the words and drawings, such as talking with the child about what you are writing down on the shopping list.	
c. Scribble on paper spontaneously	The child may use a crayon, marker, or pencil to make marks and scribble on a piece of paper or other writing surface and eventually describe what the marks are meant to be.	Provide access to variety of writing tools and supplies across the environment, with opportunities for independent use.	
d. Demonstrate a pincer grasp	The child may pick up crayons, pencils, and even smaller objects using her thumb and forefinger.	Offer healthy and safe finger foods, play-dough, pegs and peg boards, and puzzles with knobs that promote small motor skills.	
e. Experiment with a variety of writing tools	The child may use pencils, crayons, chalk, markers, pens, paints, sand, or write in the air with her finger.	Encourage and model use of a variety of tools for writing and drawing. Ensure that these opportunities are accessible and abundant throughout the environment.	
f. Imitate others who are writing or drawing shapes	The child may imitate what she has seen others write using traditional and non-traditional tools, such as making marks in the sand with a stick or drawing with a finger in pudding.	Provide imaginative experiences and creative materials for children to write with, such as using chalk on a chalkboard wall to record messages to and from the teacher.	**Developmental Continuum**
g. Demonstrate controlled linear scribbles	The child may include identifiable shapes in his scribbles.	Provide daily experiences for children to write using a variety of writing tools and an assortment of paper kinds, sizes, and shapes.	
h. Write letters, letter-like shapes, and inventive words	The child may write individual letters and strings of letters or letter-like shapes in groups.	Provide vertical wall spaces covered with large sheets of paper for children to draw/write and individual journals for each child to record important activities. Encourage children to read out loud what they have written.	
i. Use print in play	The child may write down the food order at an imaginary restaurant.	Provide writing supplies for children to use in dramatic play and encourage them to generate lists, write checks, create menus, or make signs related to their play theme.	
j. Demonstrate an understanding that print holds meaning and that thoughts and ideas can be written down	The child may ask an adult to label a drawing or write down a story that he narrates.	Ask the child if he would like you to write a description or story about his drawing or painting. Use his words and read it back to him. Be ready to take dictation whenever the child is eager to tell a story.	
k. Form letters to approximate conventional forms	The child may form alphabet letters, and indicate that letters stand for spoken sounds, although not always correctly.	Provide natural opportunities for children to copy both two-dimensional and three-dimensional alphabet letters available in the play environment.	
l. Write his or her own name	The child may write, copy, and correctly label the letters in her name with increasing accuracy.	Encourage children to put their name on their work, sign in when they arrive, and find their labeled places at circle time.	
m. Write familiar words using accepted writing format	The child may copy familiar or create pretend words, correctly writing left to right and top to bottom of the page.	Encourage children to write for a variety of functional purposes, such as making a label for the block construction or writing a note to a friend.	*Preschool*

Print Concepts

Standard 3.7: Children develop an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words, and that there is a connection between sounds and letters (the alphabetic principle).

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Show interest when stories are read	The child may watch the reader with wide open eyes and a thoughtful expression, gaze at the page, or point to a picture on the page.	Read to each child early in life and often each day. Provide a full array of books in locations accessible to children and throughout the environment.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Imitate sounds when looking at words in a book	The child may duplicate simple sounds, words, or phrases when being read or looking at familiar books.	Read to children frequently during the day, and repeat favorite books again and again.	
c. Point to words in the book	The child may point to words when being read a book, although not necessarily the word being read.	Occasionally follow the text with a finger when reading aloud to the child.	
d. Demonstrate an understanding that print represents words	The child may pretend to read a book or ask an adult to write her words on her art work or a note to her grandma.	Encourage each child to dictate a description of artwork or other projects. Recite aloud as you write names, lists, and notes.	
e. Respond to print in the environment	The child may notice and comment on the print she sees around her, such as the name on the box of cereal she eats. The child may further ask, "What does that say?"	Provide a "print rich" environment by labeling toys, supplies, and equipment. Read aloud signs/labels as you come across them throughout the day.	
f. Demonstrate an awareness that letters of the alphabet can be individually named	The child may identify letters seen in the environment or ask an adult how to write each letter in his name or in a word he is writing.	Set up a writing area in the environment where children can practice writing and copying alphabet letters from an alphabet poster or children's printed name cards that are always available. Include a variety of writing tools, such as pens, pencils, typewriters, or tablets, and an assortment of paper, stationary, notepads, and envelopes.	
g. Identify letters	The child may identify a growing number of letters, such as the letters in his name or sing the "Alphabet Song" pointing to the letter as it is sung.	Provide opportunities for children to see their names in print, such as attendance boards, cubbies, circle rugs, and birthday charts. Talk to each child about the letters in his or her name as it is being written.	
h. Match letters and their sound	The child may match letters with their sounds, such as explaining that his name, Sam, starts with the letter "S" that makes the sound "ssssss."	Present a two or three-dimensional visual of one letter and corresponding objects that begin with the same letter, emphasizing the letter's sound, such as ball and bell begin with the "buh" sound. Have the child select from a collection of objects those that begin with the same "B" sound, such as a button, a bead, a banana, a balloon, or a boat.	*Preschool*

Phonological Awareness

Standard 3.8: Children develop an awareness of the sounds of letters and the combination of letters that make up words and use this awareness to manipulate syllables and sounds of speech.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	Developmental Continuum
a. Respond to the sound of spoken language	The child may focus on the person speaking and kick her feet or move her arms in response to the rhythms of spoken language.	Talk to the child throughout the day about routines, what you are doing, what she is doing, and what is going on around her.	
b. Imitate sounds in stories, songs, and rhymes	The child may imitate a sound she has heard and say it over and over, such as "ba, ba" or "ga, ga."	Pay attention to the sounds that each child makes and repeat them back as in a conversation.	
c. Engage in familiar word games, songs, or finger plays	The child may sign or imitate the motions for simple games, such as "Pat-a-Cake" or "Peek-a-Boo."	Play these simple games with each child one-on-one, gently helping him to mimic the actions, if needed.	
d. Imitate rhyming patterns	The child may imitate rhyming patterns in songs, rhymes, and finger plays modeled by another.	Engage in songs and rhyme play. Read rhyme-rich books, such as those by Dr. Seuss.	
e. Discriminate and identify sounds in spoken language	The child may play with words and attempt to create rhyming words, such as "top" and "pop."	Encourage the child's creativity in using words and playing with words.	
f. Demonstrate an increased awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words	The child may identify words that begin with the same sound, such as Mary and Mona, or end with the same sound, such as Phil and Bill.	Make up silly rhymes to match with children's names, such as singing "Willaby, Wallaby, Woo."	
g. Demonstrate progress in rhyming words	The child may progress through developmental stages in rhyming beginning with identifying if two words or pictures rhyme, to filling in words to known songs, rhymes, and finger plays, to finally producing words that rhyme and making up her own rhymes.	Sing rhyming songs such as Raffi's "Down By the Bay," recite poems and rhymes, and read predictable books. Encourage creative generation of rhyming words even if they become "nonsense" words.	
h. Hear and separate words into syllables	The child may clap out the sounds (syllables) in words guided by an adult, such as clapping three times for the child's name "Sa-man-tha."	Model by clapping out the syllables in each child's name. Create a graph illustrating the number of syllables in all of the children's names.	

Core Domain 4: Cognition

- Approaches to Learning
- Reasoning and Representational Thought
- Creative Arts
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science
- Social Studies

Introduction to Core Domain Four: Cognitive Development

Cognitive Development is the building of concept knowledge and thinking skills. Through relationships, active exploration, and experience, children make discoveries about the world around them. Young children are motivated, curious, and competent learners right from the start. They are natural scientists and, like scientists, they are determined to uncover the mysteries of their environment.

A key aspect of early cognitive development, executive function, is not articulated as a separate domain, but is essential to children's overall ability to learn. Executive function refers to a core set of skills that develop from infancy to young adulthood and are reflected across domains. They allow children to engage in deliberate, self-regulated actions and rely on three types of brain function: working memory, mental flexibility, and self-control.

- *Working Memory* is the ability to hold and manipulate information in the brain over short periods of time – like following directions, taking turns, or rejoining a game after taking a break.
- *Mental Flexibility* is the ability to adjust to changed demands and priorities, solve problems, or apply different rules to different settings.
- *Self -control* is the ability to filter thoughts and impulses to resist temptations and distraction, stay on task, and focus.

Children are born with the potential to develop these capacities, but the foundation for executive function skills are shaped by their early experiences. Executive functions influence both cognitive processes, such as learning something new, and social emotional behaviors, such as delaying gratification and exercising self-control.

~ **Teacher-Child Relationships:** Relationships are at the center of early cognitive development. Young infants are fascinated with their caregivers' faces and voices. They learn through give-and-take interaction. As infants grow older, they use attachment relationships as a secure base for exploration. At the toddler age, children ask questions and share meaning with those around them.

As children's cognitive abilities grow, they gain a sense of mastery over their world. They develop memory skills and can remember where they left their favorite book and get it to read with a familiar adult. They learn about their family, community, and the roles people play.

To promote cognitive development, teachers should take cues from children and be responsive to their interests and needs. Research has documented that responsive care has positive influence on children's long-range cognitive development.

> **"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence."**
>
> **— Maria Montessori**

~ **Environment:** When provided with a stimulating, nurturing, and safe environment, young children use all their senses to explore their surroundings. In exploring their environment, they begin the process of discovery. Each object they encounter brings them face-to-face with information. They learn that their actions can cause something to happen – pushing a button makes a train move, for example. They learn concepts like up, down, more, less, big, and small. They explore the outdoors and learn about wind, rain, sand, flowers, leaves, and bugs.

Children notice the similarities and differences among objects and begin to organize them into categories. All four-legged animals might be called "doggie," for example, and all vehicles on the road "car." But it is unlikely that the child would mistake a four-legged animal for a four-wheeled vehicle.

Soon, the child's thinking becomes more refined and cats, dogs, and horses and cars, trucks, and buses can be identified separately. In addition, teachers need to set up an environment that is both appropriate and challenging for the age and stage of each child.

