K-3 | Components of Quality for Classroom Environments

A Guide for Elementary Administrators and Teachers

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Executive Summary

During the formative years of kindergarten through grade three, children's innate sense of curiosity initiates and supports their learning processes. They discover that skills acquisition, such as the ability to read and write, allows them to learn about things that interest them. They learn that self-competence and task mastery lead to accomplishing goals independently and as part of a team.

The *K-3 Components of Quality for Classroom Environments* starts from the premise that professional, program, content, and performance standards exist, but typically overlook the critical element of success: *context standards*. Context standards (or, as referred to in this document, context *components of quality*) are nothing new, but are sometimes hard to categorize and characterize. They might be referred to as "school climate standards," "safe school standards," or "educational equity and opportunity standards"; in general, they are the components that address the physical and psychological conditions that establish a supportive, engaging environment that fosters learning.

The following nine components of quality emerged from this work, covering key topics and developmental domains for administrators, teachers, and other staff in K-3 settings. For each of the components of quality, competencies and supporting practice examples are offered as indicators of success.

K-3 Components of Quality

1. Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Guiding Principles
2. Community Collaboration
3. Family Engagement
4. Transitioning into Kindergarten
5. Learning Environment
6. Teaching Practices
7. Qualifications and Professional Development
8. Curriculum
9. Student Assessment and Intervention

The purpose of this resource document covering the context and environment in which children learn is to: (1) create a shared vocabulary supporting K-3 quality and (2) foster conversations among administrators, teachers, and parents about policies and practices that promote high-quality classroom environments.

Introduction

Students who engage in quality learning experiences from an early age and who are given the opportunity to develop positive adult and peer relationships early in their educational experiences are better positioned for sustained academic and life success.

During the formative years of kindergarten through grade three, children's innate sense of curiosity initiates and supports their learning processes. They discover that skills acquisition, such as the ability to read and write, allows them to learn about things that interest them. They learn that self-competence and task mastery lead to accomplishing goals independently and as part of a team.

Developing positive relationships and experiencing quality early education are so vital to future success that researchers and practitioners have spent over two decades researching and refining implementation standards around best practices for our youngest learners.

It is a tremendous responsibility, and one the *K-3 Components of Quality for Classroom Environments* workgroup quickly recognized, concluding that no single set of quality components could address all the developmental and academic needs of a K-3 classroom. Rather, as Jim Squires of the National Institute for Early Education Research so aptly describes it, teaching and learning during these years is "a constellation of professional, program, content, and performance standards working together to form a system designed to help all children achieve their potential."

The workgroup used this constellation analogy to guide the development of these *K-3 Components of Quality for Classroom Environments*, concluding that professional, program, content, and performance standards exist against the backdrop of an often overlooked, but critical, element of success: *context standards*.

Context standards (or, as referred to in this document, context *components of quality*) are nothing new, but are sometimes hard to categorize and characterize. They might be referred to as "school climate standards," "safe school standards," or "educational equity and opportunity standards"; in general, they are the components that address the physical and psychological conditions that establish a supportive, engaging environment that fosters learning. They are so critical to successful learning that they are

included in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 as a way to measure school quality.

The importance of defining the context of teaching and learning in our policies, practices, and relationships—and embedding these context components into measures of accountability—cannot be overstated and is the core principle on which this document was drafted.

The Michigan State Board of Education (SBE), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and their agency and organizational partners prepared the *K-3 Components of Quality for Classroom Environments* in recognition of the critical importance of this stage of learning and development. This document is a resource to empower elementary administrators and teachers to provide elementary education in a developmentally appropriate way and within an appropriate context for *all* children.

The components, competencies, and indicators in this document reflect the current thinking of educators, researchers, and professionals who work with children daily. They are based on the latest research supporting the individual needs of children, the areas and sequence of development, and the atmosphere and conditions under which children learn best.

This document is meant to be streamlined and non-duplicative (e.g., if an item is an existing health and safety standard, such as practicing fire drills, it will not be covered in this guide), and it does not contain curriculum standards or grade-level content expectations for early learners. Instead, it covers the context and environment in which children learn and is intended to: (1) create a shared vocabulary supporting K-3 quality and (2) foster conversations among administrators, teachers, and parents about policies and practices that promote high-quality classroom environments. It is also intended to give readers a better understanding of the critical components for successful learning and to be an accessible and usable resource for everyday practice for every K-3 classroom and elementary building in our state.

