

THE HEAD START CHILD OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Released in 2000, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework is intended to guide Head Start programs in their curriculum planning and ongoing assessment of the progress and accomplishments of children. The Framework also is helpful to programs in their efforts to analyze and use data on child outcomes in program self-assessment and continuous improvement. The Framework is composed of 8 general Domains, 27 Domain Elements, and numerous examples of specific Indicators of children’s skills, abilities, knowledge, and behaviors. The Framework is based on the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Program Performance Measures, provisions of the Head Start Act as amended in 1998, advice of the Head Start Bureau Technical Work Group on Child Outcomes, and a review of documents on assessment of young children and early childhood program accountability from a variety of state agencies and professional organizations.

- The Domains, Elements, and Indicators are presented as a framework of building blocks that are important for school success. The Framework is not an exhaustive list of everything a child should know or be able to do by the end of Head Start or entry into Kindergarten. The Framework is intended to guide assessment of three- to five-year-old children—not infants or toddlers enrolled in Early Head Start and not infants or toddlers in Migrant Head Start programs.
- The Framework guides agencies in selecting, developing, or adapting an instrument or set of tools for ongoing assessment of children’s progress. It is inappropriate to use the Framework as a checklist for assessing children. It also is inappropriate to use items in the Framework in place of thoughtful curriculum planning and individualization.
- Every Head Start program implements an appropriate child assessment system that aligns with their curriculum and gathers data on children’s progress in each of the 8 Domains of learning and development. At a minimum, because they are legislatively mandated, programs analyze data on 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators in various language, literacy, and numeracy skills, as indicated with a star ★ in the chart. Local program child assessment occurs at least three times a year. The National Reporting System (NRS) child assessment includes measures of the mandated child outcomes.
- Information on children’s progress on the Domains, Domain Elements, and Indicators is obtained from multiple sources, such as teacher and home visitor observations, analysis of samples of children’s work and performance, parent reports, or direct assessment of children. Head Start assessment practices should reflect the assumption that children demonstrate progress over time in development and learning on a developmental continuum, in forms such as increasing frequency of a behavior or ability, increasing breadth or depth of knowledge and understanding, or increasing proficiency or independence in exercising a skill or ability.

The English version of the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework was translated into Spanish by the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Quality Improvement Center. The Spanish version of the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework can be accessed at www.mhsqic.org/spandocs/spandocs.htm.

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DOMAIN	DOMAIN ELEMENT	INDICATORS
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	Listening & Understanding	◆ Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.
		◆ Shows progress in understanding and following simple and multiple-step directions.
		★ Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.
		★ For non-English-speaking children, progresses in listening to and understanding English.
	Speaking & Communicating	★ Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, questions; and for other varied purposes.
		◆ Progresses in abilities to initiate and respond appropriately in conversation and discussions with peers and adults.
		★ Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.
		◆ Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.
		★ For non-English-speaking children, progresses in speaking English.
		◆ Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.
LITERACY	★ Phonological Awareness	◆ Shows increasing ability to discriminate and identify sounds in spoken language.
		◆ Shows growing awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words.
		◆ Progresses in recognizing matching sounds and rhymes in familiar words, games, songs, stories, and poems.
		◆ Shows growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words.
		★ Associates sounds with written words, such as awareness that different words begin with the same sound.
	★ Book Knowledge & Appreciation	◆ Shows growing interest and involvement in listening to and discussing a variety of fiction and non-fiction books and poetry.
		◆ Shows growing interest in reading-related activities, such as asking to have a favorite book read; choosing to look at books; drawing pictures based on stories; asking to take books home; going to the library; and engaging in pretend-reading with other children.
		◆ Demonstrates progress in abilities to retell and dictate stories from books and experiences; to act out stories in dramatic play; and to predict what will happen next in a story.
		◆ Progresses in learning how to handle and care for books; knowing to view one page at a time in sequence from front to back; and understanding that a book has a title, author, and illustrator.
	★ Print Awareness & Concepts	◆ Shows increasing awareness of print in classroom, home, and community settings.
		◆ Develops growing understanding of the different functions of forms of print such as signs, letters, newspapers, lists, messages, and menus.
		◆ Demonstrates increasing awareness of concepts of print, such as that reading in English moves from top to bottom and from left to right, that speech can be written down, and that print conveys a message.
◆ Shows progress in recognizing the association between spoken and written words by following print as it is read aloud.		
★ Recognizes a word as a unit of print, or awareness that letters are grouped to form words, and that words are separated by spaces.		