For children with disabilities or other special needs, specific adaptations to their abilities are necessary. The environment should be well organized and predictable. Providing a variety of age appropriate, easily accessible materials allows all children opportunities to pursue their passion for learning and discovery.

~ **Connection with Other Core Domains:** Cognitive development is nurtured hand-in-hand with the other developmental domains. Physically healthy and emotionally secure infants can focus on exploration and learning. Infants' growing ability to move their bodies allows them to explore environments and manipulate materials in increasingly complex ways.

> **"All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."**
>
> **— Pablo Picasso**

As children build concepts, language gives them a means to represent ideas and share meaning with others. Symbolic play not only enables children to experiment with concepts, it also gives them a means to explore social roles and feelings.

Approaches to Learning

Children's approaches to learning include the motivation, attitudes, habits, and cognitive styles that are demonstrated as they engage in learning and respond to different situations. The ways children express their approaches to learning may vary according to their temperament or cultural contexts. Temperament is unlikely to be changed; approaches to learning are more malleable.

Standard 4.1 – Curiosity

Children develop imagination, inventiveness, originality, and interest as they explore and experience new things.

Standard 4.2 – Initiative and Self-Direction

Children develop an eagerness to engage in new tasks and to take risks in learning new skills or information.

Standard 4.3 – Persistence and Attentiveness

Children develop the ability to focus their attention and concentrate to complete tasks and increase their learning.

Standard 4.4 – Reflection and Interpretation

Children develop skills in thinking about their learning in order to inform future decisions.

"The key is curiosity and it is curiosity, not answers, that we model."

— Vivian Paley

Curiosity

Standard 4.1: Children develop imagination, inventiveness, originality, and interest as they explore and experience new things.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Notice and imitate gestures	The child may open and close her mouth, stick out her tongue, or open and close her hands in imitation of actions she has observed in others.	Spend one-on-one face-to-face time with a child using the child's behavior as a guide for the response.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Repeat actions again and again to see effects	The child may drop an object from the high chair and repeat the action when the object is retrieved.	Engage in turn-taking games with each child using his response/behavior as a guide for when to quit.	
c. Attend to and examine small objects	The child may use developing fine motor skills such as the pincer grasp to pick up a small piece of lint and examine it closely.	Provide the environment and close supervision that allows the child to safely explore small objects, such as Cheerios.	
d. Investigate how things move	The child may shake a rattle repeatedly to watch and hear the objects move inside.	Provide a variety of interesting objects with movable parts and different sounds that encourage a child to move and manipulate them with varied results.	
e. Ask simple questions	The child may ask simple "what," "where," and "who" questions.	Encourage a child's questions and provide answers relative to her level of understanding.	
f. Show interest in new activities	The child may move closer and pay careful attention when she observes something novel and unfamiliar.	Showcase, explore, and discuss new places, peoples' roles in the community, and natural events in the environment, such as taking time to watch ants crawling across the sidewalk.	
g. Study materials to find how they work	The child may take something apart to see what makes it work.	Provide simple and safe objects for the child to take apart and explore, such as an old radio, clock, or typewriter.	
h. Ask more complex questions	The child may ask "how" and "why" questions, such as "Why is the moon round?" or "How do roads get built?"	Wonder aloud with a child about why things happen, investigating the answer together when appropriate.	
i. Develop personal interests	The child may focus on his own interests and passions, such as animals, trains, or art.	Read or watch a video about a variety of people and their interests, skills and abilities, including people in their community and state, such as Montana Indians.	*Preschool*

Initiative and Self-Direction

Standard 4.2: Children develop an eagerness to engage in new tasks and to take risks in learning new skills or information.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Use sounds, gestures, and movements to impact the environment and interactions with others	The child may whimper, cry, wave arms and legs, smile, coo, or frown to convey needs and/or to get the attention of another person.	Recognize and use the child's behavior to guide your response to her needs and social interaction.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Engage familiar adults and children in interactions	The child may smile, approach another child, or stand next to an adult.	Follow the child's lead and use observations of his play for the selection of activities whenever possible.	
c. Express a desire to take care of self	The child may be insistent about feeding or dressing herself.	Provide opportunities and time for a child to develop confidence and mastery of self-help skills.	
d. Approach tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination and inventiveness	The child may use a familiar toy in a new way.	Offer open-ended materials, such as art and building materials, and encourage the child to construct his or her own designs with the materials.	
e. Begin to take a few risks and try new ways of doing things	The child may try a different way of doing ordinary things or take on a challenge, such as piling up pillows and climbing on top or carrying a plate of sandwiches to the table.	Provide opportunities for the child to take reasonable and safe risks, such as climbing on a pile of cushions or helping with lunch.	
f. Make decisions and choices	The child may make a selection from several options presented to her.	Increase the choices available to the child, and ask what the child will do first, next, and last when she selects.	
g. Develop procedures and thinking skills for investigating the world and making decisions	The child may predict what might happen next or wonder "What will happen if I . . . ?"	Provide experiences designed to pique curiosity, such as magnets, feathers, buttons, or a shadow box, for the child to explore, categorize, and manipulate.	
h. Plan and achieve a goal	The child may plan to build a bridge and arrange his play to complete the bridge following the plan step-by-step.	Provide opportunities and materials for the child to set goals, make plans, and work on activities to completion.	*Preschool*

Persistence and Attentiveness

Standard 4.3: Children develop the ability to focus their attention and concentrate to complete tasks and increase their learning.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy* Developmental Continuum *Preschool*
a. Stare intently at faces, objects, and pictures	The child may stay focused on an object or face.	Provide new and interesting objects and pictures for the child to look at and explore visually.	
b. Hold the attention of an adult	The child may smile, babble, and/or sustain eye contact.	Play with each child one-on-one and face-to-face.	
c. Repeat an action that has produced a reaction in the past	The child may repeat an action, such as a smile or laugh, especially when achieving a result such as a returned smile.	Respond in a variety of ways to each child's engaging behaviors, such as making wide eyes and an open mouth.	
d. Explore objects by repeating and varying the approach	The child may try several different actions with any given object, such as bringing it to her mouth, batting it with a hand, or shaking it.	Provide an assortment of stacking toys, such as blocks, that encourage a variety of actions, such as stacking, dumping, and filling.	
e. Exhibit increased attention span with chosen activities	The child may engage in a self-selected activity for longer and longer periods of time in order to explore intently or to complete a task.	Adapt materials and routines to meet individual strengths, interests, and needs, using the child's engagement as a guide.	
f. Develop skills through repetitive practice	The child may repeat a newly learned skill with determination, such as jumping, by repeating the skill over and over until mastered.	Allow the child the time and opportunity to practice a new skill while providing sufficient support and encouragement.	
g. Persist in meeting a challenge, despite distractions or frustrations	The child may manipulate pieces until a puzzle is completed or show determination in learning to zip a zipper.	Offer appropriately challenging, engaging materials and sufficient time and adult support to achieve success.	
h. Sustain attention when peers or adults are the focus of the activity	The child may watch and listen attentively during story time or a game at circle time.	Use verbal and visual cues, such as "Look at this!" and modify expectations for sustained attention when developmentally appropriate and for children with special needs in this area.	
i. Work on a task that extends over a period of time	The child may begin an activity, such as painting a picture, go back to it later in the day or even the next day, and continue until it is complete.	Create projects that the child can work on over time, such as planting seeds and watching them grow or working on a complex Lego creation.	

Reflection and Interpretation

Standard 4.4: Children develop skills in thinking about their learning in order to inform future decisions.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Track faces and objects by moving eyes and/or head as the person or object moves	The child may focus on a brightly colored ball and turn her head to visually follow the ball as it is moved.	Provide playful opportunities for each child to focus on and track objects and faces.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Play interactive games with adults or older children that involve repetition	The child may play back and forth games, such as "Peek-a-Boo," repeating the same actions over and over for a time.	Interact with each child in consistent and predictable ways, watching for both subtle and obvious responses before repeating actions.	
c. Anticipate actions based on previous experience	The child may expect that Mom is leaving whenever Mom puts on her coat.	Point out connections and talk to each child about them, such as saying, "You remembered what happens when we get out your cereal bowl!"	
d. Experiment with play materials using familiar approaches with new objects	The child may shake a stuffed bear to see if it makes a noise like the rattle or try to stack boxes like blocks.	Provide materials that are similar but produce different results, such as a various sizes and shapes of boxes for stacking and building.	
e. Alter present behavior based on past results (or lack of results)	The child may do something different to elicit a teacher's help or attention based on what happened in the past. It's as if the child is thinking, "I did that and it didn't work, so I will try this instead."	Encourage each child to reflect on and talk about the results of past actions and identify what might be most effective for getting positive results.	
f. Relate an experience from the past to guide present behavior	The child may expect to wash her hands before eating.	Acknowledge when the child applies current knowledge to new situations, such as saying, "You remembered to ask for the peaches to be passed to you when you wanted more."	
g. Tell others about events in the past	The child may tell a story of something that happened to her.	Encourage conversations with each child one-to-one regarding what he or she has seen, done, and heard.	
h. Work out a problem or a challenge mentally	The child may try to solve a problem in her mind without resorting to trial and error.	Ask open-ended questions that encourage analysis and reflection, such as "How else could you do this?" or "What do you think would happen if you turn it upside down?"	
i. Use a variety of methods to express thoughts and feelings	The child may use art materials or body language to express thoughts and feelings.	Provide opportunities for the child to express his thoughts and feelings appropriately and offer a variety ways for him to explore thoughts and feelings visually, verbally, and through play.	*Preschool*

Reasoning and Representational Thought

Reasoning (and logic) refers to the ability to think through problems and apply strategies for solving them. Children's ability to think, reason, and use information allows them to acquire knowledge, understand the world around them, and make appropriate decisions.

Representational thought is the ability to picture or represent things using the mind. Representational thinking is a core component of symbolic play.

Standard 4.5 – Reasoning and Representational Thought

Children develop skills in causation, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving and representational thought.

"Learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialised abilities for thinking about a variety of things."