Key Definitions

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an approach to teaching grounded in the research of how young children develop and learn. It is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. DAP involves teachers meeting young children "where they are at" both as individuals and as part of a group. It involves helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals. The National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) cites three core principles of DAP: 1) age appropriate practices; 2) individually appropriate practices; and 3) culturally appropriate practices.

Developmental Domains

Developmental domains refer to interdependent aspects of childhood growth. Development and learning in one domain are assumed to influence, and be influenced by, development and learning in other domains. Major domains of development are physical development (including sensory and motor development), cognitive development and executive functioning, social-emotional development, and language and literacy development.

> **Physical development:** Physical health and well-being are the foundation for all learning. Meeting basic needs is critical, as it allows children to be ready and active participants in their learning. During the early elementary years, children need regular physical movement and may become fatigued by long periods of sitting—even more so than by long periods of active motion. Motor action, cognitive development, and behavior are all part of a single, dynamic system in the brain, and all these components influence each other. Physical play and exercise are critical to development, in part, because they promote learning and academic success.

> **Cognitive development and executive functioning:** Children's thinking becomes more logical, flexible, and multidimensional during the early elementary years. However, they are not yet able to understand complex, abstract concepts or learn through text or direct instruction alone. Learning at this age requires many opportunities for hands-on application of new skills and active participation in learning activities that build on children's prior learning and everyday life

experiences. Executive function continues to develop during these years—and not simply due to maturation. It is a set of mental processes that help manage tasks such as planning, organizing, and paying attention, fostered through teaching and learning.

Social-emotional development: As children develop cognitively and physically, they also develop socially and emotionally, becoming more responsible and independent. During the early elementary years, children become more attuned to others' emotions and how their own behavior affects others. They develop a more realistic understanding of their abilities, understand that people have different perspectives, and begin to make comparisons.

Language and literacy development: Children's language and literacy development are a major focus in grades K-3. During these years, children engage in rich conversations with peers and adults and discuss new words, including their meaning and connection to other words. This continued increase in vocabulary sets the foundation for higher levels of reading and comprehension. Supports in language and literacy development should also include supports for English language learners, including supporting literacy learning in both English and the child's home language. The benefits of bilingualism and becoming dual-language learners have been well documented and are associated with greater academic and life success.

Developmental Milestones

Certain behaviors and physical skills seen in infants and children as they grow and develop are referred to as developmental milestones. During the early elementary grades, children typically progress from one developmental milestone to the next; however, it is understood that variability exists and that each child is unique, developing and gaining skills at his or her own pace.

Developmental milestones are typically grouped into the four developmental domains: social and emotional development, physical growth and development (including sensory and motor development), cognitive development, and language and literacy development.

The developmental milestones listed in *Appendix A* are intended as a guide to the typical development of children at each grade level. It is important to

remember that human development is extremely complex and that every child develops differently and has different needs.

Early Care and Education

A preparatory stage that places emphasis on attending to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of a child in order to establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning and well-being.

Early Childhood

The period from birth to age eight. This is a time of remarkable brain development and growth that lays the foundation for subsequent development.

K-3 Leadership and Staff

District leaders, building administrators, principals, teachers, related services staff, and educational support staff who work with and on behalf of children in kindergarten through third grade in a school district.

Parent Engagement

Parents' effort to promote their children's healthy development and learning through activities that are supported and encouraged by educators in childcare, preschool, and school settings.

Parent Engagement in Schools

A shared commitment between schools and other community agencies and organizations to involve parents in educational activities in meaningful ways. Through this engagement process, parents, supported by their schools and community, become active advocates for their children's learning and development.

Whole Child Approach

An approach to teaching that is defined by policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship within the rigorous demands of the 21st century. A whole child approach raises the bar of accountability beyond narrow, single-issue "improvement" strategies for academic achievement to efforts that reflect the broad array of factors influencing long-term success

rather than short-term achievement. A whole child approach takes into account school culture and curriculum; instructional strategies and family engagement; critical thinking; and social-emotional wellness.

Michigan SBE History of Leadership in Early Childhood

As early as 1971, SBE approved *Preprimary Objectives* to describe the learning and development expected of preschool and kindergarten-age children.

In 1986, SBE approved the *Standards of Quality and Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Programs for Four Year Olds*.

In 1992, recognizing the value and need for quality early childhood education programs for children four through eight years old, SBE approved *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for PreKindergarten Through Second Grade*.

