Alabama's Standards *for* Early Learning and Development

INTRODUCTION

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF Early Childhood Education

children.alabama.gov

Purpose

Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELDs) are a critical component of the state's early childhood system and offer a unified vision for responsive and developmentally appropriate, relationship-based learning experiences for all of the state's young children, birth to age 5.

The Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development have been revised and re-designed to support the state's many early learning programs: child care, home visiting, Head Start, Alabama First Class, and special education, as well as its early childhood students in high school, career technical schools or higher education programs. They are designed to align practices across these settings, thereby promoting collaboration and consistency.

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The ASELDs offer a set of shared expectations for young children's growth and development and provide a continuum of learning for all children, birth to age 5. They lay the foundation for what children should be able to know, do and learn at age-specific intervals.

The ASELDs are intended to guide professionals' intentional and purposeful practices with children, build connections with K-3 partners, enhance family relationships, support pre-service students' learning, and inform the design of professional development plans for those who are working in the field and for those who attend high school and vocational schools. The Standards reflect the states' quality initiatives and extend the community's understanding of the way in which young children develop and learn.

Alabama Standards ARE:

- A universal language for *all* professionals who work with young children.
- A framework for the use of age and culturally appropriate practices to provide high quality experiences for children.
- A guide for the selection and use of curricula and assessments.
- A common context of learning to share with families, supporting their understanding of children's development and elements for school and life success.
- The groundwork for training and professional development, beginning at the high school and college levels and continuing with in-service.
- A means to raise public awareness about the early childhood profession.

Alabama Standards are NOT:

- A curriculum or assessment.
- An evaluation of professionals' performance.
- A means to exclude children from program participation.
- A tool to label, sort or diagnose children.
- Used in isolation.

> "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*"
> **– NELSON MANDELA**

Reflect How Children Learn

Children are natural learners. They are energetic, curious and creative as they explore and experiment with their surroundings to build new understandings and practice skills. Children's unique abilities are nurtured through strong relationships with adults and peers and stimulating environments where they can practice and master their newly-discovered skills and information.

Brain Development

A young child's brain grows at an amazing rate! At birth, the baby's brain is about 25% of an adult's and has all the neurons or cells it will ever have. The brain size doubles in the first year and by age 5 a child's brain is about 95% of the size of an adult brain. The brain's cells or neurons communicate with each other and form connections or synapses that are the foundation for learning.

These connections begin before birth and grow faster from birth through age 5 than at any other time. Young children have more than twice the number of synapses (or connections) than adults, enabling them to learn at a faster rate than adults. The opportunities children are given to interact with other people and their world, along with their experiences in safe and stimulating environments, influence children's capacity to grow or strengthen their synapses.

Brain connections begin before birth and grow faster from birth through age 5 than at any other time.

Children begin to prune or lose some of those synapses as they make sense of their world. Dual language learners, for example, hear, use, and maintain sounds and words that may be pruned or lost by those children who only speak English. The more a synapse or connection is used, the more permanent it becomes, while those that aren't used disappear. A child's experiences, then, impact what information is learned by determining what information enters the brain and how the brain processes that information.

There are critical periods, or windows, when children are especially sensitive to learning specific types of information and skills. Research tells us, for example, that the critical period for language development begins to fade by age 5. High quality early childhood programs that take a holistic approach, paying attention to all aspects of children's development and learning and supporting their families' well-being, build on brain research to ensure children are exposed to varied and stimulating experiences that are essential to children's brain development.

Play: The Foundation

Children's play is more than just interacting with toys. It is the way in which children learn about themselves, others, and their world. The importance of play has long been recognized as critical to children's well-being. In fact, the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights identifies play as a right of every child. It adopted the 1959 Declaration of the Rights during the 1989 Convention on the Rights of Children, and that same proclamation has been reviewed and further promoted in 2013.

> **The International Play Association Declaration of the Child's Right to Play, written in coordination with Article 31, defines play:**
>
> - CHILDREN are the foundation of the world's future.
> - CHILDREN have played at all times throughout history and in all cultures.
> - PLAY, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children.
> - PLAY is communication and expression, combining thought and action; it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achievement.
> - PLAY is instinctive, voluntary, and spontaneous.
> - PLAY helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.
> - PLAY is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time.