★ Indicates the 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators that are legislatively mandated.

DOMAIN	DOMAIN ELEMENT	INDICATORS	
LITERACY (CONT.)	Early Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develops understanding that writing is a way of communicating for a variety of purposes. ◆ Begins to represent stories and experiences through pictures, dictation, and in play. ◆ Experiments with a growing variety of writing tools and materials, such as pencils, crayons, and computers. ◆ Progresses from using scribbles, shapes, or pictures to represent ideas, to using letter-like symbols, to copying or writing familiar words such as their own name. 	
	Alphabet Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shows progress in associating the names of letters with their shapes and sounds. ◆ Increases in ability to notice the beginning letters in familiar words. ★ Identifies at least 10 letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name. ★ Knows that letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named. 	
	★ Number & Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates increasing interest and awareness of numbers and counting as a means for solving problems and determining quantity. ◆ Begins to associate number concepts, vocabulary, quantities, and written numerals in meaningful ways. ◆ Develops increasing ability to count in sequence to 10 and beyond. ◆ Begins to make use of one-to-one correspondence in counting objects and matching groups of objects. ◆ Begins to use language to compare numbers of objects with terms such as more, less, greater than, fewer, equal to. ◆ Develops increased abilities to combine, separate and name “how many” concrete objects. 	
		Geometry & Spatial Sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Begins to recognize, describe, compare, and name common shapes, their parts and attributes. ◆ Progresses in ability to put together and take apart shapes. ◆ Begins to be able to determine whether or not two shapes are the same size and shape. ◆ Shows growth in matching, sorting, putting in a series, and regrouping objects according to one or two attributes such as color, shape, or size. ◆ Builds an increasing understanding of directionality, order, and positions of objects, and words such as up, down, over, under, top, bottom, inside, outside, in front, and behind.
Patterns & Measurement			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enhances abilities to recognize, duplicate, and extend simple patterns using a variety of materials. ◆ Shows increasing abilities to match, sort, put in a series, and regroup objects according to one or two attributes such as shape or size. ◆ Begins to make comparisons between several objects based on a single attribute. ◆ Shows progress in using standard and non-standard measures for length and area of objects.
SCIENCE			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Begins to use senses and a variety of tools and simple measuring devices to gather information, investigate materials, and observe processes and relationships. ◆ Develops increased ability to observe and discuss common properties, differences and comparisons among objects and materials. ◆ Begins to participate in simple investigations to test observations, discuss and draw conclusions, and form generalizations. ◆ Develops growing abilities to collect, describe, and record information through a variety of means, including discussion, drawings, maps, and charts. ◆ Begins to describe and discuss predictions, explanations, and generalizations based on past experiences.