In 2002, SBE adopted the report of its Task Force on Ensuring Early Childhood Literacy, with one of the recommendations being that a single document was needed that focused on children ages three and four and the programs that serve them.

In 2005, SBE approved *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for PreKindergarten*.

In 2006, SBE approved *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs*.

In 2013, SBE approved revised versions of *[Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs](#)* and *[Early Childhood Standards of Quality for PreKindergarten](#)*.

Components of Quality, Competencies and Descriptive Indicators

1. Component: Mission, Vision, Beliefs and Guiding Principles

A. **Competency:** K-3 leadership and staff, in collaboration with families and community members, develop and communicate a written mission and vision statement that commits to developmentally appropriate practice and a whole child approach for learning, as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning that are specific to K-3.

Indicator(s):

1. Shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning are developed in collaboration with families and community members; are solidly grounded in research and evidence-based practice; and are composed of the essential elements that produce positive child outcomes for all K-3 students.
2. A written mission and vision statement for K-3 is visible in the school's overall operational and implementation plans and the statement is widely disseminated to staff, governing boards, parents, and other interested persons in appropriate languages and literacy levels.
3. Understanding of the specific and unique nature and needs of K-3 students is clearly demonstrated and it is understood that these needs are distinct from younger and older children.

B. **Competency:** K-3 leadership and staff create policies and practices that reflect the written mission and vision statement and that promote high-quality and coherent learning.

Indicator(s):

1. Opportunities to promote positive relationships with families, their children, and children's Pre-K programs before entry into kindergarten and during their first four years of elementary school are maximized, in order to improve child outcomes and prevent or close achievement gaps.
2. K-3 staff recommendations are included as overall policies and practices of the school.

3. Pre-K-3 student data from multiple sources is used to inform the continuous improvement process.

C. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership ensures that school personnel establish and maintain a developmentally appropriate culture and climate conducive to the learning needs of K-3 students.

Indicator(s):

1. Collaborative relationships among K-3 staff, as well as relationships with staff of younger and older children, are encouraged to promote flexibility and cooperation through respectful, positive, supportive interactions and practices.

2. Component: Community Collaboration

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff work cooperatively and collaboratively with a wide variety of public and private birth-through-age-8 early care and education programs, as well as community leaders, action groups and agencies in the community.

Indicator(s):

1. Collaborative efforts to support early childhood within the community, such as the Great Start Collaborative, are supported.
2. Working cooperatively and collaboratively with other early childhood programs in the community to facilitate children's transition into and out of programs and from one program to another is encouraged.
3. Collaborative efforts within the community and regular professional development among same-grade and across-grade teachers, inclusive of school, community-based and before/after school teachers, are supported.

3. Component: Family Engagement

A. **Competency:** K-3 leadership and staff engage families in building strong, meaningful partnerships.

Indicator(s):

1. Teachers regularly work collaboratively with parents and caregivers to examine and understand the child's progress in developmental and curricular areas and to develop age-appropriate goals.
2. Parents and caregivers are provided with authentic, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and meaningful opportunities to become familiar with the classroom, school building, teachers, and support staff prior to the start of and throughout the school year.
3. Families are engaged in regular and ongoing two-way communication about educational experiences and learning, in multiples forms and languages, that is sensitive to individual family needs.

B. **Competency:** K-3 leadership and staff engage families to promote respect for home language, culture, and family composition in ways that support children's learning across developmental domains and within the whole child approach.

Indicator(s):

1. Materials, language, and activities used in the classroom provide positive and authentic representations of families, cultural backgrounds, and experiences.
2. Children's individual family composition, diversity, and cultural backgrounds are considered when planning classroom celebrations, parties, and events.
3. Respect is shown toward the child's home language and efforts are made to communicate using the home language when possible.
4. Continued development of a child's home language as well as English language acquisitions is valued.

C. Competency: K-3 leadership and staff provide a range of authentic, developmentally appropriate in- and out-of-school parent engagement opportunities.

Indicator(s):

1. Home learning opportunities are encouraged as an extension of the school day, as opposed to an expectation that parents help to reteach daily lesson plans or complete unfinished daily work.
2. Research about effective collaboration and family engagement is continually reviewed and families are provided effective learning opportunities at home that align with the research.
3. Respect and acknowledgement is given for the need to balance family time and school-related activities, particularly as it relates to homework and family learning opportunities.