— Lev Vygotsky

Reasoning and Representational Thought

Standard 4.5: Children develop skills in causation, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, and representational thought.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy* Developmental Continuum *Preschool*
a. Act on an object to make sound or movement	The child may kick or swat at a mobile to create an effect.	Provide experiences and materials that help the child build an awareness of cause and effect, such as a rattle or keys on a ring.	
b. Repeat simple motions or activities	The child may drop several objects over the gate, one at a time.	Allow the child to explore freely in the safe environment while learning how his actions impact objects and people.	
c. Search for an object that moves out of sight	The child may search for a toy that has rolled out of sight or uncover a spoon hidden under a napkin.	Play games that encourage the child's ability to understand that objects still exist even if they are no longer visible (object permanence), such as "Peek-a-Boo" or "Hide and Seek."	
d. Use objects and people as tools to accomplish a means to an end	The child may use a broom to try to get a toy out from under the couch or use a block to climb upon to reach something higher than he can reach.	Provide the child with opportunities to try the same actions on different objects and to explore the use of objects as tools to achieve meaningful purposes.	
e. Use one object to represent another	The child may pretend to drink from a plastic block or fly a spoon like an airplane.	Engage the child in imaginative play while modeling the symbolic use of objects, such as pretending to bake pies with leaves, sticks, and dirt.	
f. Experiment with cause and effect	The child may try out different behaviors to explore the actions of objects and the reactions of people.	Engage the child in activities that demonstrate cause and effect, such as cooking projects and growing an herb garden.	
g. Try several methods to solve a problem before asking for assistance	The child may try to solve a social problem, such as trying to get a friend to give him the truck, before asking for help.	Encourage the child to solve problems and support him in the process by asking open-ended questions, such as "What would make this work better for you?"	
h. Notice and describe how items are the same or different	The child may categorize objects by shape, size, or color and tell why they are the same or different.	Provide various objects for the child to sort and encourage discussion about why and how the child sorted the items that way.	
i. Explain the effects that actions might have upon objects	The child may predict that the sun will dry out the mud puddles.	Provide opportunities for children to conduct simple experiments, allowing them to predict what might happen and evaluate the outcomes.	

Creative Arts

Children explore and represent their ideas, reveal their inner thoughts and feelings, find ways to understand themselves, enrich their world, and bring beauty to their surroundings through the creative arts.

Standard 4.6 – Creative Movement and Dance

Children produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation, with growing technical and artistic ability.

Standard 4.7 – Drama

Children show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation and imitation, and by participating in simple dramatic plots, assuming roles related to their life experiences as well as their fantasies.

Standard 4.8 – Music

Children engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities with growing skills for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment, self-expression, and creativity.

Standard 4.9 – Visual Arts

Children demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process as they use the visual arts to express personal interests, ideas, and feelings, and share opinions about artwork and artistic experiences.

"Our task regarding creativity, is to help children climb their own mountains, as high as possible."

— Loris Malaguzzi

Creative Movement and Dance

Standard 4.6: Children produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation, with growing technical and artistic abilities.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Move arms and legs in response to music	The child may wave his arms, kick his legs, or bounce when music is played.	Rock the child while playing or singing a lullaby. Play music with varied tempos, beats, and genres (folk, classical, rock, reggae, jazz); dance with the child and encourage the child to dance and move her body to music.	
b. Engage with people through touch and attention	The child may pat the breast while being fed or stay completely still (or wave arms and legs) when Mom sings.	Learn about infant massage and the importance of nurturing touch. Be sensitive to each child's preferences and encourage gentle touch.	
c. Use body for self-expression	The child may suck on his feet or kick at a toy hanging above his feet.	Encourage creative movement by providing an accepting, nurturing, and safe environment. Provide space and time for the child to explore her body and the environment.	
d. Move to a beat	The child may bounce, rock, or move to the beat or rhythm of music and vary his actions or the speed of the movement to match the tempo, moving faster or slower depending on the music.,	Sing songs that use body actions and have a strong beat, such as the "Hokey Pokey" or "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands," encouraging creative movement of various body parts.	**Developmental Continuum**
e. Explore a variety of ways of moving with and without music	The child may move to music or rhythms and explore various ways of moving different body parts.	Encourage children to move creatively using a variety of props, such as scarves, ribbons, or flags. Guide creative movement by saying, "Let's move like the tree moves in a gentle breeze" or "Let's wave like a flag in a strong wind."	
f. Alter movements according to the tempo (fast/slow) and dynamics (soft/loud) of music	The child may move or dance slowly to slow music and more quickly to faster music.	Help the child to listen to and identify natural rhythms indoors and outdoors, such as the clock ticking, water dripping, trees swaying, or balls rolling or bouncing, and discuss the tempo and dynamics.	
g. Move with balance and coordination	The child may participate in games and dance with coordination as she becomes aware of her position in space and acquires the needed motor skills and balance.	Provide creative props and costumes for the child to use during music and movement experiences, such as dressing up like circus animals to march in the parade and dance to the circus music.	
h. Participate in guided movement activities	The child may imitate movements and follow the directions and movements of others.	Provide opportunities for children to engage in structured movement activities, such as a Salish round dance. Teach children the movements and encourage them in the dance with Salish drumming music.	
i. Watch dance and creative movement performances with attention	The child may express appreciation for dance performances and the creative movement of others by paying attention, smiling, and clapping when it is done.	Provide opportunities for the child to observe others dancing, particularly culturally relevant dances, such as attending a Native American Pow Wow or a Celtic dance performance. If live performances are unavailable, use videos.	*Preschool*

Drama

Standard 4.7: Children show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation and imitation, and by participating in simple dramatic plots, assuming roles related to their life experiences as well as their fantasies.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Copy facial expressions	The child may imitate facial expressions or simple actions and gestures of others.	Encourage the child to imitate actions and expressions when being read a book or looking jointly in the mirror with another.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Imitate familiar actions	The child may pretend to sleep or talk on the phone.	Provide materials similar to those found in the child's home environment, such as baskets, blankets, mixing bowls, or small tools to encourage imitative play.	
c. Engage in solitary play	The child may play alone as a way to regroup or learn a new skill.	Provide a safe, quiet, and private space for the child to play alone. Solitary play is a positive skill, unless it remains the only type of play observed.	
d. Engage in rough and tumble play	The child may play actively with others, such as grabbing, chasing, and rolling around together.	Provide a safe place for active rough and tumble play with proper supervision and communicate expectations for such play beforehand, such as how to know when to stop.	
e. Imitate real life experiences in play	The child may pretend to cook dinner or feed the baby.	Provide real objects from the child's family culture to help the child role-play, such as cooking utensils or gardening tools.	
f. Role-play using stories from books, poems, or imaginary themes including the elements of drama, such as character, place, theme, and idea	The child may recall elements of a story or situation, use different voices to portray various characters, and use props in an imaginative way to identify place as she acts out a story or theme.	Read or tell stories or poems that facilitate children's dramatic skills and creativity, starting with very simple plots and roles and working towards more complex scenarios. Help children create plays of their own or dramatizations of familiar stories, such as "Caps for Sale" or "Three Billy Goats Gruff."	
g. Engage in cooperative peer play in which there is a shared purpose	The child may develop themes or plots, collect props, assume roles, direct others, and receive direction as he engages in collaborative play with peers.	Provide props, support, and sufficient time for children to engage in cooperative play by helping them to identify potential themes, such as reenacting a visit to the fire station by helping them to locate and create props.	
h. Create and direct complex scenarios based on individual and group ideas or past experiences	The child may assign roles to others, negotiate roles and plots, and make or gather props to act out or replay an experience or idea.	Provide props to encourage children to role-play and allow children to use the entire environment to act out dramatic play themes. Watch electronically or attend plays or stage performances in the community.	*Preschool*

Music

Standard 4.8: Children engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities with growing skills for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment, self-expression, and creativity.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Demonstrate interest in sounds, music, and voices	The child may attempt to engage adults by kicking her legs to music and kicking harder when it stops to get it started again.	Face-to-face with the child, make interesting sounds with your mouth and lips, such as blowing, popping, or smacking.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Experiment with a variety of sounds	The child may spontaneously make vocal sounds, shake a rattle or bells, or smack the table with her hand, in exploration of different sounds and their effects.	Respond to the child's sounds with the same sound and imitate the child's vocalizations or slap on the table. When the child responds by repeating the action, play a back and forth "game" until interest is lost.	
c. Respond to rhythms, songs, and different elements of music	The child may rock, bounce, or smile when sung to or when music is played.	Recognize and respond to individual differences reflected in each child's musical and movement preferences.	
d. Begin to clap on beat or echo clap	The child may imitate or spontaneously clap to music or rhythms.	Sings simple songs and play music; model how to clap and move to the beat.	
e. Show interest in musical instruments	The child may explore musical instruments to see how they work and the sounds that they make, such as shaking bells or tapping piano keys.	Provide simple instruments and other music-making tools, such as handmade drums from oatmeal boxes, for children to explore sound and learn about musical instruments.	
f. Sing along to familiar songs	The child may sing along with an adult to a familiar song, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."	Build a strong and varied repertoire of songs, rhymes, finger plays, and poetry.	
g. Change vocalizations to accommodate the tempo (fast/slow) and dynamics (soft/loud) of music	The child may move slowly to slow music and more quickly to faster music or sing quietly to soft music and change her voice for louder music.	Help the child to hear and identify natural rhythms in the program, such as the clock ticking, the water dripping, swaying trees, or bouncing balls. Discuss the concepts of "fast," "slow," "soft," and "loud."	
h. Experiment with musical words and sounds	The child may make rhyme or make up words to familiar tunes or create new tunes for familiar song lyrics.	Play a supportive role as the child experiments with and discovers music. Help her to create her own music and songs. Watch performances electronically or attend concerts in the community.	
i. Imitate and produce rhythmic patterns to familiar songs	The child may demonstrate common rhythmic actions to songs, such as clapping her hands or stomping her feet in rhythm to "Ride your Pony. "	Provide opportunities for children to explore rhythm with a variety of props, such as blocks, sticks, shakers, bells, or plastic tubs to drum on.	
j. Use conventional symbols to represent musical notes or invent symbols to represent sounds	The child may follow symbols that represent musical notes, such as the symbols for playing music on a color-coded xylophone, or create original symbols that represent vocal and instrumental sounds or musical ideas.	Make producing and listening to music an integral part of the child's day. Intentionally expose children to a variety of types of music and musical sounds, such as folk, classical, rock, reggae, blues, country, Native flute or drums, and jazz. Include music from a variety of cultures, including music from Montana American Indians.	*Preschool*

