



Oklahoma

EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND TWOS

Ages Birth through 36 months

Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines

A taskforce convened by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Child Care Services developed the Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines. A Review Workgroup was formed in September 2016 and met monthly to revise the Early Learning Guidelines. This was initiated due to comments and suggestions from the field, the 2016 Head Start Performance Standards, and the development of the Oklahoma Academic Standards which has replaced the PASS standards. Revision Committee members included representatives from the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development, Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association and its affiliates, Oklahoma Head Start/Early Head Start, Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association, child care programs, community colleges and universities. Additional resources including other state's Early Learning Guidelines were also added. This document has been developed to be used by all who touch the lives of Oklahoma's infants, toddlers and two year olds. The word 'teacher' is used in the guidelines to represent parents, family members, educators, caregivers, program staff and caring adults who offer instruction, support and guidance to young children.

These guidelines are intended to assist adults at all levels of knowledge and experience regarding what children may know and be able to do. The purpose is to enhance learning experiences for Oklahoma's youngest children and help provide a safe, nurturing and developmentally appropriate environment. The Early Learning Guidelines provide examples of experiences that can be used to build relationships, develop purposeful play and guide program development. They should not be used as a curriculum or assessment.

Infants, toddlers and two year olds are born ready to learn, and their capacity to learn is enriched by the teacher and the environment around them. Situations will arise throughout the day that can be considered 'teachable moments' or unplanned learning opportunities. These guidelines will assist parents and teachers in finding new ways to introduce everyday experiences and enhance teachable moments. Each section includes an area that will help the parent and teacher provide learning experiences. When or if materials are needed they may be purchased or homemade.

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Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for Infants,
Toddlers and Twos were created to serve as a foundation
to connect what is taught with what is appropriate for
very young children. They also provide a framework to
encourage consistency among early childhood programs
across Oklahoma. These guidelines were revised in 2017
and align with the Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for
Children Ages Three through Five, the Oklahoma Academic
Standards and Head Start & Early Head Start Program
Performance Standards effective 11/7/2016.

The guidelines are a resource including commonly held expectations and widely accepted best practices for children in various age groups. At the same time, the guidelines are flexible enough to meet the needs of individual children and groups of children.

Guiding Principles:

This document presents a broad view of the child development continuum reflecting commonly used and widely held expectations so teachers and parents can plan for typical developmental progression. The guiding principles are as follows:

- ★ Value the parents as the child's first teacher.
- ★ Respect that every child develops as an individual and at his/her own pace.
- ★ From the time the embryo is forming to the time the child is three years old, rapid growth and development occurs. All learning and interactions with adults that take place during this time pave the way for future success of the child, both developmentally and in preparation for school and life.
- ★ All of a child's development (social/emotional, gross/fine motor, cognitive and language) is woven together to complete the whole child.
- ★ Children learn through self-initiated play and teacherdirected activities that are developmentally appropriate.
- ★ Recognize that close relationships between teacher and child are developed during routine caregiving activities (such as diapering and feeding).
- ★ Respect the child's family and recognize that culture (language, traditions, etc.) influences who the child is and who he/she will become. This must be embraced as part of the child's early learning experiences.
- ★ Knowledge and responsiveness to the child and his/her family is a key to positive growth and development in the child.

- ★ Knowledgeable teachers who apply understanding of child development are essential to enhance a child's learning.
- ★ Each child's basic needs (For example: health, safety and nutrition) must be met for the best possible learning to occur.

The guidelines represent all areas of development (domains). The guidelines are separated into concept areas including domains but are not exclusive. Each concept area is separated into developmental ranges that overlap: young infant (zero to eight months), mobile infant (six to 18 months), and toddler (16 to 36 months). Some skills developed during this time period are listed. The skills are listed in order but are not exclusive to that age range. Children grow and develop at different rates, resulting in a wide range of normal development.