4. Component: Transitioning into Kindergarten

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff assist in facilitating a successful transition from home, preschool, or childcare into kindergarten for children and their families*.*

Indicator(s):

1. Coordination and planning of transition activities for incoming students includes providing parents with information about registration and other needed information before school starts.
2. Detailed information is gathered about incoming students to allow teachers and staff to better know their students and families before school starts.
3. Kindergarten teachers meet with preschool teachers and caregivers to discuss transition to kindergarten before school starts.
4. Shared professional development with preschool leadership and staff is offered and designed to share expectations and strategies that support transitioning students into kindergarten.

B. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff guarantee entrance into kindergarten solely by meeting the state-defined kindergarten entry age eligibility requirement, without exception.

Indicator(s):

1. Students are not excluded from school or placed in extra-year programs such as Developmental Kindergarten, Begindergarten or Young 5's based on age, gender, culture, ethnicity, economic factors, special needs, home language, participation in early childhood programs, delayed cognitive development, delayed gross or fine motor skills, or delayed social and emotional development.

5. Component: Learning Environment

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff plan the curriculum, schedule the day, and create an environment where students can learn through active involvement with each other and adults, with adequate time during the day and week for each content area, as well as recess time.

Indicator(s):

1. The daily routine/schedule is predictable, yet flexible.
2. Opportunities for vigorous indoor and outdoor activity throughout the day are provided, as well as time for more moderate play activity.
3. Students are provided scheduled, daily outdoor recess opportunities with at least one session that lasts 45 minutes or longer to give children a chance to enter deeply into structured and unstructured play as well as to provide children a necessary break from the rigors of concentrated classroom academics.
4. Transition times are used as learning opportunities.
5. Extended blocks of time are planned to allow for full engagement in activities and to ensure that unhurried and purposeful learning can occur.
6. The amount of time students use technology with screens, such as online games and online videos, is limited.
7. Time is allocated for dramatic play, the arts, physical education, approaches to learning, and social-emotional development.
8. Interventions are delivered within the context of the student's classroom environment whenever possible.
9. Classroom ratios are manageable, to achieve personalized learning with differentiated supports for all children, and are conducive to fostering necessary adult-child interactions.

B. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff create indoor and outdoor learning environments that are child-centered and reflect the unique needs, experiences, and interests of K-3 students.

Indicator(s):

1. Students are offered the opportunity to express concerns and make recommendations about their physical learning environment.

2. Positive learning environments are created where each student has a sense of belonging in the classroom.
3. Environments support active learning.
4. Environments promote the student's sense of confidence, independence, and competence.

C. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff ensure that equipment, learning materials, and furniture are age appropriate and support the abilities and developmental level of each student.

Indicator(s):

1. Materials are provided that are relevant to the students' lives to promote exploration, creativity, and hands-on active learning.
2. There are sufficient materials for the engagement of all students.
3. The use of technology supports is purposeful and intentional.

D. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff organize classroom space into functional learning areas, such as individual workspaces and group-gathering areas that are recognizable to students and that allow for social interactions.

Indicator(s):

1. Appropriate physical space for individual, small-group, and large-group activities is provided.
2. Child-initiated, adult-initiated, and flexible grouping practices are used and there is a safe area for students to use when they need to step away from an activity for a few minutes. (This space is not used as a punitive measure and may include materials students can use to relax or defuse their emotions.)
3. Students are provided with space to work together, in small and large groups, to foster perspective-taking, cooperation, and collaboration.

E. Competency: K-3 leadership and staff ensure that the K-3 outdoor physical space is age appropriate and allows for individual activities and social interactions.

Indicator(s):

1. The space provides multiple opportunities for adults to interact meaningfully with students.
2. The space allows for unstructured play and/or exploration and includes spaces for both individual play and group play.

6. Component: Teaching Practices

A. **Competency:** K-3 teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in active learning so that they can translate experience into understanding.

Indicator(s):

1. Students are provided with many opportunities to learn through exploration, manipulation, investigation, and discovery.
2. Learning activities are structured so that teachers are able to move around the classroom facilitating, scaffolding, modeling, and monitoring students' engagement with materials, ideas, and peers.
3. Students are encouraged to take (safe) risks and use trial and error in their learning.
4. Instruction is offered that is based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences and that is relevant to their daily lives.
5. Independence is promoted by gradually releasing responsibility for learning to the students.