Visual Arts

Standard 4.9: Children demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process as they use the visual arts to express personal interests, ideas, and feelings, and share opinions about artwork and artistic experiences.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Gaze at photos, pictures, and mirror images	The child may stare intently at pictures, photos, and images in mirrors when presented with such items within an appropriate distance for the child's developing eyesight.	Provide a variety of interesting pictures within an environment that is interesting for the child to visually explore. Describe what you see and what the child is seeing.	
b. Use hands and mouth for sensory exploration of objects	The child may put toys, clothing, her toes, and other objects she has in her hands to her mouth.	Provide a variety of objects that are safe, have inviting textures, and interest the senses for the child to explore, such as a frozen teething ring.	
c. Gain control in grasping a crayon, pen, or paint brush	The child may hold a crayon, pen, or paint brush in his fist or whole hand eventually progressing to a three- finger grasp (tripod grasp).	Provide a variety of art tools for the child to hold, explore, and employ, such as large crayons or washable markers.	
d. Demonstrate interest in shapes, textures, and colors	The child may express preferences for certain colors, textures, or shapes.	Discuss lines, shapes, colors, patterns, textures, and arrangement with the child when looking at artwork.	
e. Mark paper with drawing tools	The child may make uncontrolled or controlled marks, circular figures, and scribbles on paper. As the child gains experience and fine motor skills, common drawings include mandalas, suns, radials, and people.	Encourage the child to talk about his art without asking him "What is it?" as many times the child doesn't know. A better question is "Tell me how you made that picture," or simply "Tell me about your drawing."	**Developmental Continuum**
f. Experiment with a variety of art materials and develop increasing ability to use art media	When presented with safe art materials, the child may use the materials to explore cause and effect, such as mixing paint colors or using the tip of the marker to stamp dots all over the page.	Provide safe and creative materials and support for the child to explore cause and effect, such as seeing what happens when the red paint meets the blue paint on the paper.	
g. Use different colors, surface textures, and shapes to create form and meaning	The child may use a variety of materials, colors, shapes, and textures to create drawings, paintings, models, or other artistic creations, such as using clay to create a snake or pizza crust and toppings.	Provide easily accessible art materials and encourage a variety of artistic methods, processes, and means of expression that are culturally responsive to the families of children in the program as well as the local community and developmentally appropriate for the child.	
h. Display a sense of wonder and ask questions about works of art	The child may find meaning and make sense of the world around him through exposure to art and the cultures from which it emerges.	Make works of art, such as magazine pictures or prints of famous paintings, available to the child, and ask open-ended questions to encourage the child to describe what she sees. Attend art exhibits and point out the artwork at the public library.	
i. Express feelings, ideas, and concepts about art	The child may express feelings and opinions about her art and the art of others, especially if it has been modeled for her, such as noticing how colorful a peer's painting is or expressing a feeling of happiness as she analyzes the mobile she made.	Give recognition to each child's artwork by exhibiting creations at the child's eye-level. Actively help families understand and respect children's early creative efforts.	
j. Create and appreciate works of art representing cultural lifestyles	The child may create or express appreciation for art that reflects his cultural background or that of other cultures and recognize it as reflective of that culture.	Display and discuss paintings that are representative of children's family and community cultures.	*Preschool*

Mathematics and Numeracy

Children develop the ability to explore ideas, make sense of the world, and find meaning in the physical environment as they increase their understanding and use of numbers and mathematical operations, such as measurement, geometry, and properties of ordering.

Standard 4.10 – Number Sense and Operations

Children develop the ability to think and work with numbers, to understand their uses, and describe numerical relationships through structured and everyday experiences.

Standard 4.11 – Measurement

Children develop skills in using measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time.

Standard 4.12 – Data Analysis

Children apply mathematical skills in data analysis, such as counting, sorting, and comparing objects.

Standard 4.13 – Algebraic Thinking

Children learn to identify, describe, produce, and create patterns using mathematical language and materials.

Standard 4.14 – Geometry and Spatial Reasoning

Children build the foundation for recognizing and describing shapes by manipulating, playing with, tracing, and making common shapes. Children learn spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space within the physical environment.

“Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.”

— Socrates

Number Sense and Operations

Standard 4.10: Children develop the ability to think and work with numbers to understand their uses, and describe numerical relationships through structured and everyday experiences.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Understand the concept of "more" in reference to food and play	The child may use facial expressions, gestures, or words to request more.	Respond to the child's gestures and actions using the word "more." Pair the spoken word "more" with the sign language for "more."	Developmental Continuum
b. Use simple numerical concepts in everyday experiences	The child may understand "more," "all," "less," and "some," and indicate understanding verbally and/or through action.	Describe actions and use simple numerical terms, such as "I see you have all the blocks and some of the cars," or "I see you have used less yellow in your painting than blue." Enrich the program environment with items that have naturally occurring number relationships, such as clocks, timers, calendars, telephones, rulers, and thermometers. Use these items in meaningful ways at the same time not expecting children to fully understand their usage yet.	
c. Use names of a few numbers	The child may say or sign the names of some numbers when asked to count, although not consistently saying them in order or recognizing the printed number.	Make learning numbers fun and meaningful by offering hands-on opportunities for the child to watch, play, and interact with others to learn number vocabulary, such as singing number songs, games, finger plays, and rhymes. Naturally integrate counting objects in the child's environment to help the child better understand numbers and how they can be used.	
d. Use correct terms to describe simple mathematical concepts	The child may use words or point to objects to demonstrate an understanding of concepts and terms associated with classification and comparison, such as "same," "different," "more than," or "less than," as in "This plate of cookies has more than that one."	Read books, tell stories, or use finger plays that reinforce the concepts of classification and comparison and provide manipulatives that can be organized using the concepts.	
e. Move from inventive counting to accurate rote counting	The child who initially uses inventive counting (1, 2, 3, 5, 20-teen) may move to accurate counting (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.), not necessarily counting actual objects but saying the numbers in the correct order.	Include counting as part of the daily routine, with and without manipulatives, and in other languages, when appropriate.	
f. Count objects demonstrating one-to-one correspondence and meaning	The child may count a series of objects in a group and tell the number, such as "There are five cars on the train," and understands quantity is not dependent on the arrangement of the objects, such as knowing there are five cars on the track no matter how much space is between the cars.	Provide a variety of materials for counting and sorting, such as collections of buttons, shells, eating utensils, or keys.	
g. Match numerals with the correct amount of objects	The child may match the printed numeral "7" with the group of seven buttons.	Provide materials for learning number recognition, such as number books or numbers from 0-10 made out of wood, felt, or sandpaper.	
h. Set up simple addition and subtraction problems	The child may describe simple numerical problems that involve "adding to" or "taking away" using objects, pictures, and/or symbols, such as asking "Show me what it looks like when we have 5 carrots and the bunny eats two of them."	Model the "adding to" and "taking away" of objects during naturally occurring activities, such as cooking, setting the table, or passing out snacks. Encourage the child who is ready for more structured learning experiences with number concepts by providing applicable opportunities using manipulatives.	*Preschool*

Measurement

Standard 4.11: Children develop skills in using measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Fill and empty containers	The child may fill a cup with water or sand and then repeatedly dump it out and fill it up again.	Provide opportunities for the child to experiment with volume, such as putting multiple sized containers in the water table.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Make simple comparisons	As the child plays with toys and materials of different sizes and shapes, she may use comparison words, such as "Please hand me the "big" block and "I'll give you the 'little' one."	Provide toys and materials that have incremental sizes, such as nesting cups, particularly paying attention to those items that might fit this category from the child's cultural background.	
c. Arrange a few objects in order by size, with assistance	The child may line up a few blocks of different sizes in order of size with a little help from a teacher.	Provide opportunities for children to compare length using everyday objects, such as yarn, paper clips, chopsticks, or strips of paper.	
d. Explore measuring tools	The child may use a ruler, measuring cup, measuring tape, balance scale, or other tool during play with a growing understanding of their correct usage or purpose.	Provide opportunities for the child to experiment with measuring tools, such as pouring juice at snack time or watering the plants. Place measuring tools in the areas where they would naturally be used, such as a clock or kitchen timer in the dramatic play area or scales at the science table.	
e. Use appropriate terms/language to describe measurable attributes	The child may use terms, such as "heavy" and "light" to describe weight; "full" and "empty" to describe volume; "near" and "far" to describe distance. The child may eventually progress to using more sophisticated terms, such as "gallons," "minutes," "hours," "tons," and "inches," and "feet" although not always correctly.	Talk with the child about measurement concepts during everyday activities and routines, such as saying, "You rolled that ball so far!" Post charts and posters that represent measurement, such as a children's growth chart or a graph of the distance to children's homes. Use proper measurement language while gathering the information, creating the product, and discussing the results.	
f. Recognize time as a sequence of events that relates to the routines of daily life	The child may recognize that she brushes her teeth after meals or that her parents pick her up after snack.	Talk about time in general and the sequence of events during daily activities. Post a visual schedule to further assist the child in predicting what will happen next.	
g. Organize objects without assistance	The child may arrange objects by size, volume, height, weight, and length, without assistance.	Provide materials and arrange opportunities for the child to sort, order, and categorize objects, decreasing the amount of support given to the child to sort independently. Discuss how he or she sorted the objects that way.	
h. Estimate measurement characteristics of familiar objects or events	The child may estimate length, volume, distance, time, weight, or height, such as guessing that he is as tall as the bookshelf, that 10 marbles will fit in the small jar, or that it will take a week for the plants to sprout.	Encourage the child to practice estimating and actually measuring with both standard and non-standard measuring devices, such as using the number of footsteps to measure the room or the number of paper clips to measure the table from one side to the other.	
i. Measure length by laying units end to end	The child may measure objects or spaces using traditional and non-traditional measuring tools, such as a measuring tape or a wooden stick.	Encourage children to estimate the length of objects or spaces and confirm their estimations using measuring tools, such as a yardstick, ruler, or measuring tape. Record the results.	*Preschool*

