

# The Head Start Approach to School Readiness

Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. *The Head Start Approach to School Readiness* means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start is a leader in the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development, including physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development, all of which are essential to children getting ready for school.

School readiness goals articulate the program's expectations of children's status and progress across the five essential domains of child development and early learning. The five essential domains include (1) language and literacy, (2) cognition and general knowledge, (3) approaches to learning, (4) perceptual, motor, and physical development, and (5) social and emotional development. Goals are broad statements that articulate the highest developmental achievement children should attain as a result of Head Start services. Below, you will find the School Readiness Goals that have been developed by our program:

## Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development

- 1) Children will demonstrate control, strength and coordination of large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance
  - *Examples: Skipping, climbing, hopping, catching, throwing, etc.*
- 2) Children will demonstrate increasing control of small muscles for such purposes as using utensils, self-care, building, writing, and exploring
  - *Examples: Builds with small or large blocks, writing/drawing, controlled coloring, eating with utensils, zipping, adequate hand strength, etc.*
- 3) Children and families will practice healthy and safe habits
  - *Examples: Eats a variety of nutritious foods, participates in physical activities, follows safety rules, brushes teeth regularly, washing hands, etc.*
- 4) Creative Arts Expression – Children will demonstrate an interest in and participate in a variety of visual arts, dance, music and dramatic experiences
  - *Examples: Enjoys pretend play, uses objects in pretend play, dances to music/rhythm, engages in music experiences by singing/listening/dancing, uses materials as musical instruments, etc.*

## Social and Emotional Development

- 5) Children will develop and demonstrate positive interactions and relationships, as well as a sense of belonging with adults and peers
  - *Examples: Cooperates with others, develops friendships, expresses sympathy, willing to share/take turns, establishes trust in some adults, etc.*
- 6) Children will develop and demonstrate the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, attention, impulses, and behavior
  - *Examples: Displays appropriate behaviors, handles impulses with minimal direction from adults, follows simple rules and routines, transitions between tasks/activities with ease, etc.*
- 7) Children will develop and demonstrate the ability to recognize the emotions of others and respond positively
  - *Examples: Recognizes and labels basic emotions in books or photographs, uses words to describe the feelings of adults or other children and describe some of these emotions as happy, sad, or mad.*

## Approaches to Learning

- 8) Approaches to Learning – Children will demonstrate flexibility, inventiveness, curiosity, motivation, persistence and engagement in learning
  - *Examples: Interested in learning new things, can maintain attention on an enjoyable task, participates in group play, models or teaches peers, asks lots of questions, etc.*

## Language and Literacy

- 9) Language Development – Children will be able to utilize language to express their wants and needs, both verbally and nonverbally
  - *Examples: Uses words to get needs met, has a varied vocabulary, likes to tell about stories or events, etc.*
- 10) Language Development – Children will engage in conversations, follow directions, and comprehend language
  - *Examples: Has back-and-forth conversations with adults and peers, can understand meaning from simple stories, follows directions, etc.*
- 11) Literacy Knowledge and Skills – Children will be able to demonstrate knowledge (age appropriate emergent literacy skills) of print and develop the awareness that print conveys meaning

- *Examples: Understands books are read front to back – left to right, recognizes alphabet letters, associates correct sounds with letters, understands that a group of letters can make a word, etc.*

12) English Language Development – Children who are dual language learners will demonstrate competency in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English

### **Cognition and General Knowledge**

- 13) Logic and reason – Children will find multiple solutions utilizing symbolic representation to questions, tasks, problems and challenges by using reasoning skills
- *Examples: Recognizes cause and effect relationships, engages in pretend play with objects, understands the difference in pretend play and reality, uses past knowledge to build new knowledge, etc.*
- 14) Mathematics knowledge and skills – Children will use math in everyday routines to count, compare, relate, pattern and problem solve
- *Examples: Counts toys, sorts toys by color/size/type, recognizes numbers by their correct names, counts down days to an event, etc.*
- 15) Science knowledge and skills - Children will engage in exploring their environments through observations, manipulation, asking questions, making predictions and developing hypotheses
- *Examples: Compares differences of objects, talks about different kinds of flowers/trees/rocks, asks about life-death cycle, recognizes animals have different abilities, etc.*
- 16) Social Studies knowledge and skills – Children will engage in exploring their family and community, its history and events, and interacting with people and the environment
- *Examples: Notices differences in people's appearance, talks about things that happened in the past, understands their environment has natural things as well as man-made things, recognizes that there are places outside of the child's environment, etc.*