B. **Competency:** K-3 teachers and school leadership are knowledgeable about the developmental continuum and learning trajectories and progressions of K-3 learners.

Indicator(s):

1. Developmentally appropriate instruction is provided within a whole child approach.
2. Data from whole child assessments is used to inform instruction.
3. Differentiated learning experiences and instruction are offered according to the unique needs of each student.

C. **Competency:** K-3 teachers use a variety of active and intellectually engaging strategies to promote critical thinking and learning.

Indicator(s):

1. A range of teaching strategies for learning that include modeling, demonstrating, explaining, coaching, and intentionally planned direct instruction is offered.

2. Critical thinking is fostered by posing problems, asking open-ended questions, pointing out discrepancies, and explicitly addressing misconceptions.
3. Thought-provoking questions are intentionally posed that require students to wrestle with the answers and provide real evidence to support their answers.
4. Attention is given to the individual learning needs of each student, and teachers reduce or add complexity to the tasks for each student.
5. Teachers engage in reciprocal discussions with students about books or interesting ideas and acknowledge the students' responses as important.

D. **Competency:** K-3 teachers use language and strategies that enhance students' literacy knowledge and skills.

Indicator(s):

1. Students engage in conversations throughout the day.
2. A variety of words, intentional vocabulary instruction, and content-related words are used to promote vocabulary development.
3. Dual-language learners receive appropriate encouragement and support in their primary language while also receiving support for interactions with peers in play, classroom, and social situations in English, as their competence and confidence increases.

E. **Competency:** K-3 teachers structure the learning environment to enhance positive adult-to-student and student-to-student interactions.

Indicator(s):

1. Authentic, age-appropriate interaction with and among students is promoted.
2. Students are shown how to develop positive and constructive relationships between students and peers.
3. Students' needs are acknowledged and teachers respond respectfully.

4. Students' ideas and efforts are acknowledged and encouraged throughout the day by receiving respectful feedback that fosters a natural motivation for learning.
5. A sense of community is created within the classroom.
6. Students are encouraged to be kind to one another and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.

F. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff use positive, non-punitive guidance practices aligned to students' developmental levels that result in natural and logical consequences and allow students to accept increasingly greater responsibility for their actions.

Indicator(s):

1. Students are supported in developing age-appropriate conflict resolution strategies, such as negotiation and reconciliation.
2. Students are provided objective feedback about behaviors that need to change or be modified based on observation and evaluation.
3. Guidance policies are implemented that do not deprive students of outdoor recess opportunities, meals, snacks, water for hydration, or bathroom privileges.
4. Staff members understand the potential effects of trauma and create an environment that helps students feel safe to learn.
5. Trauma-informed procedures are in place to respond to the needs of traumatized students.

7. Component: Qualifications and Professional Development

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership ensures that the school's staff is qualified to develop and implement a K-3 program appropriate to the developmental needs of the children and families served.

Indicator(s):

1. Teachers and administrators have age-/grade-appropriate endorsements and certifications.
2. Staff members are knowledgeable about, are trained in, and implement developmentally appropriate practices, including holistic, integrated, and experiential teaching methods.

B. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 staff participate in a variety of ongoing professional development activities specific to the developmental needs of K-3 students.

Indicator(s):

1. Staff participate in a variety of ongoing professional development activities that are based upon program and individual needs assessments.
2. Leadership provides, communicates the availability of, participates in, and continually updates professional development resources to include information about research, teaching methods, techniques for classroom management, developmentally appropriate practices, cultural proficiency, technology, parent engagement, and child development/learning theories targeted at the specific and unique nature and needs of K-3 students.

8. Component: Curriculum

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff choose or create a cohesive, aligned curriculum that builds upon curricula implemented at the preschool level and that addresses the whole child based on predictable sequences of growth, development, learning, and content expectations for the specific grades K-3.

Indicator(s):

1. The curriculum attends comprehensively to children's developmental domains through a whole child approach as much as it does academic subject areas, such as math and literacy.
2. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to explore and investigate their own interests and actively learn the content expectations specific to their grade level.
3. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to collaborate and cooperate with one another toward shared goals and works to build positive social outlooks and behaviors in all children.
4. The curriculum accounts for variation in students' individual learning trajectories and sequences of learning.

B. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff ensure that the curriculum fosters integration of content areas to support children's development in all domains.

