

A Guide for Families



West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework:

*Content Standards and Learning Criteria
for Pre-Kindergarten*

What are early learning standards?

Early learning standards show what children ages three through five should know and be able to do. These standards are guidelines for giving children experiences that add to their learning and skills. The early learning standards are based on practical and well-researched ideas and examples. They can be used by child care centers, Head Start facilities, elementary schools, family child care, and parents.

Why are early learning standards important?

Well-planned early experiences are important to beginning a child's life-long journey of learning and success. Early learning standards show the right expectations for children. Because no child learns in the same way, the standards outline daily chances to provide good activities to help each child to grow and learn to the best of his ability.

Does West Virginia have its own early learning standards?

Yes. Based on West Virginia legislation passed in 2002, a group of West Virginia early education professionals wrote the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework. This group wanted to create a set of guidelines that is helpful to each child, regardless of whether the child is in the home, a child care setting, or pre-kindergarten. The West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework is set up around 6 key areas: social and emotional development, the arts, physical health and development, language and literacy, mathematics, and science.

How can I help my child?

Parents, caregivers, and other family members have an important role in supporting the growth and development of children. Many of the experiences suggested by the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework you already provide. Use this reference tool to explore opportunities you can experience with your child. If your child is in a child care setting or pre-kindergarten, you may consider discussing with staff how to encourage your child's development.

The following is a guide for caregivers to better understand the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework. These standards will help your child learn and grow to be the best he or she can be.

Social and Emotional Development

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to develop friendships, express feelings, and explore his importance in the family and community.

Why is this important?

Children grow and learn by developing positive relationships, which teach them about family and community and the contributions they can make.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Make emotion faces in a mirror. You can explore happy faces, sad faces, surprised faces, angry faces, and more.
- Share a loaf of bread with the birds or ask your child to help with watering plants. Explain that living things need to be taken care of to grow.
- Encourage your child to develop independence by making simple choices. For example, "Would you like to wear your red shirt or blue shirt today?"
- Establish a routine around familiar activities such as washing hands before eating, brushing teeth after eating, reading books before bedtime, and eating meals together.



The Arts

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to explore and participate in dance, drama, music and art.



Why is this important?

Through a variety of music and movement, children hear and learn to recognize various sounds of language. This will help them in the beginning stages of reading. Also, through art and pretend play, children get an opportunity to develop their imagination and creativity. These skills will be needed later on for problem solving, conflict resolution and leadership.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Make an instrument together. You can use an oatmeal container to make a drum. Using this drum, you can show your child how to play quietly and then loudly, or slow and then fast. Marching is always fun too!
- Provide different art materials. Consider including empty cereal boxes, fabric, old greeting cards, and magazines to your paper, paint, markers, crayons and playdough. Instead of asking a child "What is this a picture of?" you could say "I really like how you used red and purple together."
- Encourage pretend play by providing a variety of items. Pots and pans, old telephones, old clothing and shoes, and plastic dishes always spark imagination.

Physical Health and Development

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to gain control over his large muscles, needed for running and jumping, and his small muscles, used during scribbling and eating with utensils.

Why is this important?

Children are naturally active and enjoy learning by exploring their environment. These activities help them refine their physical abilities.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Help your child learn to pour his own juice, milk or water from a smaller container during mealtimes.
- Encourage your child to dress himself. Be sure to allow enough time for zippers, buttons, snaps and laces.
- Provide daily opportunities for you and your child to play outside. Show him or her how to climb on play structures to increase balance.
- Encourage your child to walk up and down stairs, using the hand railing.



Physical Health and Development

Here is what you may see:

Along with muscle control, your child may become aware of healthy routines and safety habits, such as washing hands, brushing teeth, using tissues, and recognizing safety symbols.

Why is this important?

By developing the knowledge and habits of healthy living early, children can practice a healthy lifestyle as an adult.



