

Approaches to Learning

A. Initiative and planning

Children from birth show their eagerness to learn by choosing to participate in activities that they find interesting and personally meaningful. As active learners, they make choices, decisions, and plans with increasing intentionality and purpose. As children develop, their plans become more complex, taking several days to complete.

Level 0 - Child turns toward or away from an object or person.

Level 1 - Child moves with persistence until reaching a desired object or person.

Level 2 - Child indicates an intention with one or two words.

Level 3 - Child expresses a plan with a simple sentence and follows through.

Level 4 - Child makes and follows through on two or more unrelated plans.

Level 5 - Child stays with his or her plan for a substantial part (at least 20 minutes) of work time (choice time, free play time).

Level 6 - Child plans and follows through on a project that takes more than two days to complete.

Level 7 - Child uses outside resources to gather information needed to complete his or her plan.

B. Problem solving with materials

Children encounter problems as they work with materials during play.

Discovering that their actions can produce results and solve problems helps children build independence and self-confidence. They develop from trying one idea to several until they find a solution that works. As they tackle more complex problems, their solutions also become increasingly complex.

Children also grow from just responding to problems to anticipating and acting to prevent them.

Level 0 - Child moves his or her eyes, head, or hand toward a desired object or person.

Level 1 - Child repeats an action, even when it isn't working, to solve a problem.

Level 2 - Child asks for help in solving a problem with materials.

Level 3 - Child verbally identifies a problem with materials.

Level 4 - Child persists with one idea or tries several ideas until he or she is successful at solving a simple problem with materials.

Level 5 - Child helps another child solve a problem with materials.

Level 6 - Child anticipates potential problems with materials in play and identifies possible solutions.

Level 7 - Child coordinates multiple resources (materials and/or people) to solve a complex problem with materials.

C. Reflection

Reflection is more than memory. It is remembering with analysis. As children become increasingly able to form mental pictures, they can recall over longer periods of time. Like planning, their reflections become more detailed.

Level 0 - Child returns his or her attention to an object or event of interest.

Level 1 - Child indicates he or she wants something to happen again.

Level 2 - Child returns to where something he or she wants or has played with is located.

Level 3 - Child says one thing he or she did soon after the event.

Level 4 - Child recalls three or more things that he or she did and/or the details of something that happened.

Level 5 - Child recalls, without prompting, the sequence of three or more things he or she did or that happened.

Level 6 - Child says the reason why an experience happened to him or her as it did and what he or she would do the same or differently next time.

Level 7 - Child recalls another person's experience and uses what he or she observed in a similar situation.

Social and Emotional Development

D. Emotions

Right from the start, children feel and express emotions, whether it is pleasure at having their hunger satisfied or seeing a familiar face, fear of a loud noise, or anxiety when a comforting object is taken away. Infants show emotions with facial expressions, gestures, sounds, and their whole bodies. As children develop language, they begin to put their feelings into words with the help of supportive adults. Understanding and talking about their feelings is an important step in children gaining control over how they express their emotions. This ability not only helps them become more aware of their own feelings but also allows them to observe and explain the emotions of others.

Level 0 - Child expresses an emotion with his or her face and/or body.

Level 1 - Child initiates physical contact with another person to express an emotion.

Level 2 - Child names emotions.

Level 3 - Child explains the reason behind an emotion.

Level 4 - Child tries at first to control how he or she expresses emotions but then resorts to physical expression.

Level 5 - Child controls the expression of his or her feelings.

Level 6 - Child uses a wider range of words to describe his or her own emotions.

Level 7 - Child describes and gives a reason why people feel differently about the same situation.

E. Building relationships with adults

Infants form attachments with a primary caregiver whom they depend on to satisfy their needs in the absence of a parent. Toddlers use the primary caregiver as a trusted base of support from which to explore on their own.

Children increasingly form relationships with other adults, such as other staff members, the parents of peers, or visitors. They are motivated to initiate and maintain these relationships, which not only contribute to their physical and emotional well-being but also are a vehicle for learning about the world. While children are initially focused on their own needs in their relationships with adults, children eventually discover that adults are people independent of their caregiving role and their relationships with adults become more reciprocal.

Level 0 - Child looks at, smiles at, vocalizes to, or makes faces at a primary caregiver.

Level 1 - Child uses a familiar adult as a secure base from which to explore, returning periodically.