Indicator(s):

1. The curriculum is delivered with an integrated, cross-curricular, interdisciplinary approach that incorporates important concepts throughout the daily routine.
2. The curriculum provides integrated learning activities that are real and relevant to students' lives.

9. Component: Student Assessment and Intervention

A. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff implement a balanced assessment system that informs student learning and guides continuous improvement.

Indicator(s):

1. A balanced assessment system (i.e., one that uses Pre-K transition data, parent report data, and formative, summative, and interim/benchmark assessments) is used to communicate individualized needs and student progress and to inform instruction.
2. Valid and reliable K-3 measurement tools are used for the purposes and populations for whom they were designed and validated.
3. All developmental domains/academic content areas are assessed.
4. Training in observational and direct assessment literacy is conducted so that teachers and staff can administer, interpret, and use results to inform instruction.

B. <u>Competency:</u> K-3 leadership and staff provide differentiated, individualized instruction that is based on assessment results and use evidence-based practices relevant to their student population to make decisions within the context of a larger, multi-tiered system of support.

Indicator(s):

1. Learning is individualized and allows children to meet self-determined academic and personal goals to their highest potential.
2. Learning supports are provided that acknowledge the diversity of learning needs and the challenges of each learner.
3. Evidenced-based supports are offered for each student based on multiple sources of student assessment data.
4. Evidence-based strategies are used to increase trajectories of learning and meet the specialized needs of K-3 students to not only avoid retention but to promote appropriate grade-level advancement.
5. Assessments are delivered within the context of a student's classroom environment whenever possible.

Appendix A: Developmental Milestones

Developmental Milestones for Kindergarteners (Age 5)

Social and Emotional Development

- Has an interest in behaving like friends and wants their approval;
- Begins to prefer same-gender friendships;
- Becomes jealous of other people spending time with "their" friends;
- Follows the rules most of the time and may criticize kids who don't follow the rules;
- Enjoys being on display and will sing, dance, or be silly to get attention;
- Wants your approval and to be taken seriously;
- May throw a tantrum or get angry if they think they're not being listened to;
- Starts to see why it's helpful to share and get along with other kids.

Physical Growth and Development

- Walks on tiptoes and heel-to-toe, like on a balance beam;
- Jumps rope and pumps legs to swing alone;
- Stands and hops on each foot;
- Catches a ball the size of a softball;
- Starts to move in different ways at the same time to do things like swim, dribble a basketball, or dance;
- Uses one hand more than the other (known as "hand dominance");
- Holds a pencil using a tripod grip (two fingers and a thumb);
- Cuts out basic shapes with scissors and may be able to cut a straight line;
- Uses a fork, spoon, and knife easily;
- Is able to wipe and wash after using the bathroom.

Cognitive Development

- Recognizes and names colors and basic shapes;
- Knows the letters of the alphabet and letter sounds;
- Can recite name, address, and phone number;
- Understands basic concepts about print (such as knowing which way the pages go and that words are read left to right and top to bottom);
- Knows that stories have a beginning, middle, and end;
- Counts groups of objects up to 10 and recites numbers to 20;

- Sticks with an activity for 15 minutes and finishes a short project;
- Makes plans about how to play, what to build, or what to draw.

Language and Literacy Development

- Uses words to argue and try to reason with people; *because* is an oft-used word;
- Uses most plurals, pronouns, and tenses correctly;
- Tells stories, jokes, and riddles and may understand simple puns;
- Uses language to talk about opposites and to compare things ("That black cat is smaller than the white one.");
- Talks about things that are going to happen as well as things that have already happened;
- Follows simple multi-step directions;
- Begins to match spoken words with written words;
- Begins to write letters and some words that are used and heard often.

Developmental Milestones for First Graders (Age 6)

Social and Emotional Development

- Wants parental attention but is beginning to shift attention to peers;
- May be insecure with increased independence;
- Plays in more elaborate manner;
- Usually likes to play with friends of the same gender;
- Understands feelings of others, although most are still focused on themselves;
- Finds failure can be very hard;
- Develops a sense of humor;
- Begins to think about how they look in the eyes of others and is self-conscious;
- Can be moody, friendly, and enthusiastic at times and then rebellious and irritable at other times;
- Wants to make friends but can be bossy and not understand why friendship is rebuffed;
- Can be very competitive;
- Is fascinated by rules;
- Is sometimes a "poor sport" or dishonest; may invent rules;
- Is sensitive to criticism; thrives on encouragement;

- Has a strong desire to perform well and do things right;
- Generally enjoys caring for and playing with younger children;
- Tends to prefer playmates of the same sex;
- Can be helpful with small chores;
- Has a strong need for love and attention from parents and teachers;
- Determines what is "good" and "bad" based on parents' and teachers' opinions;
- Begins to develop a moral sense (such as understanding "honesty").