Organization:

This document contains not only the concept areas and standards, but also an area of development in the sections entitled 'THE BABY MAY' and indicators of an infant's progress in areas under 'THE BABY MIGHT'. Suggestions are given as examples of what 'THE TEACHER CAN' do to encourage growth and development. The domains are interdependent and support one another. Each of the sections is organized into the five areas:

- 1) Introduction provides a brief description of the area of development and the purpose for including it in the guidelines.
- 2) Standard agreed upon framework of skills within each domain that infants, toddlers and twos need to experience to develop a foundation for additional learning.
- 3) THE BABY MAY' identifies what infants, toddlers and twos are likely to know or do in relationship to each standard.
- **4)** THE BABY MIGHT FOR EXAMPLE' specific observable skills or actions showing what an infant, toddler or two might do.
- 5) 'THE TEACHER CAN' examples of activities, environments, daily routines, interactions and play to encourage the development of skills in all domains.

Elements of a Quality Program for Infants, Toddlers and Twos:

The following are considerations necessary to provide a quality program for infants, toddlers and twos. These elements provide the critical foundation for human development and lifelong learning; therefore, all aspects of a program must be thoughtfully and deliberately developed.

Inclusion for All Children

Using knowledge of each child, teachers plan learning experiences by taking into account children's differing abilities, temperaments, developmental levels and approaches to learning. Responsiveness to individual children is evident in teacher/child interactions, activities and classroom environment. Teachers make sure each child has opportunities to actively participate and make contributions. There are resources to assist providers with quality inclusive child care; some are located in the Resource Section.

- ★ Inclusion is broad in scope and may include medical, physical, learning, behavioral, family and environmental stress. Some children may have needs identified by Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP).
- ★ Knowledge of child development is used in providing services for children. Knowledge of individual capabilities must be used in making decisions about children. For additional resources and guidance on developmental milestones, red flags or concerns see the additional resources section on page.
- ★ Children benefit from being in a classroom of diverse learners. Every child has strengths and challenges and learns to appreciate and accept each other.
- ★ As much as possible, children who have been identified as needing additional supports and/or resources, can receive therapeutic or other services within their natural settings to maintain their sense of stability and support their feelings of belonging and acceptance.
- ★ The Council for Exceptional Children/Division of Early Childhood uses the term "young children (0-8) who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities" in their Division of Early Childhood Recommended Practices which was updated in 2014. The reference to a term often used, 'special needs', has been replaced.

In inclusive programs teachers:

- ★ Work closely with family members and other professionals to support children's health, safety and behavior. Teachers observe children in natural settings and record activities, behaviors and development in order to plan relevant, individualized learning opportunities.
- ★ Work with children who have advanced skills and knowledge by offering activities to meet each child's individual abilities.

- ★ Use adaptive equipment to assist children in learning a skill or participating in a activity. (For example: loop scissors for a child who does not have hand strength or provide a beanbag chair at circle time so a child in a wheelchair can sit on the same level as others in the room.)
- ★ Develop strategies to encourage children's active participation in activities. An example would be to pair children who are having difficulty with at a task with friends who are successful. Children may select activities based on readiness, learning style and interest.
- ★ Create an adaptable environment for the flow of activities that can be adjusted. Arrange the play space so activity areas are clearly defined and provide children who may be easily overwhelmed an opportunity to use unfamiliar equipment. Materials and activities encourage all children to participate actively.
- ★ Modify materials as needed for children to participate as independently as possible. Use picture cues, simplified language, or the child's primary language when possible and lower the easel or provide a chair for the child who has difficulty standing.
- ★ Modify activities to be less or more complicated depending on children's abilities. Break activities such as cooking projects or games into parts by describing and making pictures of the steps, and sequence or prepare art experiences with individual children in mind.
- ★ Provide adult assistance in an activity or routine to support children's participation. (For example: provide hand on hand assistance for some activities, and position an adult near children who may need more assistance).
- ★ Seek resources to understand each child's abilities and disabilities. Teachers are in regular communication with families and may consult with appropriate specialists to ensure each child receives needed specialized services.