Level 2 - Child seeks out a familiar adult to communicate a simple need or desire, using at least one word.

Level 3 - Child asks an adult to play with him or her or share in an activity.

Level 4 - Child engages in a conversation with an adult and takes two or more turns.

Level 5 - Child involves an adult in an activity for an extended period of time by assigning a task or role to the adult, working with the adult toward a goal the child has in mind, or leading the adult in a complex pretend-play scenario.

Level 6 - Child asks an adult a question about the adult's knowledge or experience to learn more than what is covered in a group or classroom discussion.

Level 7 - Child follows up a conversation with an adult to learn or share more information.

F. Building relationships with other children

Even infants are in tune with the other children around them. They watch, listen, and pick up on what others are doing. Gradually children begin to relate more directly to other children, from handing them a toy, to playing alongside them, to forming relationships with special friends. These connections provide multiple emotional, social, cognitive, and creative benefits and become the foundation for establishing future relationships.

Level 0 - Child watches another child.

Level 1 - Child spontaneously brings an object or shows affection to another child.

Level 2 - Child plays and works alongside other children.

Level 3 - Child makes a comment directly to another child.

Level 4 - Child shows a preference for one or more friends.

Level 5 - Child plays collaboratively with two or more other children by contributing ideas and/or incorporating ideas from the other children into their play.

Level 6 - Child engages in sustained personal and reciprocal conversation with a friend.

Level 7 - Child follows up on (asks about) something personal a friend has previously shared with him or her.

G. Community

Because young children are social beings, they want to join in the life of the group but need to learn how. They gradually make the transition from "me" (their own needs) to "we" (the collective interest). The sense of community begins with simple attention to others, followed by an awareness of group routines and expectations and how they apply to oneself. Children discover how their own and others' behavior, both accidental and intentional, affects the well-being of the community as a whole.

Level 0 - Child alerts to what is going on around him or her.

Level 1 - Child participates in a part of the daily routine when led or assisted by an adult.

Level 2 - Child attempts, on his or her own, a simple task that is related to part of the daily routine.

Level 3 - Child transitions between parts of the daily routine.

Level 4 - Child reminds others of classroom routines and social expectations.

Level 5 - Child performs an action on his or her own that is helpful to the classroom community and is done apart from classroom rules, jobs, or routine expectations.

Level 6 - Child distinguishes the actions of others as being purposeful or accidental.

Level 7 - Child acknowledges, on his or her own, how his or her behavior affects others and, as needed, acts to correct it.

H. Conflict resolution

Social conflicts are a daily occurrence in an early childhood setting. As children learn to settle disputes with their peers, they begin to balance their own needs with understanding and respect for the needs of others. The egocentrism of the toddler is replaced by the perspective taking of the preschooler, allowing the child to see that there is more than one "right side" in a conflict. With adult support, children learn how to identify a social problem and participate in figuring out a solution that satisfies everyone involved. This takes practice. For that reason, you might find that older children who have not had prior experience with resolving conflicts may begin at a lower level.

Level 0 - Child continues with his or her action in a conflict situation.

Level 1 - Child reacts to a conflict by withdrawing, crying, hitting, kicking, or biting.

Level 2 - Child attempts to deal with a conflict in a simple way.

Level 3 - Child requests adult help in resolving a conflict with another child.

Level 4 - Child engages in conflict resolution (with adult support) by offering a solution and agreeing on a solution.

Level 5 - Child negotiates a solution to a conflict with another child on his or her own (without adult help).

Level 6 - Child anticipates whether a solution to a conflict will or will not work and explains why.

Level 7 - Child helps to mediate conflicts between other children.

Physical Development and Health

I. Gross-motor skills

For sensory-motor infants and toddlers, movement plays a major role in every aspect of early learning. Their emerging sense of themselves as capable doers is rooted in their ability to navigate the environment and get where and what they want without adult assistance. Once they master basic mobility skills, children become more coordinated and gain muscle strength and stamina. They exhibit greater control and balance. As their gross-motor skills develop, children enjoy attempting more complex and sequenced movements.

Level 0 - Child moves the whole body.

Level 1 - Child walks.

Level 2 - Child goes up or down a ladder, runs while navigating around people and objects, or marches.

Level 3 - Child walks up or down stairs with alternating feet, jumps with both feet off the ground, or gallops.