High quality early learning settings offer both exploratory (or free play) as well as guided play to promote learning and development. Exploratory play allows children to be creative, to find out about their own interests and abilities and to make decisions. Through play experiences, children learn how to work in groups and get along with others, Adults guide, but do not control, play experiences introducing new experiences as well as expanding familiar play settings and activities. They ask questions to help children plan and make sense of their play, and they capitalize on the teachable moment by using unplanned opportunities that have captured children's interests to facilitate new learning *For more information about the value of play and its stages, see Appendix One: The Wonder of Play*

Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of children's successful growth and development. The adults and peers with whom they interact help children to construct their own meaning and understanding of the world around them. Children depend on nurturing relationships to help them feel safe, secure, and confident in the way in which they learn about themselves and relate to others.

Holistic Learning

Children's social-emotional, physical, creative and cognitive learning are intertwined. Every aspect of learning is equally important and they work together to support children's growth and development. Although the Alabama Standards are divided into four sections, and further into domains, learning occurs across these interconnected domains or holistically. A single activity or experience offers opportunities to master content or acquire skills from multiple domains. Children who are using play dough, for example, can be experiencing multiple learning opportunities:

Mathematical skills grow when children roll or cut dough in different lengths and sizes or create different shapes.

Motor skills strengthen as they roll, knead or shape dough.

Scientific thinking develops when children explore the mixing of colors or experience what happens when play dough dries out.

Social-Emotional skills blossom when they share the dough as children play with others or work with another child to make a creation.

Language development occurs when children talk with each other about what they're doing and making.

Approaches to Play and Learning skills grow when they use the play dough in unique and different ways.

Cultural Context

Children learn in the context of their unique heritage and family culture and values. Children's culture is the lens through which they experience activities and events, develop relationships, and build knowledge. Children often reveal cultural differences in the way they interact with adults and other children, how they use language, demonstrate independence and self-reliance, or express emotions. Alabama's Standards are culturally relevant, respecting children and families' differences.

Resilience

Young children are especially vulnerable to both positive and negative experiences. Positive relationships, settings where children feel safe, and quality experiences influence children's happiness, resilience and success. On the flip side, when children experience trauma or threatening or dangerous events in their lives, their learning and development may be negatively impacted. They may have difficulty with thinking and learning, memory, and attention. They may have trouble regulating their own emotions, have overwhelming feelings of frustration and exhibit anxiety and fearfulness.

Positive relationships, settings where children feel safe, and quality experiences influence children's happiness, resilience and success.

Early learning professionals can help children who have experienced trauma by establishing strong, positive relationships with both children and their families. Adults need to maintain consistent routines and use positive guidance strategies. The Standards, and in particular, the domains of Approaches to Play and Learning, Physical Development and Health, and Social Emotional Development offer developmental trajectories and strategies to guide adults' understanding of development-specific strategies to support traumatized children.

"*Every child is a different kind of flower, and all together, they make the world a beautiful garden*"
– UNKNOWN

Embrace All Children

Every child is special. No two children are the same. Every child has unique personality traits, temperament, and even physical appearances. Every child is a competent learner with strengths, abilities, and interests. Every child grows and learns in his/her own way at a self-defined pace; some children may need additional support to guide their learning and development. Early childhood professionals must use their understanding of each child's uniqueness to adapt experiences and environment to best meet their needs and maximize learning.

Children with Disabilities

Alabama's young children with disabilities are best supported in inclusive environments that ensure that all children have equal opportunities to participate in early learning programs. The 2015 Position Statement issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services defines inclusion, "children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional) , friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities."

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division of Exceptional Children (DEC), in their joint position statement, Early Childhood Inclusion (2009) have further described inclusion: "The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are **access**, **participation**, and **supports**. **Access** refers to children's opportunities to experience varied learning situations, activities, settings and environments. **Participation** involves the individualized accommodations that some children may need to fully engage in early learning activities. **Supports** reflect the availability of a continuum of responsive services and programs that meet the needs of both children who are identified and those who are risk for disabilities.

Early screening to identify possible disabilities followed by the development and implementation of individualized treatment plans help professionals set realistic goals and expectations based on their strengths and interests, ultimately supporting all children's growth and progress. *For additional information on inclusive practices, see Appendix Three: Inclusion in Early Learning Programs*.