Data Analysis

Standard 4.12: Children apply mathematical skills in data analysis, such as counting, sorting, and comparing objects.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Group a few objects together by similarity	The child may group a few objects by color, shape, or size, with assistance.	Provide similar materials, sing songs, and read books that name colors or identify shapes and objects with similarities.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Collect items that have common characteristics	The child may collect similar objects together, such as gather all of the red blocks or fill a basket with leaves.	Provide natural opportunities for the child to sort and classify items, such as "Let's pick up all of the wooden horses first" or "The red blocks go in the red bucket."	
c. Match, sort, put in order, and regroup objects using one or two attributes	The child may arrange a variety of objects by one or two characteristics, such as shape, size, color, or texture.	Engage the child in experiences with sorting, comparing, and organizing materials both indoors and outdoors, with materials found in the environment.	
d. Convey the concepts and use correct terms associated with classification and comparison	The child may use words or point to objects to describe the ideas and concepts expressed by the terms "same," "different," "more than," and "less than."	Read books, tell stories, use finger plays, and provide materials that reinforce the concepts of classification and comparison.	
e. Identify how items in a group are similar	The child may recognize that all of the items in a particular group are similar and/or in an identifiable category or group, such as the toys on the shelf are all animals or that dogs, cats, horses, and deer are all animals.	Help the child notice similarities among objects in the environment while playing and while completing daily routines, such as picking up toys.	*Preschool*

Algebraic Thinking

Standard 4.13: Children learn to identify, describe, produce, and create patterns using mathematical language and materials.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	Indicators: Behaviors we might see	Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development	*Infancy*
a. Imitate a series of simple actions with assistance	The child may repeat a series of simple actions, such as patting and then rolling the dough when playing "Pat-a-Cake."	Present simple rhymes and games for the child to mimic, such as "Pat-a-Cake" or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or other culturally relevant songs and rhymes.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Classify, label, and sort familiar objects into a known group	The child may sort a collection of buttons by various criteria, such as color, size, or number of holes.	Engage the child in sorting and classification activities, encouraging the child to sort objects and describe how they are similar.	
c. Recognize patterns using a variety of materials	The child may see a pattern of beads that are strung in an alternate pattern of yellow, blue, yellow, blue, etc.	Help the child recognize familiar patterns in the environment, including those representative of the child's cultural background, such as patterns in art, Native beadwork, or quilts.	
d. Predict what comes next in a simple pattern	The child may accurately indicate the color that comes next in a pattern of beads that are strung together, alternating two colors	Offer hands-on activities to explore and describe patterns and relationships involving numbers, shapes, data, and making graphs in problem-solving situations	
e. Reproduce simple patterns of concrete objects	The child may string beads to copy a pattern made up of a two-part pattern, such as alternating blue and red beads or setting forks and spoons around the table.	Provide an environment rich in shapes, sizes, colors, and textures, and arrange multiple opportunities for the child to interact with these objects and play with the concepts of patterning.	
f. Reproduce simple patterns of sound and movement	The child may repeat a pattern of action, such as stomp, clap, stomp, clap, etc. or clap knees, hands, knees, hands, etc.	Encourage the child to create, identify, and describe patterns in objects, designs, pictures, movement activities, and daily routines, such as in setting the table or in singing songs with repetition.	
g. Describe a sequence of events	The child may relate her recollection of an event using terms such as first, next, and last.	Help the child to recognize and describe sequences in nature, daily routines, family or cultural activities, and in stories, such as reading predictable books or pointing out the features of the changing seasons in nature.	*Preschool*

Geometry and Spatial Reasoning

Standard 4.14: Children build the foundation for recognizing and describing shapes by manipulating, playing with, tracing, and making common shapes. Children learn spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space within the physical environment.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Develop an awareness of shapes	The child may place objects of the same shape together in a pile or container.	Provide developmentally appropriate and safe geometric materials in a variety of shapes and sizes, choosing from materials such as unit blocks, colored, patterned, and different-shaped blocks, stencils, and objects found in nature, such as leaves, sticks, and rocks.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Move body and materials in space	The child may sit himself under the table or on top of the chair, recognizing the positions are different.	Encourage the child to use a wide variety of gross motor skills in open spaces both indoors and outdoors and in relation to other objects in the space by creating a simple obstacle course.	
c. Recognize and describe two-dimensional shapes	The child may point to, name, or describe common shapes, such as circle, triangle, rectangle, square, diamond, or oval, regardless of orientation or size.	Encourage the child to explore materials, nature, and the environment (two and three-dimensional objects) through movement, hands-on experiences, and language rich opportunities.	
d. Describe different two and three-dimensional shapes and name common characteristics	The child may notice and comment on shapes in the environment, such as recognizing that a clock is a circle and the book cover is a square.	Assist the child in identifying shapes in the environment, such as the shapes of wheels on the wagon, a stop sign, or in a spider's web.	
e. Create geometric shapes	The child may draw, construct, or copy simple shapes, such as making circles with play dough or markers.	Provide a variety of materials for the child to create and represent shapes, such as paper, pipe cleaners, play dough, scissors, tape, or wood. Play a game of making shapes with their fingers or by lying down next to each other on the floor (take pictures!).	
f. Use position words that indicate where objects are located in space	The child may use terms or indicate an awareness of terms such as "inside," "outside," "behind," "in front of," "above," "below," "over," "under," "next to," "near," and "far."	Provide the child with opportunities to describe the position, direction, and distance of objects in relationship to his or her body.	
g. Demonstrate an understanding of size and shape relationships	The child may recognize that small items, such as shoes or hats, go in the small cubby, while boots and coats belong in the bigger cubby.	Use—and encourage the child to use—language, physical gestures, and drawing skills to demonstrate directional words, concepts, and spatial relationships with people and things in the environment.	
h. Experiment with mapping skills	The child may use program materials, such as blocks, pencils and paper, or clay, to draw or recreate his surroundings.	Encourage the child to explore mapping skills using program materials to recreate his or her surroundings, such as drawing a map of the play space, building a reproduction of the neighborhood with blocks, creating the clues and the path for a simple treasure hunt, or highlighting Indian reservations on a map of Montana.	*Preschool*

Science

Children develop an understanding and awareness of their environment (the natural world) and scientific concepts and practices as they develop skills in making predictions, testing their knowledge, and conducting scientific investigations. Children's natural sense of wonder and delight in learning about their world fuels scientific exploration.

Standard 4.15 – Scientific Thinking and Use of the Scientific Method

As children seek to understand their environment and test new knowledge, they engage in scientific investigations using their senses to observe, manipulate objects, ask questions, make predictions, and develop conclusions and generalizations.

Standard 4.16 – Life Science

Children develop understanding of and compassion for living things.

Standard 4.17 – Physical Science

Children develop an understanding of the physical world (the nature and properties of energy, nonliving matter, and the forces that give order to nature).

Standard 4.18 – Earth and Space

Children develop an understanding of the earth and planets.

Standard 4.19 – Engineering

Children develop an understanding of the processes that assist people in designing and building.

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder; he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, the excitement, and mystery of the world we live in."

— Rachel Carson

Scientific Thinking and Use of the Scientific Method

Standard 4.15: As children seek to understand their environment and test new knowledge, they engage in scientific investigations using their senses to observe, manipulate objects, ask questions, make predictions, and develop conclusions and generalizations.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Observe objects and people in the environment	The child may gaze briefly but intently at objects or people in the environment.	Encourage the child to notice people and objects in the environment and talk about what is being seen.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Use senses to examine objects in detail	The child may use sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell to explore objects in detail.	Provide materials that enhance all the senses, such as finger painting with scented paints while listening to music.	
c. Explore the features of materials, objects, and processes using all the senses	The child may touch, mouth, shake, and bang to gather information about an object's characteristics, such as whether it is soft or hard, hot or cold, or wet or dry.	Provide opportunities for the child to explore interesting and new textures, sounds, and sights.	
d. Identify similarities and differences among objects	The child may classify or sort like objects and describe their similarities or differences.	Provide collections of objects and a variety of containers throughout the environment that children can sort and classify, such as large buttons that can be sorted into baskets in the dramatic play area, shells that can be sorted into bowls in the science area, or big beads that can be sorted onto pipe cleaners in the art area.	
e. Participate in simple teacher-initiated investigations to test observations, discuss and draw conclusions, and form generalizations	The child may make predictions and test her ideas using simple experiments, such as discovering which objects will float and which ones will sink in water.	Encourage the child to become a scientist and test her predictions, such as after predicting which object will hit the ground first, the ball or the feather, she actually conducts an experiment to see if she is correct or not.	
f. Collect, describe and record information through a variety of means	The child may collect information and describe it through a variety of means, such as drawing pictures, making graphs, or constructing webs or concept maps.	Encourage children to make observations and record their observations in a variety of ways, such as creating a booklet with sketches of the leaves or insects that were seen on a walk around the block. Add non-fiction and fiction books with a science theme to the library area, as well as other areas, such as the dramatic, art or block area.	
g. Develop procedures and thinking skills for investigating the world, solving problems, and making decisions	The child may apply previously learned information to new situations, suggest more than one solution to a problem, or develop purposeful plans and carry them out.	Host a mini-science fair in which children display and discuss their use of the scientific method: formulate a question, make predictions, conduct a simple experiment, observe and record findings, form conclusions, and tell others about their research and results.	
h. Formulate answers to own questions using the scientific method	The child may independently make and test his ideas, such as investigating whether his sand structure will hold together better if he adds water to the sand.	Direct children's attention when they are engaging in the scientific process, using statements such as "It sounds like you are making a hypothesis."	*Preschool*