Level 4 - Child strikes a large moving object with his or her hand or foot.

Level 5 - Child skips for eight or more repetitions (skips in a row).

Level 6 - Child strikes a small moving ball with a paddle, racket, or bat.

Level 7 - Child combines a series of movements in a smooth, sequenced action.

J. Fine-motor skills

The early childhood years are a period of tremendous refinement in the use of hands and fingers. Infants progress from flexing their fingers to being able to grasp objects and then manipulate them in various ways. From that point on, children gain strength, flexibility, and hand-eye coordination as they gain mastery over a growing number of objects and tools. Children take on increasingly complex fine-motor tasks and apply them to self-care and learning activities such as tying their shoes, creating intricate structures, and writing.

Level 0 - Child opens and closes his or her hand.

Level 1 - Child uses his or her small muscles to handle or pick up objects.

Level 2 - Child fits materials together or pulls them apart.

Level 3 - Child uses his or her small muscles with moderate control.

Level 4 - Child manipulates small objects with dexterity and precision.

Level 5 - Child uses a tripod grasp (thumb and two fingers) to write or draw a letter, numeral, or closed shape.

Level 6 - Child performs precise actions involving opposing hand movements.

Level 7 - Child uses finger dexterity and strength to complete a multistep task.

K. Personal care and healthy behavior

At first infants rely on others to meet their basic physical needs, but they gradually begin to participate in satisfying their own needs (for example, feeding themselves finger foods). Over time, children become even more competent at doing things for themselves. Children also grow more curious about their bodies and enjoy learning the names of body parts. As they become more aware of what their bodies can do, they wonder how they can make them bigger and stronger. With the examples set by adults, they are ready to learn about healthy eating and exercise habits.

Level 0 - Child expresses basic physical needs.

Level 1 - Child feeds him- or herself finger foods.

Level 2 - Child names basic body parts.

Level 3 - Child performs a personal care task with assistance.

Level 4 - Child performs a personal care task independently.

Level 5 - Child makes a healthy choice and explains why it is good for him or her.

Level 6 - Child explains the reason behind a safety rule.

Level 7 - Child explains how and why people have to take care of their bodies.

Language, Literacy, and Communication

L. Speaking

Infants attend to speech because it is intimately connected with trusted caregivers. Even before they have words, babies “talk” by cooing, babbling, and gesturing. Their sounds gradually take on the inflections and other characteristics of the language or languages spoken around them. Soon they begin to form and use actual words. In toddlerhood, preschool, and beyond, vocabulary and the length and complexity of children’s utterances seem to explode. They adopt the conventions of speech and engage in extended and meaningful conversations with others.

Level 0 - Child makes verbal sounds such as cooing and babbling.

Level 1 - Child says (or signs) a single word to refer to a person, animal, object, or action.

Level 2 - Child says a two- or three-word phrase to refer to a person, animal, object, or action.

Level 3 - Child talks about real people or objects that are not present.

Level 4 - Child uses the pronouns he, she, him, her, his, and hers correctly.

Level 5 - Child uses a clause that starts with when, if, or since in a complex sentence.

Level 6 - Child uses “what if” or “suppose” talk to spark a conversation about possibilities.

Level 7 - Child participates in a collaborative discussion with another child about specific school-related content.

M. Listening and comprehension

Listening to and comprehending spoken and written words are essential aspects of learning. Children progress from understanding simple spoken words and phrases (also signs and gestures) to more complex and detailed information. Their understanding of oral and written stories undergoes a similar development. First, they pick up individual story elements, such as a character or single event. Later, they grasp interactions among characters and the sequence and causal relationships between events. Children also begin to connect what they hear and read to people and events in their own lives.

Level 0 - Child responds to a voice by turning his or her head, establishing eye contact, or smiling.

Level 1 - Child responds nonverbally to simple statements or requests.

Level 2 - Child responds verbally to simple statements or questions.

Level 3 - Child adds to a conversation by connecting the topic to his or her own experience.

Level 4 - Child retells (remembers) three or more details in a story or book.

Level 5 - Child predicts what will happen next in an unfamiliar story or book and gives a reason based on what happened earlier in the book or on his or her own experience.

Level 6 - Child shows an understanding of content information (the topic) by asking and/or answering clarifying questions about key points presented orally or in text.