Children who are Learning English

Research shows that children who are provided with instruction in their home language experience significant gains in language, reading and math. They also benefit from a stronger

cultural identity, demonstrate good executive function skills and positive social emotional gains in comparison with those children who are not experiencing dual language learning.

"DLLs come to early childhood programs with richly varied backgrounds, sets of skills, and cultural ways of knowing: they need teachers who welcome them and recognize their unique abilities, what they know, and what they need to learn. Teachers of young DLLs understand that children communicate their knowledge using the safest method possible, and this may mean the use of their home language, English, or a mixture of both." (Magruder, et al 2013, 10) *For more information about supporting young dual language learners, see Appendix Four: Supporting Dual Language Learners in Early Learning Programs.*

Children who are Advanced Learners

As early as birth some children may show signs of giftedness. They may be more alert, reach their developmental milestones at a faster pace and demonstrate advanced language skills. They typically are very curious with excellent memories, attention spans and a capacity for abstract thinking. Gifted children may be exceptionally good with mathematical concepts and are good readers. They are creative with good imaginations and enjoy the creative arts. Advanced learners often devise unique solutions to problems and you may find these children are leaders in a group.

Research shows that gifted children's development is often uneven, with some areas of learning more advanced than others. This is known as asynchronous development. For example, a child's mastery of language may be advanced while his mastery of emerging reading and writing skills may be in the typical range. In other words, a gifted child may not be gifted in all areas. This may result in social-emotional challenges with peer relationships, self-identity and the need for perfection. Professionals who work with gifted children need to assure they are offered child-centered learning opportunities with opportunities to address their curiosity and express their creativity and imagination. View additional supportive practices on the domains' Adaptations and Accommodations pages.

Children's Learning Preferences

Responsive early childhood professionals recognize, acknowledge, and individualize children's learning to accommodate their unique learning styles or preferences. Some children may be visual learners who use their eyes to learn. They may close their eyes to picture something or respond best to pictures or demonstrations. Auditory learners use their ears. They remember what they hear and may use rhymes, songs or discussions to learn best. Tactile or kinesthetic learning occurs through children's engagement in physical activities; they learn by doing, touching, and moving. While children may prefer one learning modality over another, they typically combine them for greater understanding and knowledge acquisition. Professionals offer the strongest and most effective learning experiences when they offer children opportunities to learn through the use of all their senses.

Guide Early Learning Professionals' Practices

ALL children are born ready to learn! Their development and skill mastery are dependent on caring adults who nurture and support their growth and provide them with experiences that help them gather and build knowledge about their world. Adults create the opportunities for children's learning by challenging them to acquire new understandings and information, built on prior knowledge. Early childhood professionals best support children when they understand the continuum of learning, the sequence in which skills emerge and are mastered, and develop learning experiences that are based on children's existing understandings, while at the same time, challenge them to acquire new information.

Responsive early childhood professionals recognize, acknowledge, and individualize children's learning to accommodate their unique learning styles.

Alabama's Measures of Quality

Many early learning programs incorporate frameworks and assessments to support their high quality program delivery. Resources such as the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) provide guidance and evaluation tools that help professionals assess their own, and their programs', learning environments or adult-child interactions. Programs may also seek accreditation through organizations such as NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children), NAAPC (National Accreditation Commission) or the National Early Childhood Program Assessment (NECPA). These processes promote quality through the use of self-study, a set of guidelines or assessment tools and a national certification. Alabama offers quality assessment opportunities through the availability of Alabama Quality Stars, its quality rating and improvement scale (QRIS), and its First Class Pre-K guidelines and standards.

Pre-service students as well as individuals who are working in the field may find additional resources to support their career advancement as defined in Alabama's Pathways. The Child Development Associate (CDA) or NAEYC Professional Standards and Unifying Framework provide guidance and certifications. Two and four year coursework and credentials round out the educational opportunities.

All of these documents are linked to ASELDs through the promotion of standards' use to understand all children's growth and development, the prioritization of developmentally appropriate and individualized learning through play, and the importance of family and community engagement.
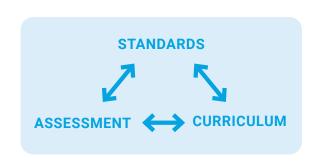
Universal Design for Learning

Universal design for learning, often referred to as UDL, is a framework or approach that ensures all children have equal opportunity to learn

and succeed. All children benefit from adults' use of universal design, especially those children with unique needs. Early childhood professionals who use UDL create flexible and varied opportunities for learning that build on children's strengths. They use the three main principles: 1) representation; 2) expression; and 3) engagement to develop multiple ways for children to access and participate in materials and activities, to acquire and build knowledge as well as demonstrate what they know or have learned, and to motivate children to learn.