Life Science

Standard 4.16: Children develop understanding of and compassion for living things.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Show interest in animals and other living things	The child might look at, smile, coo, or babble when the cat or dog comes into view.	Provide opportunities for the child to observe and, if safe and of interest, to touch a variety of living things.	
b. Explore characteristics of living things	The child might pick up an earthworm or squat down to watch an ant while exploring outside.	Assist children to carefully examine the living things that they encounter by pointing out characteristics, providing vocabulary, and adding background information, and when necessary searching together for more information. For example, point out that the earthworm has segments and wonder with the children about what they might eat.	
c. Identify plants and animals in the neighborhood	The child may identify familiar plants and animals and their characteristics, such as labeling a dog, making the sound of a dog, and pointing to the dog's tail.	Provide the names and characteristics of plants and animals that children encounter in the environment, such as when you go on a walk you might examine the bark and leaves of the cottonwood tree and discuss how the cottonwood tree provides shade when it is hot outside.	
d. Describe simple behaviors of animals	The child may pretend that she is lapping milk, purr, and curl up to take a nap on a pillow just like a cat.	Provide many opportunities for children to observe different animals and to compare and contrast their behavior, such as placing a bird feeder within view from a window. Add props such as binoculars, books about local birds, and clipboards with paper and pencils to record their observations.	
e. Engage with plants and animals in a respectful way, without adult prompting	The child may express concern when an animal is sick or injured.	Provide opportunities for the child to nurture and interact with animals and plants.	
f. Identify the basic needs of living things	The child may understand that living things need water to live, and he may also generalize his needs to those of other living things, such as saying that the worm needs a home or that the kitty is meowing for his mommy.	Grow a garden indoors or outdoors, and help the child to care for the plants and talk about what they need and what they give back.	
g. Describe the relationship between living things and their habitat	The child may describe how the animals and plants in the pond support each other.	Provide opportunities for the child to create a simple habitat for a living thing and learn to care for it, such as creating an ant farm to safely learn about the species without harming it. Point out the similarities and differences between the habitat of the ants and the habitat of other living things.	
h. Observe and describe plants, insects, and animals as they go through predictable life cycles	The child may describe how living things grow and change, such as saying that a plant comes from a seed, that she was once a baby, or that the puppy will be a dog. Children may become interested in where babies come from.	Provide opportunities for the child to explore various life cycles, such as watching a tadpole turn into a frog or a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis.	
i. Investigate, describe, and compare the characteristics that differentiate living from non-living things	The child may describe the characteristics of living and non-living things and how they differ.	Provide many opportunities to discuss whether things are typically classified as living or non-living, while being respectful of the cultural beliefs regarding this type of categorization. For example, the Kootenai Culture Committee Director refers to rocks as living things.	*Preschool*

Physical Science

Standard 4.17: Children develop an understanding of the physical world (the nature and properties of energy, non-living matter, and the forces that give order to the natural world).

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy* Developmental Continuum *Preschool*
a. Use all of the senses to actively explore objects and their properties	The child may explore texture, noise, weight, taste, or color of a ball by mouthing, shaking, rolling, and throwing the ball.	Provide the child with a variety of toys and objects that excite the child's interests and stimulate her senses.	
b. Observe natural physical forces and phenomena, such as gravity, sounds, and variations in light	The child may notice natural phenomena such as gravity or variations in light and sound, and act upon her observations, such as dropping an object repeatedly from her highchair and observing the object and the adult.	Engage with the child in activities, following her lead, as she explores phenomenon, such as gravity. Talk about her observations and allow her to observe the phenomena, often again and again.	
c. Explore cause and effect	The child may repeat actions on an object in anticipation of a desired effect, such as winding up a wind-up toy to see it move or activating toys with moving parts.	Provide toys and objects that produce interesting effects while supervising the child for safety. Talk about the child's actions and the effects that her actions have upon the items.	
d. Explore how objects move	The child may experiment with movement, such as pushing, pulling, dropping, rolling, or swinging, and carefully observe the movement of people and things.	Provide toys and equipment that can be pushed, pulled, rolled, and manipulated to assist the child in exploring these objects and discovering the properties of motion.	
e. Use tools to explore the properties and characteristics of objects	The child may use magnets, magnifying glasses, scales, and rulers to investigate an object's properties.	Give children tools, instruction, and opportunities for guided practice in using different tools to investigate their surroundings.	
f. Compare, contrast, and describe objects based upon their characteristics	The child might point out the characteristics of objects as he uses them in play, such as saying, "This rock is really heavy, but this one is light."	Provide many different objects for children to explore, such as balls that are different sizes, shapes, textures, and weights. Encourage children to notice, discuss, record, and compare the characteristics.	
g. Notice and describe qualities of sound and light	The child may experiment with pitch and volume and make sounds with and without objects. She may recognize sources of light and discover that shadows are produced from light.	Provide opportunities to explore light and sound using various materials, such as a flashlight for drawing "designs" on the walls or glasses of various sizes filled with water to explore the variation of sounds when tapped with a spoon.	
h. Explore and describe how properties of objects and materials can be changed	The child may add water to cornstarch, fill a balloon with air, or mix yellow and red paint. The child may explore how making a change the effects a familiar activity, such as moving the flashlight in such a way as to create a longer or shorter light line or using a wooden drumstick to make a louder tone than the rubber stick makes.	Talk with the child as she explores the environment and properties of objects, and as she makes discoveries, help her to makes sense of her observations and draw simple conclusions.	
i. Plan and carry out investigations on the behavior of moving things	The child may experiment with objects to change their motion, such as creating a ramp so the car rolls faster and farther and trying out various angles of the ramp to see the effect on the car's speed and distance before it stops.	Provide materials and support as the child explores objects and properties of motion. Ask open-ended questions to guide his inquiries, such as "Why did the car go farther when you raised the end of the ramp a bit higher?"	
j. Use vocabulary that demonstrates a basic understanding of scientific principles related to the physical world	The child may provide simple explanations for scientific principles, such as why certain objects sink or float or how ice melts and water freezes.	Provide opportunities and support for the child to investigate the physical world through both planned and spontaneous exploration of objects and substances, such as what sinks and what floats. Provide rich vocabulary words and accurate terminology as the child investigates the environment.	

Earth and Space

Standard 4.18: Children develop an understanding of the earth and planets.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Express a sense of wonder for the natural world, including the sun, clouds, moon, and sky	The child may look at or smile while observing natural phenomena, such as watching the snow or rain fall or gazing at a sunny place on the carpet, the moon shining through the window, or the blue sky shining through the leaves of a tree.	Provide occasions for the child to be or look outdoors and observe the natural world, such as watching rain beat on the windows, leaves blow in the wind, or snow fall on the ground.	
b. Interact with natural materials	The child may play with snow, mud, water, sand, or other natural materials in the environment.	Provide opportunities for the child to play with natural materials, such as snow, water, or sand both indoors and outdoors.	
c. Identify characteristics of night and day	The child may identify both properties of night/day and the activities associated with those times, such as that night is when the sun goes down, the sky is dark, and when she goes to bed, and day is when the sun is in the sky and she gets up.	Discuss night and day, and allow the child to describe what she does during those times. Create a group booklet on "What we do during the day" where children draw pictures and tell stories of daytime events. Read books or listen to stories by American Indians about stars, the sky, and the moon.	
d. Identify or label earth's materials	The child may label natural objects, such as rocks, water, dirt, leaves, and grass.	Provide many opportunities for children to explore natural objects using a variety of tools, such as magnifying glasses and tweezers.	
e. Identify the weather and notice changes in the weather	The child may identify weather conditions, using such terms as sunny, rainy, windy or snowy, and describe the effects of the weather, such as that he needs to wear boots on a snowy day.	Talk with the child about the weather in a natural way as he observes the weather and the impact it has on him. Chart weather conditions for an extended period of time to investigate weather patterns.	
f. Demonstrate curiosity and ask questions about the earth, sun, or moon	The child may show interest in learning more about the earth and ask questions related to her observations, including why questions, such as "What is the moon made of?" or "Why is the sky blue?"	Encourage the child to ask questions, and provide simple answers based on her level of understanding. Often a good place to start is to ask the child, "What do you think the moon is made of?" or "Why do you think the sky is blue?" and build on her existing ideas. Also, read books based on children's interests and level of understanding to encourage their curiosity and interests and to provide information.	**Developmental Continuum**
g. Develop vocabulary for the natural features of the earth and sky	The child may identify and describe the earth's materials, such as rocks, dirt, mud, clay, soil, sand, rivers, mountains, or ponds, and identify/describe the basic features of the sky using terms such as sun, moon, stars, or clouds	Collect and classify natural materials, such as rocks or shells, with the child, Model appropriate vocabulary as you interact with the objects. Encourage the child to draw pictures, give information, or tell stories about the collections.	
h. Investigate properties of natural objects and the environment	The child may explore rocks, soil, or water, and tell others what he knows about these materials. He may describe physical characteristics and behaviors of animals, such as how the rabbit moves and what it eats, and understand the concepts of "living" and "nonliving," such as that living things breathe and grow, although he may associate living things primarily with things that move.	Encourage children to explore natural materials outdoors in creative ways, such as making sand castles, rock gardens, and mud pies.	
i. Interact with and explore a variety of natural outdoor environments	The child may extensively explore a pond, creek, meadow, forest, or neighborhood park.	Provide lengthy opportunities for children to explore outdoor environments, such as investigating a patch of grass using a magnifying glass and recording her observations through drawings or taking pictures.	
j. Describe the change of seasons	The child may describe the four seasons and how the environment and her activities change as a result, such as that summer is the time for swimming because it is warm and sunny, and winter is the time for sledding because it is cold and snowy.	Encourage the child to observe and talk about the weather and how the weather impacts her activities.	
k. Classify objects by attributes or characteristics	The child may sort natural objects by size, shape, color, smell, texture, etc. and describe their attributes, such as "These rocks are all round, smooth and red." The child may make generalizations across and within species, such as that most plants have stems and come from seeds, or that most birds can fly.	Create collections of natural materials for the child to sort and classify, such as a collection of river rocks that the child can explore, both dry and wet. For example, the child may use a spray water bottle to bring out the colors and then sort them accordingly into bowls. Encourage the child to notice several characteristics of the rocks and sort them by various criteria, such as color and size.	
l. Make observations of the moon, sun, clouds, and sky, and record them over time	The child may notice and chart changes observed in the sky, such as watching the moon change to a full moon over the month.	Encourage the child to observe the changes in the moon over time and record her observations over time, describing where she saw the moon in the sky and what it looked like.	*Preschool*