Level 7 - Child compares and contrasts relationships among characters, events, and themes in a book or story.

N. Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is recognizing the sounds that make up words. For young children, this awareness begins with identifying the ending sounds of words (rhymes, such as the at in cat and hat) and the beginning or onset sounds of words (alliteration, such as the /b/ in ball and baby). Older children begin to divide (segment) or put together (blend) a word into its phonemes, that is, the smallest units of sound that make up the word (such as /k/ /u / /p/ in cup). Phonological awareness is essential to learning how to read. Children develop this sound awareness through conversations, words games, songs, chants, and stories.

Level 0 - Child responds (turns, looks, kicks, startles, or quiets) to a sound in the environment.

Level 1 - Child makes the sound of an animal, a vehicle, or another familiar object.

Level 2 - Child repeats or joins in saying parts of simple rhymes.

Level 3 - Child spontaneously says real or made-up rhyming words.

Level 4 - Child points out that two words do not rhyme.

Level 5 - Child points out that two words (real or made up) start with the same sound.

Level 6 - Child identifies the beginning and ending phonemes in a word.

Level 7 - Child segments or blends a word composed of three or more phonemes.

O. Alphabetic knowledge

Alphabetic knowledge is learning letter names, and the alphabetic principle is understanding the systematic relationship between a letter and its sound. Very young children do not differentiate between letters and other visual symbols but enjoy looking at pictures and noticing individual features (the mouth on a drawing of a face). They gradually begin to recognize letters as distinct characters, each with its own sound (or sounds). This is an "aha" moment that often begins with a child recognizing the letters in his or her name and is then generalized to other letters and their sounds.

Level 0 - Child attends to visual images.

Level 1 - Child plays with three-dimensional materials that have the characteristics of letters.

Level 2 - Child says or sings a letter.

Level 3 - Child identifies a letter.

Level 4 - Child identifies 10 or more letters.

Level 5 - Child uses invented spelling to sound out new words without adult prompting.

Level 6 - Child identifies all letters.

Level 7 - Child identifies at least two consonant blends and two vowel sounds.

P. Reading

Children read pictures before they read letters and words. As they hear adults repeat the words in a familiar picture book, children come to understand that these exact words also appear in the marks on the page. Preschoolers read familiar symbols (stop signs, fast-food logos, and onscreen icons). These are all precursors to reading actual words. The first letters and words children read are often their names or other familiar words. As their alphabetic knowledge increases, they sound out more words and use other contextual cues to help them read.

Level 0 - Child gazes at a picture in a book.

Level 1 - Child points to familiar objects in pictures and photos.

Level 2 - Child "reads" a picture by labeling what he or she sees.

Level 3 - Child identifies what a common symbol represents.

Level 4 - Child reads two or more words.

Level 5 - Child reads three or more words in print (other than the names of self, family members, and/or friends).

Level 6 - Child reads distinct words while following a line of text, reading new words by using letter sounds (alphabetic principle), picture clues (visual context), patterns of language (syntax), and/or vocabulary (semantics).

Level 7 - The child decodes (reads) a two-syllable word by breaking the word into syllables.

Q. Book enjoyment and knowledge

Children of all ages enjoy looking at books. Infants treat them like any other object but soon realize that books are in a special category that contains pictures and stories. Through repeated exposure to books, children begin to understand how books work, for example, that they are read front to back. They develop favorites and ask to have them read over and over. As their language and comprehension skills increase, children are also able to understand more of the content and sequence of books and pay attention to details of character, plot, and setting.

Level 0 - Child touches, grasps, or mouths a book.

Level 1 - Child turns pages of a book.

Level 2 - Child looks at a book front to back and turns the pages one at a time.

Level 3 - Child uses a phrase or sentence to talk about a person, animal, object, or event pictured in a book.

Level 4 - Child selects or requests a particular book.

Level 5 - Child explains why he or she likes a particular book or series of books.

Level 6 - Child retells in sequence four or more events in a story or book.

Level 7 - Child summarizes a book based on the story elements of character, setting, and events (plot).

R. Writing

Once children connect spoken and written words, they want to write to share their own ideas. Children actually “write” (scribble and draw) before they can read. Learning to make letters and numerals is another step along the writing continuum. They write letter-like forms (lines and curves), which develop into real letters and then into words. They adopt the writing conventions of their language. As their vocabularies and alphabetic knowledge increase, their writing likewise increases in length and complexity.