Intentional and Purposeful Planning

Professionals facilitate children's development and learning when they are thoughtful and purposeful in their work. They deliberately design the environment, plan the schedule and routines, offer materials and activities, and use play as the means by which children accomplish the goals that have been identified. Professionals facilitate children's learning by observing, assessing and intentionally developing experiences that build on children's current knowledge or developmental level. Intentional professionals interact directly with children; they ask questions to encourage children's thinking and problem solving, and adapt experiences to meet individual children's learning styles, interests, and needs.

STANDARDS

ASSESSMENT ⟷ **CURRICULUM**

The Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development guide professionals' understanding of what children can know, learn and do. They help them intentionally create learning experiences that facilitate children's learning, decide the way in which those experiences will be provided, and the way in which they will be shared with other professionals and families.

Higher Order Thinking

Children expand their creative and critical thinking processes when early learning professionals build their higher order thinking skills (HOT). Professionals who ask children probing questions or provide experiences that help them make predictions, investigate an idea or object, form opinions, and even analyze a situation are encouraging young children to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. A young child's emerging HOT skills set the stage for success, not only in school, but in future jobs or adult situations. ASELD's Professional Practices offer examples of ways that HOT can be encouraged and the Children's Observable Actions demonstrate some ways that children exhibit these important skills.

Connections with Curriculum and Assessment

Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development standards, curriculum, and assessment go hand-in-hand to promote children's development and learning. In fact, the Standards are the framework from which curriculum and assessments can be designed and used.

The ASELDs include all domains of children's learning, and within the domains, describe the content and expected outcomes for children. Examples of children's actions illustrate the process and sequence of learning and professional practices guide ways in which adults interact with children to support their learning.

Adults use the ASELDs to define the specific learning experiences and content that will be taught to children *or the curriculum. Curriculum* is built from feedback from the children themselves, family interests, and professionals' knowledge of child development. Each professional adapts the environment, activities, and interactions to guide children's growth and learning.

Professionals' partnerships with families are critical to facilitating positive learning outcomes.

Assessment informs professionals' practices. When professionals observe children's behaviors, their responses to activities and experiences, and their skill mastery, they are able to design or adapt learning goals to encourage new understandings and development. Professionals use observation, the collection of artifacts or children's work samples, and family input to establish goals and determine children's progress towards meeting those goals. The ASELDs are aligned with Alabama's assessment tools to inform those developmental indicators that can be assessed to indicate children's outcomes.

Partnerships with Families

Professionals' partnerships with families are critical to facilitating positive learning outcomes for young children. Adults in early learning programs and family members must work together to develop desired goals and outcomes to support children's learning. Professionals can use the ASELDs to help families learn about age-appropriate expectations and strategies to encourage learning, and at the same time, families can inform program professionals about children's experiences and interests. Together, families and professionals create a strong alliance that builds children's confidence and successful learning experiences. *See the Family and Community Engagement Domain for more information about families' engagement in children's learning.*

Technology as a Learning Tool

Technology in an early childhood classroom is broader than computers, laptops and cell phone. Even the most basic tools such as pencils and crayons are beginning forms of technology; they were made by humans and are used by humans. The newer technology tools have become a part of children's experiences and can be incorporated into early learning classrooms as long as they are used appropriately, to guide children's learning and development.

Assistive technology for children with special needs often supports their access to early learning environments and activities; interactive media has been used to build children's English language learning. A joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College, Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8, tells us "when used intentionally and appropriately technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development." Still not recommended for children under two, older toddlers and preschoolers can benefit from interacting with technology tools and interactive media when experiences are " active, hands-on, engaging, and empowering; give the child control; provide adaptive scaffolds to ease the accomplishment of tasks; and are used as one of many options to support children's learning." *See Appendix Six: Technology in Early Learning Programs for additional information about the use of technology in early childhood classrooms.*

Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development
Use a New Design

The 2020 edition of the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development has been developed to support all professionals who interact with young children, birth to age 5. The Standards have been aligned with both national and state program standards and program requirements so that adults who work directly with children in infant-toddler or preschool classrooms, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, child care facilities, home visiting programs, or special education settings will be able to use the document to guide their interactions and instructional practices. Instructors in higher education, high school and career and technical programs are encouraged to introduce pre-service students to the standards through their coursework. Professional development specialists and technical assistance specialists who reference the standards within their training and coaching empower professionals' understanding and use of the ASELDs to cultivate high quality early learning programs. Professionals who write special education plans can use them to specify children's goals. In short, the ASELDs offer one single set of expectations for Alabama's young children that extend across all program types.