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DOMAIN	DOMAIN ELEMENT	INDICATORS
SCIENCE (CONT.)	Scientific Knowledge	◆ Expands knowledge of and abilities to observe, describe, and discuss the natural world, materials, living things, and natural processes.
		◆ Expands knowledge of and respect for their bodies and the environment.
		◆ Develops growing awareness of ideas and language related to attributes of time and temperature.
		◆ Shows increased awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships.
CREATIVE ARTS	Music	◆ Participates with increasing interest and enjoyment in a variety of music activities, including listening, singing, finger plays, games, and performances.
		◆ Experiments with a variety of musical instruments.
	Art	◆ Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.
		◆ Progresses in abilities to create drawings, paintings, models, and other art creations that are more detailed, creative, or realistic.
		◆ Develops growing abilities to plan, work independently, and demonstrate care and persistence in a variety of art projects.
	Movement	◆ Begins to understand and share opinions about artistic products and experiences.
		◆ Expresses through movement and dancing what is felt and heard in various musical tempos and styles.
	Dramatic Play	◆ Shows growth in moving in time to different patterns of beat and rhythm in music.
◆ Participates in a variety of dramatic play activities that become more extended and complex.		
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Self-Concept	◆ Shows growing creativity and imagination in using materials and in assuming different roles in dramatic play situations.
		◆ Begins to develop and express awareness of self in terms of specific abilities, characteristics, and preferences.
		◆ Develops growing capacity for independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks.
	Self-Control	◆ Demonstrates growing confidence in a range of abilities and expresses pride in accomplishments.
		◆ Shows progress in expressing feelings, needs, and opinions in difficult situations and conflicts without harming themselves, others, or property.
		◆ Develops growing understanding of how their actions affect others and begins to accept the consequences of their actions.
	Cooperation	◆ Demonstrates increasing capacity to follow rules and routines and use materials purposefully, safely, and respectfully.
		◆ Increases abilities to sustain interactions with peers by helping, sharing, and discussion.
		◆ Shows increasing abilities to use compromise and discussion in working, playing, and resolving conflicts with peers.
		◆ Develops increasing abilities to give and take in interactions; to take turns in games or using materials; and to interact without being overly submissive or directive.

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DOMAIN	DOMAIN ELEMENT	INDICATORS
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)	Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates increasing comfort in talking with and accepting guidance and directions from a range of familiar adults. ◆ Shows progress in developing friendships with peers. ◆ Progresses in responding sympathetically to peers who are in need, upset, hurt, or angry; and in expressing empathy or caring for others.
	Knowledge of Families & Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develops ability to identify personal characteristics including gender and family composition. ◆ Progresses in understanding similarities and respecting differences among people, such as genders, race, special needs, culture, language, and family structures. ◆ Develops growing awareness of jobs and what is required to perform them. ◆ Begins to express and understand concepts and language of geography in the contexts of their classroom, home, and community.
	Initiative & Curiosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Chooses to participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities. ◆ Develops increased ability to make independent choices. ◆ Approaches tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness. ◆ Grows in eagerness to learn about and discuss a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Grows in abilities to persist in and complete a variety of tasks, activities, projects, and experiences. ◆ Demonstrates increasing ability to set goals and develop and follow through on plans. ◆ Shows growing capacity to maintain concentration over time on a task, question, set of directions or interactions, despite distractions and interruptions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develops increasing ability to find more than one solution to a question, task, or problem. ◆ Grows in recognizing and solving problems through active exploration, including trial and error, and interactions and discussions with peers and adults. ◆ Develops increasing abilities to classify, compare and contrast objects, events, and experiences. 		
PHYSICAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT	Gross Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shows increasing levels of proficiency, control, and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, and galloping. ◆ Demonstrates increasing abilities to coordinate movements in throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing balls, and using the slide and swing.
	Fine Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develops growing strength, dexterity, and control needed to use tools such as scissors, paper punch, stapler, and hammer. ◆ Grows in hand-eye coordination in building with blocks, putting together puzzles, reproducing shapes and patterns, stringing beads, and using scissors. ◆ Progresses in abilities to use writing, drawing, and art tools including pencils, markers, chalk, paint brushes, and various types of technology.
	Health Status & Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Progresses in physical growth, strength, stamina, and flexibility. ◆ Participates actively in games, outdoor play, and other forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shows growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting. ◆ Builds awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules such as fire safety, traffic and pedestrian safety, and responding appropriately to potentially harmful objects, substances, and activities.

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