Engineering

Standard 4.19: Children develop an understanding of the processes that assist people in designing and building.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Investigate immediate surroundings	The child may use his senses to explore and experiment with different items in his environment.	Provide a variety of changing materials for children to explore and investigate. Model curiosity in play and routines with the child.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Attempt to solve a challenge encountered in play	The child may use an object to extend his reach when he is unable to reach the object by just using his body.	Allow children opportunities to try and figure out a resolution to a challenge rather than immediately resolving the challenge for them.	
c. Continue to try new ways to resolve a problem if the first solution does not work	The child may make numerous attempts to solve a problem, such as repeatedly trying to make a bridge out of blocks or make a tennis ball roll through a pathway of ramps.	Encourage children to try alternative and new solutions. Provide suggestions if the child is becoming frustrated, such as "I wonder what would happen if you . . . ."	
d. Use simple machines and materials during play	The child may use ramps, gears, wheels, pulleys, and levers as essential components of her play theme.	Label and demonstrate the use of simple machines. Discuss how simple machines work and give children many opportunities to use and experiment with them.	
e. Design, build, and test solutions during play	The child may experiment with testing solutions during her play, such as trying various arrangements when building with blocks.	Provide enough time for children to engage in "deep play" where they have the opportunity to test several solutions. Take photos or make sketches of children's designs and solutions and encourage them to continue over subsequent days.	
f. Design, build, and test solutions when presented with a challenge	The child may try out several different ideas when presented with a challenge orchestrated by a teacher.	Provide challenges for the children, such as "Build the tallest block tower you can." Assist the children to discuss their design and to compare and contrast different structures.	
g. Use a formalized design process of investigation, invention, implementation, and evaluation with guidance	The child may design an object such as a musical instrument that makes sound using a systematic design process and guidelines from the teacher.	Guide children through the design process of building something, such as a musical instrument that makes sound, a simple machine out of Legos, or a boat that propels itself. Ensure that the object being designed is of high interest to the children.	
h. Use a formalized design process of investigation, invention, implementation, and evaluation independently	The child may use the design steps to independently create an object.	Provide plentiful materials, time, and support for children who are interested in designing an object.	*Preschool*

Social Studies

Children develop an awareness and understanding of how people interact and relate to each other and the world around them in the past, present, and future.

Standard 4.20 – Time (History)

Children develop an understanding of the concept of time, including past, present, and future as they are able to recognize recurring experiences that are part of the daily routine.

Standard 4.21 – Places, Regions and Spatial Awareness (Geography)

Children develop an understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics. Children develop an understanding of how they are affected by—and the effect that they can have upon—the world around them.

Standard 4.22 – The Physical World (Ecology)

Children become mindful of their environment and their interdependence on the natural world; they learn how to care for the environment and why it is important.

Standard 4.23 – Technology

Children become aware of technological tools and explore and learn the ways to use these resources in a developmentally appropriate manner.

"While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about."

— Angela Schwindt

Time (History)

Standard 4.20: Children develop an understanding of the concept of time, including past, present, and future as they are able to recognize recurring experiences that are part of the daily routine.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Anticipate a predictable event	The child may become upset when the caregiver puts on a coat, recognizing that he or she may depart; or the child may become excited when she sees her bib and spoon, expecting meal time is near.	Discuss routines with the child and describe what happens before and after.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Recognize the beginning and ending of an event	The child may clap when the song is over or try to take off her bib when her bowl and spoon are removed.	Label events and routines using terms such as "here we go," "all done," "today," "next," "tomorrow," "later," or "when you were a baby."	
c. Recall the immediate past	The child may point to what she just finished doing or use simple words to describe an event in her immediate past.	Look at photos or videos of the child and describe what you both see.	
d. Anticipate recurring events	The child may connect likely events by saying, "After we eat lunch, we read stories."	Provide a consistent and predictable routine for the child; talk about upcoming events or activities and reconsider the ones in the past.	
e. Experiment with general terms related to the elements of time	The child may say, "Today we are going to Granny's."	Use correct terms when describing time and sequence of events.	
f. Make simple predictions	The child may make predictions about the future, such as "When I get big . . ." or "When my mom comes. . . . ."	Encourage children to make and evaluate predictions, such as "How many cups of water will it take to fill the bucket" or "What will happen if we add water to the cornstarch?"	
g. Use terms relative to time sequence	The child may use time-related words and concepts, such as "first," "last," "morning," "night," "yesterday," and "today," although not always correctly.	Provide access to open-ended learning experiences with materials such as clocks, watches, timers, and calendars.	
h. Demonstrate an awareness of the past	The child may indicate awareness of her past and use phrases, such as "When I was a baby. . . ."	Tell stories from the past, including those that begin with "A long time ago. . . ." Encourage family members to talk with the child about family history and culture. Create a personal timeline with each child from birth to the present.	
i. Use correct vocabulary for days of the week and names of the months, although not always correctly or in conventional order	The child may sing songs with the days of the week or name the month of his or her birthday.	Use the names of the days of the week and of the months when talking about events, such as "On Monday, we will go to the park" or "Who was born in March?" Incorporate language from the Montana Indian tribes when talking about months or seasons.	*Preschool*

Places, Regions, and Spatial Awareness (Geography)

Standard 4.21: Children develop an understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics. Children develop an understanding of how they are affected by—and the effect that they can have upon—the world around them.

Benchmarks: What we want the child to be able to do	*Indicators: Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities: Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Explore the environment	With support from the teacher, the young child may begin to explore his or her environment, watching and reaching for things all around her.	Provide safe, interesting materials, and space for the child to explore with multiple opportunities to discover and explore materials and people.	**Developmental Continuum**
b. Explore spatial relationships	The child may try multiple times to put an object into a container, turning it this way and that, trying to make it fit.	Provide materials, such as shape sorters and other shape-matching opportunities, for children to experiment with shape, size, and spatial relationships of objects in relationship to one another.	
c. Develop awareness of his or her physical body and the space it occupies	The child may attempt to fit his hand into a tube or try to sit in a box or cupboard.	Provide opportunities for the child to experience different physical positions with objects and people, such as on the floor, being carried, climbing up, or peeking through a tunnel.	
d. Demonstrate understanding of physical relationships	When asked, the child may move her body or objects in the correct position or direction, such as "on," "under," "inside," "outside," "forward," "backward," and "sideways."	Use positional words while the child is playing or when giving directions, often modeling the position with your own body, as in "Ring Around the Rosie."	
e. Create representations of locations and space	The child may draw or build a simple representation of familiar locations, such as her house.	Engage children in activities to create representations of familiar environments, such as their homes, neighborhoods, community, or reservation.	
f. Experiment with maps, compasses, globes, or navigational charts	The child may use maps and globes to explore places and regions of the world with interest in learning about geographical concepts.	Engage the child in travel-related play, such as taking a trip on the bus or train, and use tools such as maps, travel magazines, and compasses to find the way.	
g. Identify where he or she lives	The child may describe or provide accurate information, such as an address or the color of her house, when asked where she lives.	Provide opportunities for the child to describe his home environment and a variety of ways to represent it, such as constructing his house out of clay or drawing his house (be sure to put the address on it).	
h. Use a simple map	The child may label areas in a diagram of a house or draw a map from the early childhood program to her house and the street where she lives.	Provide multiple ways for the child to represent her environment, such as drawing, building blocks, or clay, and use a large map of Montana to identify landmarks, national parks, and reservations. "Google maps" provide an interesting way to use technology to view local areas or landmarks.	*Preschool*

The Physical World (Ecology)

Standard 4.22: Children become mindful of their environment and their interdependence on the natural world; they learn how to care for the environment and why it is important.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Use all the senses to explore the environment	The child may watch, mouth, grasp, or reach for objects and people and eventually use more than one sense at a time, such as stroking the bottle or breast when being fed.	Offer objects and toys that encourage the use of multiple senses, such as a rattle or teething toy that offers sound, texture, and visual appeal.	
b. Convey interest in nature	The child may show excitement for and an interest in natural phenomenon, such as flowers, leaves, snow, or a breeze.	Engage in outdoor play on a daily basis in ways that allow the child to interact with the environment and use his or her senses to safely explore nature, such as feeling grass. Find ways of bringing nature and the outdoors inside in safe and developmentally appropriate ways, such as finger painting in mud.	
c. Express an interest in live animals and pictures of animals	The child may point to pictures of animals in a book or on a poster, imitate animal sounds, or pat the dog.	Provide opportunities for the child to interact safely with live animals, especially those animals which are common in the child's environment.	**Developmental Continuum**
d. Take simple actions to care for his or her environment	The child may spontaneously pick up and throw away a piece of trash or pick up toys with encouragement and assistance.	As part of the daily routine, frequently model actions that demonstrate taking responsibility for the environment, such as using a plastic bag and gloves to pick up trash on a walk and recycling whenever possible, including using recycled materials as props for play.	
e. Use natural objects for play	The child may use sticks to build with, bury toy animals in the leaves, or make mud pies from dirt.	Collect and use natural objects whenever possible for play and observation both inside and outside. Encourage appropriate use and care when collecting natural materials.	
f. Recognize changes in his or her home, neighborhood, or other familiar place	The child may observe and recount in a drawing or story his experience with a change in the environment, such as telling a story of how the water was flowing over the road on the way to school or including a bird in his picture illustrating the field trip to the park.	Encourage the child to notice changes in the environment, such as the weather, and how the changes in the weather or seasons impact life , such as clothing, food, activities, and animals).	
g. Take responsibility for caring for living things	The child may take care of a plant by watering it regularly or take care of a pet by feeding it and giving it fresh water every day.	Offer children multiple opportunities to care for living things and promote each child's sense of meaningful contribution, such as asking him to turn off the lights when leaving the room or helping him plant seeds and care for the plants.	
h. Notice changes in the weather and seasons and discuss the changes and their impact	The child may voluntarily choose to wear a long-sleeve shirt or coat when it is cold or use terms such as "rainy," "windy," or "cloudy" to describe the weather.	Plant a garden with the child and discuss how the earth, sun, and rain provide nutritious food for people and support life.	
i. Identify and describe natural features in the environment, and how natural resources are used	The child may describe rivers, trees, and mountains, and how they are used, such as trees produce both wood for building and nesting places for the birds and squirrels.	Talk about natural resources and their use, such as how wood is cut into lumber. Make paper with the children by tearing up old construction paper, putting it in the blender with some water, spreading this mixture of pulp on a screen to dry for several days, and then enjoying the new paper in the art area.	
j. Exhibit simple conservation behaviors	The child may describe, with adult support, how to care for the environment, use resources wisely, and prevent damage to the earth, such as recycling or using paper or water only as needed.	Provide an opportunity for the child to choose a chore, conduct an activity, or problem solve an issue to support the immediate environment, such as picking up trash around the play yard, raking the leaves into the compost pile, or starting a recycling program.	*Preschool*