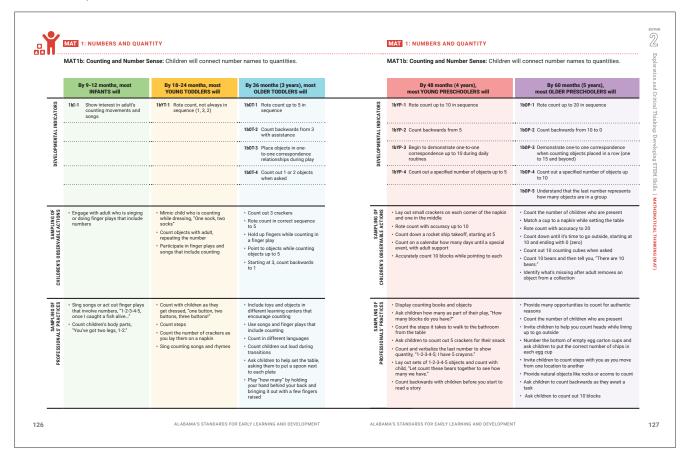| Infants	Young Toddler	Older Toddler	Young Preschooler	Older Preschooler
Home Visiting				
Early Head Start			**Head Start**	
			Alabama First Class	
Early Intervention, IDEA Part C			**Special Education, IDEA 619 Part B**	
Child Care: Family and Group				
Technical Assistants, Professional Development Specialists				
Pre-Service Knowledge Mediators: **Higher Education, High School, Career and Technical Education**				

National and State Standards

The ASELDs correlate with national and state standards. They build on the research and current practice to reflect Alabama's philosophy, values, and priorities for young children. Programs and professionals who use the ASELDs can feel confident they are meeting their federal requirements while at the same time responding to Alabama's unified vision for early childhood.

Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development	Head Start Outcomes Framework *(See page 199 for Crosswalk)*	Special Education Early Learning Outcomes	Teaching Strategies GOLD Dimensions	First Teacher Competencies (Home visiting)
Section One: Relationships and Connections • Family and Community Engagement • Social Emotional Development • Social Studies	• Social Emotional Development • Social Studies Knowledge and Skills	• Outcome 1: Positive Social Emotional Skills • Social Emotional Development • Approaches to Learning	• Social Emotional • Social Studies	• Children's Families and Communities Interactions • Diversity and Cultural Awareness
Section Two: STEM Skills: Exploration and Critical Thinking • Scientific Exploration and Knowledge • Mathematical Thinking • Approaches to Play and Learning	• Scientific Knowledge and Skills • Mathematics Knowledge and Skills • Approaches to Learning	• Outcome 2: Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills • Mathematics • Science • Technology • Approaches to Learning	• Cognitive • Mathematics • Science and Technology	• Child Growth and Development • Learning Activities and Enrichment
Section Three: Communication • Language and Literacy • Creative Arts	• Language Development • Literacy Knowledge and Skills • Creative Arts Development	• Outcome 2: Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills • Language and Literacy • Creative Arts	• Language • Literacy • The Arts	
Section Four: Physical Development and Health	• Physical Development and Health	• Outcome 3: Use of Appropriate Behavior to Meet Their Needs Physical Development • Physical and Health	• Physical	• Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development
Provide a Continuum

The ASELDs follow a unique format that includes learning progressions or indicators for children's learning, birth to age 5. Each double page provides a sequence of development for specific strands within the ASELDs' domains.

The left side of each page depicts the Infant-Toddler Standards; the right side of each page shows the Preschool Standards. Professionals can utilize the age grouping that best represents the children with whom they work, and at the same time, review the age groupings before and above to more fully understand the learning trajectory for each skill. Adults can more accurately identify and select the kinds of tasks or support each individual child that will best benefit each child.