Physical Growth and Development

- Is still having growth spurts;
- May be clumsy;
- Often is full of energy; likes to be active;
- Enjoys running, jumping, skipping, tumbling, throwing, catching, dancing to music, and other forms of physical play;
- Can dress him- or herself but may still need help with buttons or laces;
- Tires easily;
- Is in perpetual motion, e.g., squirming while sitting, gesturing while talking, running, tumbling, throwing;
- Gains control of fine motor activities;
- Develops a good sense of balance and may stand on one foot and walk on a balance beam;
- Can catch balls;
- Is sloppy and in a hurry;
- May be noisy or loud in the classroom;
- Develops the ability to copy designs and shapes;
- Learns to distinguish left from right;
- Engages in oral activities (teething), chews pencils, fingernails, or hair.

Cognitive Development

- Can express him- or herself well;
- Begins to understand cause-and-effect relationships;
- Starts to grasp the concept of past, present, and future;
- Becomes more engaged in the process rather than the product;
- Likes to do "work" but may take on projects that are too big;
- Shows increased expression and artistic enjoyment;
- Can follow a series of three commands in a row;

- Views things as right or wrong, wonderful or terrible, with very little middle ground;
- Increases problem-solving ability;
- Has a short attention span, though it is long enough to enjoy more involved stories;
- Learns best through discovery and active involvement with people and materials;
- Is interested in real-life tasks and activities; wants to make "real" jewelry, take "real" photographs, and create "real" collections;
- Begins to understand time and days of the week;
- Uses language and words to represent things not visible.

Language and Literacy Development

- Experiences language gains in depth, description, and expression;
- Rapidly develops vocabulary;
- Uses correct spoken grammar (most of the time);
- Can spell his or her first name and write some letters and numbers;
- Reads some simple words aloud with ease and identifies an increasing number of words;
- Enjoys language play—songs, riddles, rhymes, and word games;
- Asks a lot of questions;
- Likes to write;
- Enjoys sharing thoughts and ideas;
- May reverse printed letters (b/d);
- Sometimes carries on "collective monologues": two children playing together and talking but carrying on separate monologues.

Developmental Milestones for Second Graders (Age 7)

Social and Emotional Development

- Becomes more aware of and sensitive to the feelings of others;
- Increases focusing skills;
- Avoids taking risks and making mistakes;
- Craves security and structure;
- Is afraid of being in trouble with parents or other adults;
- Is generally worried about the opinions of others;
- Develops friendships, typically with children of the same gender;

- Sometimes plays in larger groups;
- May like working or playing alone or with one friend;
- Needs reinforcement;
- Is touchy; may say or think, "Nobody likes me";
- Loves to talk, even exaggerate;
- Works hard to please teachers, parents, and other adults;
- Is sensitive to adult evaluation;
- Is more independent but still relies heavily on the teacher;
- Places more of an emphasis on fairness;
- Likes structure; dislikes changes in school routines;
- Compares self to others; can be self-critical;
- Recognizes that establishing friendships is very important, although often lacks the skills necessary to do so;
- Views things as right or wrong, wonderful or terrible, with very little middle ground;
- Seeks a sense of security in groups, organized play, and clubs.

Physical Development

- Experiences increasing coordination;
- Prefers drawing small letters and figures;
- Has growing pains;
- Uses scissors with ease;
- May undergo changes in self-concept due to great differences in size and abilities of peers;
- Is developing large muscles in arms and legs, more so than small muscles;
- Learns to use small/fine muscles;
- May appear gawky and awkward due to long arms and legs;
- May not want to rest when tired;
- Is sometimes tense;
- Experiences many physical hurts, real and imagined.