Level 0 - Child grasps objects.

Level 1 - Child makes marks on a writing surface.

Level 2 - Child scribbles.

Level 3 - Child writes discrete letterlike forms.

Level 4 - Child writes five or more recognizable letters or numerals.

Level 5 - Child combines letters to form words (other than his or her name) for a purpose.

Level 6 - Child writes a sentence, separating the words with spaces.

Level 7 - Child uses writing conventions (in English) by writing several sentences from left to right in horizontal lines.

Mathematics

S. Number and counting

Children learn to count by counting things — objects, people, and events. For infants, developing number sense is as basic as grasping the “oneness” of an

object. Toddlers learn number words. Through everyday experiences, preschoolers learn that number words (one, two, three) refer to quantity and gradually realize that the last number counted tells "how many" there are. Later, children begin to compare quantities and combine and separate numbers into their components.

Level 0 - Child looks at, touches, or handles a single object.

Level 1 - Child uses a word, sign, or phrase to ask for "more."

Level 2 - Child uses a number word or rote counts.

Level 3 - Child consistently counts (with one-to-one correspondence) up to 10 objects.

Level 4 - Child identifies four or more single-digit numerals.

Level 5 - Child counts (with one-to-one correspondence) more than 10 objects and says the last number counted tells how many.

Level 6 - Child says how many more or fewer are in one set than in another set.

Level 7 - Child composes and/or decomposes a number in two or more ways.

T. Geometry: Shapes and spatial awareness

Infants look at shapes, and toddlers instinctively match and sort them, long before they learn the names of shapes. Infants and toddlers move their bodies and objects, eventually attaching simple position, direction, and distance words to them. Preschoolers begin to recognize what makes a shape a shape (triangles have three sides and three corners) and compare shapes. Older children master a variety of shape and spatial concepts and use them to solve spatial problems.

Level 0 - Child tracks a moving object.

Level 1 - Child fits an object into an opening that is the correct size.

Level 2 - Child moves him- or herself or objects in response to a simple position or direction word.

Level 3 - Child recognizes and names two-dimensional shapes (circle, triangle, square, rectangle).

Level 4 - Child transforms (composes or decomposes) shapes and identifies the resulting shape(s).

Level 5 - Child describes what makes a shape a shape (identifies shape attributes).

Level 6 - Child names a three-dimensional shape (cube, cylinder, pyramid).

Level 7 - Child describes three-dimensional shapes to compare their similarities and differences.

U. Measurement

The motivation to measure comes from children's interest in comparing things: Who is older? Whose road is longer? Infants explore one object at a time but as children handle two or more things, they become aware of measurable properties that differentiate them (for example, this one feels heavier). As language develops during toddlerhood and preschool, children learn basic measurement terms and explore the tools used to measure.

Children gradually learn how to measure correctly by using the same unit, starting at the baseline, and not leaving gaps or overlaps while measuring.

Level 0 - Child explores (looks at, touches, handles) one or more objects with measurable attributes (size, weight).

Level 1 - Child fills a container.

Level 2 - Child nests or stacks four or more objects by size.

Level 3 - Child uses a measurement term.

Level 4 - Child directly compares or orders things based on measurable attributes using the word same and words with er and est endings.

Level 5 - Child uses standard measuring procedures.

Level 6 - Child measures something using two different units and explains why the outcome is different.

Level 7 - Child, on his or her own, correctly measures using a standard measuring unit and says what the unit measures.

V. Patterns

Children become aware of patterns in objects, movements, sounds, and events. They do this through their own observations and when adults call their attention to them. This awareness grows as children progress from handling single objects, to lining up and ordering objects, to noticing regularities in the arrangement of objects. For example, some patterns repeat (for example, red-blue-red-blue-red-blue), while others change in predictable ways (for example, as age increases, so does height). Working with patterns and relationships is the basis for studying algebra later in school.

Level 0 - Child looks at or handles one object and then another.

Level 1 - Child gathers three or more objects.

Level 2 - Child lines up three or more objects one after another.

Level 3 - Child recognizes, copies, or extends an existing simple pattern (such as ABABAB or AABBAABBAABB).

Level 4 - Child creates a unique (not copied) simple pattern with at least three repeats.