Programs, such as family child care, that have mixed-aged groupings will be able to adapt learning opportunities for different ages of children by using the full page spread.

Infant-Toddler Standards

Illustrated on the left side of each double page, the Infant-Toddler Standards define learning expectations for children birth to age 3. They are divided into three age groupings that explain the approximate age at which **most** children will master the indicators for each strand and developmental indicator. They are defined in a range of months: infants: **by** 9-12 months and young toddlers: **by** 18-24 months. The older toddlers' age of mastery is defined in years (**by 36 months or 3 years**) to reflect the programmatic transitions that some children experience as they move from Early Head Start to Head Start or from Early Intervention to Special Education 619.

These arbitrary age groupings are used as a means for organizing content; the range that is presented for each age level allows for the variations of growth that may occur, even within a single domain. Mastery of skills will typically occur **by the end** of the defined age. In other words, Infant indicators indicate learned skills by the time a typically-developing child is **about 9 months to 1 year old**.

The continuum from birth to age three allows professionals to look across each level to identify where a child is currently performing and to design experiences that build on that stage or scaffold learning to reach the next level.

Preschool Standards

The Preschool Standards, on the right side of each double page, are divided into two age groupings: young preschooler and older preschooler. The young preschoolers grouping reflects the skills and expectations for children as they reach **4 years old or 48 months.** The older preschoolers' column represents skills mastered by children as they leave preschool and enter kindergarten, **by 60 months or 5 years.** Another way to think about the preschool standards is that young preschoolers are typically in their first year of preschool. Older preschoolers are most likely in their second year or the year prior to kindergarten.

The indicators within each domain describe expectations for skill mastery **by the end of the designated year**, and just like the Infant-Toddler Standards, the age range allows for children's uneven development within or across domains. Professionals may go back and forth across the age levels to define a preschool child's abilities.

Learning Trajectory

The birth through preschool learning trajectories are defined within the each double-page spread. When professionals use the two pages together, to "look forward or backward", they can understand each child's learning path and more accurately design activities and experiences that scaffold or take him/her to the next level. Learning is often uneven and a child may demonstrate skill mastery in different places across the trajectory for different types of skills. For example, an older toddler may have achieved preschool-level language skills, and at the same time, demonstrate motor skill development at a toddler level. The Standards enable professionals to look across the learning sequence, at the indicators before and after the child's identified skill level to determine strategies that will expand their knowledge and capabilities.

Learning is often uneven and a child may demonstrate skill mastery in different places across the trajectory for different types of skills.

The trajectories are extended when professionals further investigate the sequence of skills as children move into kindergarten, first and second grade. The Crosswalks to Alabama's Courses of Studies (see Section on Crosswalks) further professionals' understanding of the way in which children, even as early as infancy, begin to grow the skills and competencies that pave the way for more complex learning as they mature.

The 2015 Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation report from the National Academies Press tells us that professionals' ability to use learning trajectories or progressions is an important workforce practice. The report defines three components of learning trajectories: the subject matter content; the developmental progressions children go through as they learn the content; and the sequenced activities educators can use to help students learn the content. Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development include all of those components.

> "
> *"The more that you read,
> the more things you will know.
> The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."*
> **– DR. SEUSS**
> "

Alabama's Domains of Learning

Relationships and Connections

This section designates those skills and expectations that are built from children's relationships with peers and adults, their own self-knowledge and their connections to family and the communities in which they live. This section highlights the impact of relationships for young children's success.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FCE) *Relationships to Help Me Succeed*

Describes a unique set of standards and practices that highlight the importance of families', communities' and professionals' partnership in supporting children's learning.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SED) *Myself, My Feelings, My Relationships*

Describes those skills needed to understand, express and manage feelings as well as the ability to establish positive relationships with others.

SOCIAL STUDIES (SST) *Learning about Myself, My Family, and My Community*

Labels the knowledge children acquire about their family, their community and their place within the world.

Exploration and Critical Thinking: Developing STEM Skills

Section 2 represents the skills and strategies children use to learn through exploration and problem solving. STEM (or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) are the areas of learning that prepare children for future success by encouraging creativity, innovation and invention.

APPROACHES TO PLAY AND LEARNING (APL) *Developing Skills and Attitudes for Success*

Identifes the skills and behaviors that children use for learning. Play skills, along with children's persistence, flexibility, creativity promote successful learning and interactions with others.