Here are some things you can do together:

- Give your child the opportunity to make reasonable food choices. For example, "Would you like apples or peaches with lunch today?"
- Encourage your child to care for some of her own needs, including washing her hands or brushing her teeth.
- Encourage your child to be helpful and assist others, for example, picking up toys after playing.
- Model, encourage and practice recognizing safety routines and symbols such as holding your hand and looking both ways before crossing the street or parking lot.

Language and Literacy

Here is what you may see:

Your child may show an increasing ability to listen to others, learn new words, and express his or her wants and needs.

Why is this important?

Early language and literacy development help a child communicate and learn. The number of words a child knows and understands has been linked to future reading ability.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Ask your child questions that start with “how,” “what,” “why,” “when,” or “where”. For example, “How did you decide to draw this?” This encourages children to build vocabulary and share their ideas.
- Play games that involve listening to specific directions such as “Simon Says”.
- Talk with your child and share ideas throughout the day. For example, in the car, you can talk about the buildings along the way. Be sure to listen and respond to her statements.
- Use every day opportunities to introduce new words such as different types of fruits and vegetables you see in the grocery store.



Language and Literacy

Here is what you may see:

Your child may become increasingly interested in books, letters and sounds.

Why is this important?

Words and the way they are linked together express and relate ideas that provide children the opportunity to notice, understand and think about the world around them.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Read to your child each day from a variety of children's books. Before you begin reading, talk about what might happen in the book. Ask your child to guess how the book will end. When you do begin reading, be sure to include the title of the book and the author.
- Practice rhyming with your child. Sing nursery rhyme songs and read rhyming books together. Your child will love to sing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" with you.
- Make comments such as "We have to wait here because that sign says "Don't walk" or "Tell me when you see the sign that says "Stop".



Language and Literacy

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to use crayons and other writing tools with increasing ability.

Why is this important?

Writing provides an opportunity for children to express thoughts, feelings and ideas. It also gives them a chance to explore their imagination and creativity.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Encourage, accept, and praise your child for her writing efforts. Ask her "Share with me what you wrote." Be sure to display her work.
- Encourage your child to help write grocery lists, dinner menus, or messages to mom or dad.
- Provide different types of paper, markers, crayons and pencils so your child can scribble and experiment with language.



Mathematics

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to identify numbers, amounts, and patterns.

Why is this important?

Understanding math concepts helps children find meaning in the world around them.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Take opportunities to practice counting objects throughout the day. For example, you can count socks, steps, family members, and apples at the grocery store. Encourage children to explore how numbers represent objects.
- Point out numbers in daily life such as on the clock, telephone, or calendar. At the grocery store look for prices on food.
- Encourage children to help you as you sort clean clothes. You can sort by pattern, by size, by color, or by item.
- Look for shapes around the home such as the rectangle-shaped cereal box or the circle-shaped plates.
- Provide opportunities for children to help you in the kitchen such as counting and measuring ingredients for a recipe.



Science

Here is what you may see:

Your child may begin to wonder and question the world around him. Your child will attempt to gain understanding by asking questions, looking, listening, touching and tasting.



Why is this important?

As children begin to observe the world around them, they learn to organize, predict (what's going to happen), and problem solve. Children also learn that simple investigations can help answer questions.

Here are some things you can do together:

- Explore what sinks and what floats in a puddle or the bath tub. Explain to your child what the words "sink" and "float" mean.
- Compare differences between hot and cold. What is the difference between water, ice, and steam?
- Talk about the weather, record temperatures daily, and ask your child to try to predict what will happen tomorrow. You can use this as an opportunity to build your child's vocabulary by introducing words like sunny, cloudy, and freezing.
- Make a collection of natural items with your child. For example, you can collect rocks, leaves, and shells.

For more information on the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework visit www.wvdhhr.org/oss/pieces/ta/curriculum.asp or <http://wvde.state.wv.us> or call 1-304-558-1885

If you have concerns about your child's developmental progress, please contact 1-800-642-8541.

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