Technology

Standard 4.23: Children become aware of technological tools and explore and learn to use these resources in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Benchmarks: *What we want the child to be able to do*	*Indicators:* *Behaviors we might see*	*Learning Opportunities:* *Possible experiences to support development*	*Infancy*
a. Pay attention to music	The child may move to the music or wave her arms when familiar tunes are played.	Use music purposefully and watch the child for preferred volume and tone.	Developmental Continuum
b. Demonstrate an interest in toys and objects with technologically produced effects	The child may show interest in objects that produce cause and effect using technology, such as turning her head toward the sound of a ringing phone or switching the lights on and off.	Help the child connect the object with its effects in hands-on play, such as the flashlight turns on when she pushes in the button on the bottom and the bell rings when she drops the ball down the twisty tube,	
c. Make a mechanical toy work	When provided with a safe mechanical toy, the child may persistently seek a way to make it work, such as trying to turn the handle or asking an adult for help.	Provide mechanical toys that the child can explore and enjoy with and without adult supervision.	
d. Use technological resources to communicate with others	The child may use technology in daily activities, such as talking on the telephone to a family member or drawing a picture using a computer touchscreen.	Provide technological tools for the child as props during play and as methods for real and pretend communication with others, such as a word processor and printer in the writing station, multiple old cell phones in the dramatic play area, and headphones for independent use to listen to a culturally relevant story or music on a CD player.	
e. Use correct terms and vocabulary to describe technological tools and procedures	The child may label familiar technology devices and use accurate terms, such as cell phone, computer, TV, camera, or printer, and describe or model how they can be used.	Teach children the correct vocabulary for technology, including terms such as, "digital camera," "iPad/tablet," "computer," "Internet," "mouse," "keyboard," "printer," "on/off," "software," "hardware," "monitor," "printer," and "battery."	
f. Identify ways in which technology is a tool	The child may describe the benefits of technology and ways in which technology helps people accomplish tasks, such as a wheelchair that helps a child get around the room and playground or an iPad that provides books in large print.	Discuss and explore with the child the ways that technology is used in daily life, such as digital storytelling, Skype, or assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. Model using technology responsibly and constructively, such as using the computer to check the weather forecast. a video camera to record children's stories as they act them out, or a digital camera that children can use to record the stages of their block building structure.	
g. Demonstrate appropriate use and care of technological tools	The child may know how to correctly turn off the computer, shut down a device, and handle specialized equipment with care.	Model proper care of technological tools as well as teach and support children as they learn how to use technology appropriately.	
h. Use technology as a tool for learning new information	The child may access information using technology, such as a computer search to identify a type of bird seen on a walk, using fine motor skills to manipulate the mouse while the teacher guides the search as needed.	Expand upon children's interests and inquiries for new knowledge utilizing appropriate technology and providing support as needed, such as how to conduct Internet searches to answer questions.	*Preschool*

Additional Information

- If You're Concerned – Act Early
- References
- Montana Early Learning Standards Task Force

If You're Concerned – Act Early

Arrange a meeting with the child's parents and encourage them to check with the child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for the child's age. If a referral is necessary, talk with someone in the local community who is familiar with services for young children in the area, such as Montana's early intervention program.

At 2 months

Doesn't respond to loud sounds
Doesn't watch things as they move
Doesn't smile at people
Doesn't bring hands to mouth
Can't hold head up when pushing up when on tummy

At 4 months

Doesn't watch things as they move
Doesn't smile at people
Can't hold head steady
Doesn't coo or make sounds
Doesn't bring things to mouth
Doesn't push down with legs when feet are placed on a hard surface
Has trouble moving one or both eyes in all directions

At 6 months

Doesn't try to get things that are in reach
Shows no affection for caregivers
Doesn't respond to sounds around him
Has difficulty getting things to mouth
Doesn't make vowel sounds ("ah", "eh", "oh")
Doesn't roll over in either direction
Doesn't laugh or make squealing sounds
Seems very stiff, with tight muscles
Seems very floppy, like a rag doll

> "Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world."
>
> — Maria Montessori

At 9 months

Doesn't bear weight on legs with support
Doesn't sit with help
Doesn't babble ("mama", "baba", "dada")
Doesn't play any games involving back-and-forth lay
Doesn't respond to own name
Doesn't seem to recognize familiar people
Doesn't look where you point
Doesn't transfer toys from one hand to the other

At one year

Doesn't crawl
Can't stand when supported
Doesn't search for things that she sees you hide
Doesn't say single words like "mama" or "dada"
Doesn't learn gestures like waving or shaking head
Doesn't point to things
Loses skills he once had

At 18 months

Doesn't point to show things to others
Can't walk
Doesn't know what familiar things are for
Doesn't copy others
Doesn't gain new words
Doesn't have at least 6 words
Doesn't notice or mind when a caregiver leaves or returns
Loses skills he once had

At two years

Doesn't use 2-word phrases (for example, "drink milk")
Doesn't know what to do with common things;
like a brush, phone, fork, spoon
Doesn't copy actions and words
Doesn't follow simple instructions
Doesn't walk steadily
Loses skills she once had

At three years

Falls down a lot or has trouble with stairs
Drools or has very unclear speech
Can't work simple toys
(such as peg boards, simple puzzles, turning handle)
Doesn't speak in sentences
Doesn't understand simple instructions
Doesn't play pretend or make-believe
Doesn't want to play with other children or with toys
Doesn't make eye contact
Loses skills he once had

At four years

Can't jump in place
Has trouble scribbling
Shows no interest in interactive games or make-believe
Ignores other children or doesn't respond to people outside the family
Resists dressing, sleeping, and using the toilet
Can't retell a favorite story
Doesn't follow 3-part commands
Doesn't understand "same" and "different"
Doesn't use "me" and "you" correctly
Speaks unclearly
Loses skills he once had

> **"I think, at a child's birth, if a mother could ask a fairy godmother to endow it with the most useful gift, that gift would be curiosity."**
>
> **— Eleanor Roosevelt**

At five years

Doesn't show a wide range of emotions
Shows extreme behavior (unusually fearful, aggressive, shy or sad)
Unusually withdrawn and not active
Is easily distracted;
has trouble focusing on one activity for more than 5 minutes
Doesn't respond to people, or responds only superficially
Can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
Doesn't play a variety of games and activities
Can't give first and last name
Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly
Doesn't talk about daily activities or experiences
Doesn't draw pictures
Can't brush teeth, wash and dry hands, or get undressed without help
Loses skills he once had

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/actearly

References

The Montana Early Learning Standards were based upon the work of the previous Montana Early Learning Guidelines (Infant and Toddler and the 3-5 Year Old Guidelines). The work of the authors of these seminal documents is greatly appreciated, as their research provided the foundation for the current set of standards and reflects the unique dynamics and characteristics of Montana's children and teachers.

The Montana Early Learning Standards Task Force reviewed standards and guidelines from other states throughout the process. We greatly appreciate the work of the following states:

- Alaska
- Colorado
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Dakota
- Oregon
- Washington
- Virginia (Fairfax County)

The Task Force also consulted the following resources in preparing this document:

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Montana Early Learning Standards Task Force

The revision process for the Montana Early Learning Standards was led by Dr. Cindy O'Dell, with the support and direction from the Montana Early Learning Standards Task Force. The Task Force was selected in part to establish both *content validity* and *face validity*. In order to establish *content validity*, it was necessary to find professionals who had substantial experience in the field of early childhood learning, an appropriate educational background, and experiences external to—but appropriately related to—early childhood learning.

Establishing *face validity* indirectly required the same characteristics but also required Task Force members to have the ability to prudently examine each standard in a way that brought to mind the specific qualities of education that flow from a given standard. Once the totality of qualities illuminated by the standards was understood, it was necessary for each Task Force member to conceptualize the whole of childhood education in order to insure the qualities fostered by these standards was congruent with the conceptual whole. In this way, the Task Force was responsible for assisting Dr. O'Dell in removing any redundancies and filling any gaps.

To establish these validities, the Task Force was comprised of 17 early childhood professionals from across Montana. Task Force members provided information regarding their educational and professional backgrounds and qualifications pertinent to serving on the Task Force. Just over half of the respondents are presently working in higher education and 70% have served as teachers. Several other members currently work for Head Start with the remaining members working for Native American Tribes, the Montana Early Childhood Project, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

Some members did not report their years of experience and others reported years of experience that ran concurrently with other related employment; this made it impossible to determine the average amount of experience represented within the Task Force. Nevertheless, a total of 453 years of experience in both direct and related forms of early childhood work were reported. These include grant writing, research, national service, home child care, counseling, motherhood, child care resource and referral trainer, and school-based language programs.

All Task Force respondents held advanced degrees in areas directly or closely related to early childhood education: BS/BA degrees (100%), MS/MA degrees (62%), and PhD degrees (15%). The respondents reported a total of 73 publications and awards while nearly all of them hold or have held positions of leadership in their employment. In addition, the responding Task Force members reported a total of 53 memberships in 27 different professional organizations, holding 14 offices from among those professional organizations.

Content validity was well supported by the extensive experience and strong educational backgrounds of the Task Force membership. Most members also had a variety of external but appropriately related experience as well. To provide the necessary conceptualization level of the Task Force to establish face validity, persons were sought who were also published, active in professional organizations, and held leadership positions therein. All three of these criteria indicate an excellent ability to not only conceptualize at a high level, but to function successfully at that high level! These 17 persons were eminently qualified individually and as a group for their roles in assisting with the development of the Montana Early Learning Standards and consequently contributed a great deal to establishing the validities necessary to develop the MELS.

MONTANA DPHHS

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http://www.dphhs.mt.gov

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montana early childhood project

http://www.mtecp.org