SCIENCE EXPLORATION AND KNOWLEDGE (SEK) *Exploring the World Around Me*

Provides foundational information about science, engineering and technology concepts as well as the critical thinking skills that children use to learn and understand new ideas.

MATHEMATICAL THINKING (MAT) *Exploring, Processing, and Logical Reasoning*

Introduces basic mathematics skills and language that help children learn about numbers, shapes, patterns, measurement and data analysis.

SECTION

3

Communication

This section describes children's language and literacy development as well as the way they communicate through the arts such as music, movement, dramatic play and visual arts.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (LLT)
Understanding and Expressing by Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing

Shows children's emergent skills in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Children use language skills to communicate with others while they develop literacy skills to read and write.

CREATIVE ARTS (CRA) *Expressing Feelings and Ideas through Art, Music, Movement and Drama*

Offers the ways in which children use creative arts to express themselves. Moving beyond talking and listening, children may use different media such as drawing or acting to express their feelings and thoughts.

SECTION

4

Physical Development and Health

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH (PDH) *Growing Strong, Healthy and Resilient*

Describes the way in which chldren develop coordination, strength, and control of their bodies and develop the knowledge about how to stay healthy.

Alabama's Standards for Early Learning and Development are organized into 4 sections with 8 domains of learning for children and a 9th domain that describes the ways in which professionals and families work together to support children's learning. The eight children's domains portray a comprehensive view of children's learning and are further supplemented through the additional domain of Family and Community Engagement.

Learning Domain Sections:

Each of the eight learning domain segments in the ASELDs has 4 key parts: 1) a domain introductory page; 2) the learning progressions, birth to 5 years or 60 months; 3) recommendations for adaptations and accommodations to support children with unique needs; and 4) foundational practices for professionals. These pages work together to guide *all* professionals, regardless of the early learning setting, in the design and use of age, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning standards for *all* young children, birth to age 5.
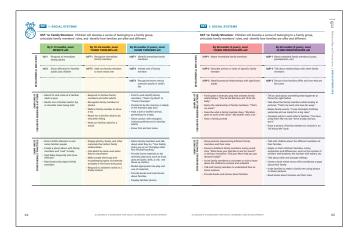
PART 1
Introduction:

This page offers a brief description of the domain and explains its importance for children's development and professionals' instructional strategies. The page spotlights a significant idea about a domain-related theme. A table of contents for the section can also be found here.

PART 2
Learning Progressions:

The content-specific learning progressions for children are detailed in this part and provide the information about what most children should be able to know, learn and do at specific ages and stages.

Within a domain, the learning progressions follow a pattern of sub-domain, strand, and developmental indicators. These describe developmental skills, first as a broad idea in the sub-domain, and then are further defined through the strands and developmental indicators. (*see example on page 24*)

Children's Observable Actions and Professional Practices complete the learning progressions pages. The children's observable actions offer examples of the way in which children demonstrate the skills to help professionals identify the child's progress towards mastery. Professional Practices specify strategies or ideas for professionals to use to intentionally design experiences or interact with children to help them learn. Both Children's Observable Actions, and Professional Practices offer examples; they are not a comprehensive list. Professionals and family members may identify other ways in which children are demonstrating mastery of specific skills.

PART 3
Adaptations and Accommodations for Learning:

Children learn in different ways and often have unique learning needs. Professionals may need to adapt or modify activities and materials so that every child can successfully and confidently learn. This key page offers a sampling of strategies for individualizing or differentiating learning to accommodate unique needs and learning styles to assure ALL children's best possible learning outcomes.

PART 4
Foundational Practices:

Professionals can maximize children's experiences when they consider schedules, the learning environment, and their methods for facilitating children's knowledge acquisition. This page within each domain provides examples and additional resources to guide professionals' intentional and purposeful curriculum development and assessment strategies.