Level 5 - Child creates his or her own (not copied) complex pattern (such as AABAABAAB or ABCABCABC) with at least three repeats.

Level 6 - Child translates a pattern into sounds, symbols, movements, and physical objects on his or her own.

Level 7 - Child explains how increasing and decreasing patterns work.

W. Data analysis

Although they do not go about this process as systematically as adults, children nevertheless enjoy gathering and recording quantitative (numerical) information. As with other areas of early mathematics, infants focus on single objects or events. By toddlerhood, children group things into collections that they later learn to quantify and compare. Preschoolers can begin to represent this information on simple charts and make sense of the data. Gradually,

children begin to ask their own questions that can be answered by gathering and interpreting data.

Level 0 - Child shows interest in (looks at, touches, handles) one object from a collection of objects.

Level 1 - Child collects objects.

Level 2 - Child groups things into two or more collections.

Level 3 - Child represents information (data) in concrete ways.

Level 4 - Child represents information (data) in abstract ways.

Level 5 - Child interprets information (data) from a representation.

Level 6 - Child applies information (data) from a representation.

Level 7 - Child poses a question of interest and collects and interprets information (data) to figure out the answer.

Creative Arts

X. Art

Children use two- and three-dimensional materials to draw and paint, mold and sculpt, and build and assemble. Infants experience art's sensory qualities, while toddlers explore shape, color, and texture as they practice using art materials and tools. Preschoolers progress from making accidental to intentional representations and gradually add more detail and complexity to their creations. By kindergarten, children begin to use the elements of art to create specific effects.

Level 0 - Child explores materials with different textures and colors.

Level 1 - Child explores art materials.

Level 2 - Child uses art materials to build, make discrete marks, or to mold or flatten.

Level 3 - Child uses art materials, notices an unintended result, and says what it looks like.

Y. Music

Children experience sounds and music by listening, experimenting with their voices, singing, and playing simple instruments. Young children and music are natural partners. Newborns respond to music by wriggling with pleasure or being lulled to sleep. Toddlers babble in musical tones and repeat song fragments. Preschoolers modify their voices during pretend play and build up a repertoire of familiar songs. Older children learn more complicated songs and become familiar with a growing variety of musical instruments.

Choose Rating

Level 0 - Child calms or alerts to sounds, tones, or music.

Level 1 - Child responds to other people singing by joining in with vocalizations or corresponding motions.

Level 2 - Child requests a song using a word or gesture.

Level 3 - Child modifies his or her voice when singing parts of a song.

Level 4 - Child explores the sound of a simple rhythm instrument in three or more ways.

Level 5 - Child sings all of the words in a familiar song.

Level 6 - Child sings all or most of the chorus and nonrepetitive verses to a complex song.

Level 7 - Child recognizes the sounds and uses the names of musical instruments.

Z. Movement

Children explore moving their whole bodies, or parts of their bodies, with and without music. Infants are all about movement! These movements become more varied in toddlerhood; at this age children enjoy learning the names of simple movements and responding to music with movement. By preschool, children experiment with different types of movement and connect specific movements to the features of music. As children become older, they begin to sequence movements and dance.

Level 0 - Child turns head, waves arms, or kicks legs while lying on his or her back.

Level 1 - Child stands and bounces in response to music.

Level 2 - Child moves actively to music.

Level 3 - Child names and does a movement.

Level 4 - Child maintains a steady beat for at least eight beats.

Level 5 - Child describes how his or her movement is connected to a feature of music.

Level 6 - Child creates his or her own dance or series of movements (including at least four distinct movements) and repeats the sequence.

Level 7 - Child learns the steps to a simple dance and performs them to a steady beat.

AA. Pretend play

Pretend play involves imitation and imagination. The youngest children watch and then imitate the actions and sounds of people, animals, and objects in their environment. By late toddlerhood, children pretend by using one object to stand for another. In early preschool, they begin to take on the roles of characters. Children progress from playing alongside others to playing with others. Their pretend play becomes more imaginative and involves props and increasingly complex scenarios with multiple roles. They dramatize familiar stories and invent their own.

Level 0 - Child watches and listens to another person.

Level 1 - Child imitates an action of an animal, an object, or a person.

Level 2 - Child uses one object to stand for another object.