Cognitive Development

- Has a solid sense of time;
- Develops a preference for learning style;
- Strives for perfection in his or her work;
- Enjoys hands-on activities and inquiry;
- Considers issues and problems using only one factor at a time;

- Becomes a reflective thinker;
- Is more serious and less impulsive;
- Realizes that there are many things that need to be learned, sometimes leading to lower confidence;
- Begins to reason logically and organize thoughts coherently;
- Does most of his or her thinking about actual physical objects and may have difficulty handling abstract reasoning;
- Often makes decisions based on the influence of others instead of by reasoning;
- Wants to assume more responsibility;
- Likes to collect, organize, and sort things;
- Has a longer attention span;
- Learns to evaluate what he or she does;
- Needs closure and wants to complete assignments;
- Likes to work slowly;
- Wants work to be perfect;
- Needs manipulatives to learn effectively;
- Is curious about how things work;
- Is egocentric but begins to understand others' perspectives.

Language and Literacy Development

- Has a growing interest in words and vocabulary development;
- Shows improved listening skills;
- Increases skills in reading words fluently and comprehending ideas;
- Enjoys conversations with adults;
- May struggle with spelling, but spelling is more consistent and "correct";
- Is interested in word meanings;
- Develops more skill in reading and writing;
- May reverse printed letters (b/d);
- Expands speaking and listening vocabulary at a very rapid pace.

Developmental Milestones for Third Graders (Age 8)

Social and Emotional Development

- Has a sense of his or her place in the world;
- Is fairly independent and outgoing;

- Develops a strong sense of right and wrong;
- Is increasingly capable of cooperation, organization, and rule-following;
- Enjoys friendships with a group of children of the same gender;
- Demonstrates compassion and empathy for others;
- Adjusts well to change;
- Is willing to take risks;
- May have difficulty adhering to boundaries;
- Begins to define self based on certain attributes or achievements, such as "I wear glasses";
- May become self-conscious based on how he or she believes that he or she looks in the eyes of others;
- Senses that establishing friendships is very important, although he or she may lack skills;
- Begins to develop a sense of humor and tell jokes;
- Is less dependent on adults and more dependent on peers;
- Begins to question authority and test limits;
- Often overestimates abilities; "bites off more than he or she can chew";
- Is interested in rules and rituals;
- May have a best friend;
- Has a strong desire to perform well and do things right;
- Finds criticism and failure difficult to handle;
- Views things as right or wrong, wonderful or terrible, with little middle ground;
- Generally enjoys caring for and playing with younger children.

Physical Development

- Moves with more grace and control;
- Experiences increases in strength, stamina, and reaction time;
- Is enthusiastic about playing on teams;
- Is full of energy;
- Hurries;
- Experiences improvement in eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills;
- Enjoys rough-and-tumble games as well as team sports;
- May be physically daring;
- Exhibits increased speed and smoothness in fine motor skills;

- May write with tiny letters and may create artwork with more detail;
- Is developing large muscles in arms and legs, more so than small muscles;
- Enjoys testing muscle strength and skills;
- Has a good sense of balance;
- May notice large differences in the sizes and abilities of other children.

Cognitive Development

- Is continuing to develop attention span;
- Cares about both the process and the product;
- Seeks approval of peers and adults;
- Has a growing interest in how things work;
- Prefers groups or group activities;
- Masters basic skills;
- Exhibits increases in confidence and competence;
- Can reason logically about actual objects and organize thoughts coherently, but cannot handle abstract reasoning very well unless it relates to real experiences;
- Learns best through active, concrete experiences;
- Enjoys collecting, organizing, and classifying objects and information;
- Engages in imaginative play in the form of skits, plays, and puppet shows;
- Likes groups and group activities;
- Enjoys planning and building;
- Increases problem-solving ability;
- Is interested in magic and tricks;
- Learns to plan and evaluate what he or she does;
- May say, "That's dumb," or, "I don't want to do that," when something is suggested;
- Begins to see and understand the perspectives of others;
- Listens well but is so full of ideas that he or she cannot always recall what has been said;
- Likes to explain ideas—may exaggerate;
- Gets engrossed in activity at hand; loves to socialize at the same time;
- Is industrious and often works quickly.

Language and Literacy Development

- Is rapidly increasing speaking and listening vocabularies;

- Is talkative;
- Tends to exaggerate;
- Enjoys sharing ideas, interests, and opinions;
- Is fluent in his or her speaking and reading;
- Uses complex sentences with few grammatical errors;
- Uses sophisticated language to describe ideas and experiences;
- Learns to see books as sources of information; reading and writing may become major interests;
- May reverse printed letters (b/d) until mid-third grade.

Appendix B: References

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