> "You see a child play, and it is so close to seeing an artist paint, for in play a child says things without uttering a word. You can see how he solves his problems. You can also see what's wrong. Young children, especially, have enormous creativity, and whatever is in them rises to the surface in play."
>
> **– ERIK ERIKSON**

MAT 1: NUMBERS AND QUANTITY

SUBDOMAIN: Further organizes the domain into specific content areas

MAT1b: Counting and Number Sense: Children will connect

STRAND: Specific goals or knowledge related to the subdomain

AGE LEVELS

	By 9-12 months, most INFANTS will	By 18-24 months, most YOUNG TODDLERS will	By 36 months (3 years), most OLDER TODDLERS will
DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS	**1bI-1** Show interest in adult's counting movements and songs	**1bYT-1** Rote count, not always in sequence (1, 3, 2)	**1bOT-1** Rote count up to 5 in sequence
			1bOT-2 Count backwards from 3 with assistance
			1bOT-3 Place objects in one-to-one correspondence relationships during play
			1bOT-4 Count out 1 or 2 objects when asked

NUMBERING: Represents the strand and the indicator, progressing across age levels to show progression of skills

DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Specify the types of skills or knowledge most children know or can do by the end of the age level

SAMPLING OF CHILDREN'S OBSERVABLE ACTIONS

- Engage with adult who is singing or doing finger plays that include numbers

- Mimic child who is counting while dressing, "One sock, two socks"
- Count objects with adult

- Count out 3 crackers
- Rote count in correct sequence to 5
- Hold up fingers while counting in a finger play
- Point to objects while counting objects up to 5
- Starting at 3, count backwards to 1

CHILDREN'S OBSERVABLE ACTIONS: Examples of the ways in which may demonstrate this skill or knowledge

SAMPLING OF PROFESSIONALS' PRACTICES

- Sing songs or act out finger plays that involve numbers, "1-2-3-4-5, once I caught a fish alive…"
- Count child

- Count with children as they get dressed, "one button, two buttons, three buttons!"

- Include toys and objects in different learning centers that encourage counting
- Use songs and finger plays that include counting
- Count in different languages
- Count children out loud during transitions
- Ask children to help set the table, asking them to put a spoon next to each plate
- Play "how many" by holding your hand behind your back and bringing it out with a few fingers raised

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: Examples of strategies or experiences professionals can use to support children's learning

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ALABAMA'S STANDARDS FOR EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MAT 1: NUMBERS AND QUANTITY

MAT1b: Counting and Number Sense: Children will connect number names to quantities.

	By 48 months (4 years), most YOUNG PRESCHOOLERS will	By 60 months (5 years), most OLDER PRESCHOOLERS will
DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS	**1bYP-1** Rote count up to 10 in sequence	**1bOP-1** Rote count up to 20 in sequence
	1bYP-2 Count backwards from 5	**1bOP-2** Count backwards from 10 to 0
	1bYP-3 Begin to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence up to 10 during daily routines	**1bOP-3** Demonstrate one-to one correspondence when counting objects placed in a row (one to 15 and beyond)
	1bYP-4 Count out a specified number of objects up to 5	**1bOP-4** Count out a specified number of objects up to 10
		1bOP-5 Understand that the last number represents how many objects are in a group
SAMPLING OF CHILDREN'S OBSERVABLE ACTIONS	• Lay out small crackers on each corner of the napkin and one in the middle • Rote count with accuracy up to 10 • Count down a rocket ship takeoff, starting at 5 • Count on a calendar how many days until a special event, with adult support • Accurately count 10 blocks while pointing to each	• Count the number of children who are present • Match a cup to a napkin while setting the table • Rote count with accuracy to 20 • Count down until it's time to go outside, starting at 10 and ending with 0 (zero) • Count out 10 counting cubes when asked • Count 10 bears and then tell you, "There are 10 bears." • Identify what's missing after adult removes an object from a collection
SAMPLING OF PROFESSIONALS' PRACTICES	• Display counting books and objects • Ask children how many as part of their play, "How many blocks do you have?" • Count the steps it takes to walk to the bathroom from the table • Ask children to count out 5 crackers for their snack • Count and verbalize the last number to show quantity, "1-2-3-4-5; I have 5 crayons." • Lay out sets of 1-2-3-4-5 objects and count with child, "Let count these bears together to see how many we have." • Count backwards with children before you start to read a story	• Provide many opportunities to count for authentic reasons • Count the number of children who are present • Invite children to help you count heads while lining up to go outside • Number the bottom of empty egg carton cups and ask children to put the correct number of chips in each egg cup • Invite children to count steps with you as you move from one location to another • Provide natural objects like rocks or acorns to count • Ask children to count backwards as they await a task • Ask children to count out 10 blocks