Level 3 - Child pretends by using words and actions to take on the role of a character or animate a figure.

Level 4 - Child engages in repetitive pretend-play scenarios.

Level 5 - Child plays with two or more children, stepping out of the pretend play to give directions to another person.

Level 6 - Child creates a specific prop or costume having five or more details to support and extend pretend play.

Level 7 - Child performs in a group dramatization of a familiar story, myth, or fable, adding his or her own ideas.

Science and Technology

BB. Observing and classifying

Being a good observer is an important skill for budding scientists to develop. Infants and toddlers use all their senses to observe. Preschoolers begin to sort things into categories — big and small, loud and quiet, rough and smooth, to name just a few. They discover similarities and differences in people, objects, and events. Over time, their classifications are based on an increasing number of attributes or characteristics.

Level 0 - Child explores objects using different senses.

Level 1 - Child uses a sound or hand sign to name an object.

Level 2 - Child uses the same word to name more than one object.

Level 3 - Child sorts or matches things and may identify things as being the same or different.

Level 4 - Child sorts things based on one characteristic (attribute) and describes the reason.

Level 5 - Child sorts based on two characteristics and gives the reason.

Level 6 - Child intently or repeatedly observes something and describes his or her discoveries in detail.

Level 7 - Child divides a category into sets, divides the sets into subsets, and describes the characteristics of each subset and how it relates to the original category and to the other subsets.

CC. Experimenting, predicting, and drawing conclusions

Infants do things randomly and then, with increasing intention, act to bring about a desired effect. Toddlers explore materials to see what they can do. Preschoolers ask questions and test out their ideas, make predictions (hypotheses) about what might happen, and then see whether what they thought would happen actually did. Children come up with simple explanations, based on their own logic, to explain what they do and do not observe.

Level 0 - Child does a spontaneous action.

Level 1 - Child performs an action on an object.

Level 2 - Child uses trial and error to investigate a material itself and/or an idea.

Level 3 - Child describes a change in an object or situation.

Level 4 - Child makes a verbal prediction at random.

Level 5 - Child gives a reason for the result of his or her experiment.

Level 6 - Child applies a conclusion he or she made from a previous experience to a new situation.

Level 7 - Child poses a question and systematically tests out possible answers.

DD. Natural and physical world

Infants learn about the natural and physical world simply by being in it — feeling the breeze, gazing at the sun streaming through a window, and feeling the motion of being rocked. Toddlers learn the names for plants and animals and become more interested in taking care of them. Preschoolers talk about wildlife and where they live. They notice how materials change and wonder why. Children learn how people’s behavior affects the environment and how they can help to protect it.

Level 0 - Child responds to a sensory experience in the natural world.

Level 1 - Child picks up, examines, or uses a natural object or material.

Level 2 - Child names an object or event in the natural and physical world.

Level 3 - Child initiates or talks about performing an action helpful to plants or animals.

Level 4 - Child talks about where different types of wildlife live or are found (habitats).

Level 5 - Child identifies a change in a material or the environment and a possible cause.

Level 6 - Child explains how or why people’s behavior can be harmful to the environment and offers an idea to help.

Level 7 - Child identifies and describes a cycle or system.

EE. Tools and technology

To an infant, a tool is anything that satisfies a need or desire — a teething ring that alleviates pain or a mobile that provides something interesting to look at. Toddlers use everyday materials as simple tools in their play. Preschool and kindergarten children use tools (for example, scissors, staplers) to deliberately carry out their intentions. They increasingly use interactive digital technology (including software, apps, e-books, and the Internet) to supplement hands-on learning.

Level 0 - Child responds to (mouths, reaches for, turns toward, touches) an object.

Level 1 - Child explores a tool in his or her play.

Level 2 - Child explores technology devices.

Level 3 - Child uses tools to support his or her play.

Level 4 - Child explains in a simple way how a tool works.

Level 5 - Child explains in a simple way how to make a piece of technology work.

Level 6 - Child explains how tools and technology assist in the tasks of daily living.

Level 7 - Child uses technology to look up information he or she is interested in.

Social Studies

FF. Knowledge of self and others

Infants must first develop a sense of self before they can differentiate themselves from others. Toddlers learn who people are and what they do by seeing and imitating roles in their families, while preschoolers venture into the worlds of their school, neighborhood, town, or city. They are curious about how they and their families are the same and/or different from others. Children learn it is important to treat all people fairly and respect their diversity.

Level 0 - Child puts own fingers, thumb, or foot in own mouth.

Level 1 - Child indicates or says an object is mine.

Level 2 - Child spontaneously identifies him- or herself in a mirror or photo.

Level 3 - Child plays or talks about family or community roles.

Level 4 - Child identifies similarities or differences in people's personal characteristics.

Level 5 - Child compares his or her own and others' family characteristics.

Level 6 - Child voices a sense of belonging to a community.

Level 7 - Child takes personal responsibility for making sure others are treated fairly and with respect.

GG. Geography

Infants familiarize themselves with their immediate surroundings. Once they become mobile, they are eager to discover new locations. Orienting themselves to familiar people and things gives toddlers a sense of security. As preschoolers travel the same routes each day (for example, from home to school), they construct cognitive maps in their heads of where things are in relation to one another. Over time, children begin to work with simple maps depicting unfamiliar locations.

Level 0 - Child gazes at an object in a fixed location.

Level 1 - Child moves one object to gain access to another object.

Level 2 - Child shows where objects belong or where events happen in the immediate environment.

Level 3 - Child uses symbols to help retrieve or put away materials or to identify the actual location of interest areas.

Level 4 - Child reads a simple familiar map, such as a map of the classroom.

Level 5 - Child knows how to navigate around a familiar building.

Level 6 - Child describes the location of familiar landmarks.

Level 7 - Child interprets a map of an unfamiliar location.

HH. History

For young children, time is very personal and concrete. They pay attention to when things stop and start or how long it will be until something they want happens. Gradually their sense of time expands. Instead of being focused solely on the present, they think about what happened before and what will happen next. They develop the ability to think farther back and farther ahead.

Level 0 - Child engages in a voluntary action.

- Level 1 - Child indicates the end of an event.
- Level 2 - Child anticipates the next event in a familiar sequence.
- Level 3 - Child uses words such as yesterday or tomorrow to refer generally to things in the past or future.
- Level 4 - Child uses words such as yesterday and tomorrow correctly.
- Level 5 - Child shares a story about him- or herself or family that happened farther back than in the immediate past.
- Level 6 - Child interprets photos or illustrations as representing past or future time periods.
- Level 7 - Child creates (draws and/or writes) a timeline to show personal events in a sequential manner.

English Language Learning (ELL)

II. Listening to and understanding English

Children learning English actively attend to the new language, often silently. This quiet period does not mean they are “tuning out” but are instead busy listening. A clue to how much they understand can often be found in their gestures and imitative behavior, and the extent to which they can respond to simple instructions and questions. Children who have more experience with English may also be ready to join in play or learning activities. Even if they cannot yet take on a speaking role, they understand enough to contribute materials to the activity or offer assistance to others.

- Level 2 - Child continues with his or her actions when spoken to in English.
- Level 3 - Child observes (watches and listens) as others converse in English.
- Level 4 - Child uses cues in the environment to follow routines and directions.
- Level 5 - Child responds to simple English words and phrases alone, without needing visual cues.
- Level 6 - Child responds to a complex phrase in English.
- Level 7 - Child follows a conversation in English between two or more other people.

JJ. Speaking English

Children may at first attempt to use their home language when speaking with teachers and peers, but gradually realize they are not being understood. At this point, they may stop talking so they can listen (see item II) or may continue to talk by imitating the sounds of English. The spoken English of ELL children develops in a way very similar to monolingual children, beginning with no English to one or two words, to standard or formulaic phrases (“I want _____”), and later to expressing themselves in their own words. They apply the general rules of English, although they may still make errors. Eventually, like a native speaker, their vocabularies expand and they master the rules of grammar and syntax.

- Level 2 - Child, if he or she speaks, uses a language other than English.

Level 3 - Child imitates and/or repeats sounds, words, and phrases in English; speech may not always be clear.

Level 4 - Child names a familiar object or action in English on his or her own and/or uses a common English phrase.

Level 5 - Child says, in English, a short phrase that includes a verb; may combine English words with the home language in the same phrase.

Level 6 - Child speaks English in sentences that include nonstandard phrases; may make grammatical errors that stem from the home language or are typical of young children.

Level 7 - Child speaks English in complete sentences, using proper word order and construction.