



PlaySpace Alignment with Montana Early Learning Guidelines

PlaySpace activities and opportunities align with Montana Early Learning Guidelines: What Children Ages 3-5 Need to Know, Understand, and Be Able to Do in the following key areas:

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science
- Social-Emotional Development



Language and Literacy

Guideline 1: Receptive Language (understanding what is heard)

Children enter into the exchange of information around what is seen, heard, and experienced. They begin to acquire the concepts and language that contribute to learning to communicate and, eventually, to read.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- reads to and with the child on a daily basis in a way that makes the child become an active participant.
- talks with the child before, during, and after daily routines, activities, and events.
- offers an environment filled with rich language and many opportunities to hear language and use language for a variety of purposes.
- responds with scaffolding techniques (provides the support necessary for a child to accomplish a new or complex task).

Guideline 2: Expressive Language

Children learn when they talk out loud. Children use words to help adults and others to understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and solve problems.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides a friendly, nurturing, familiar and stimulating environment that allows children to feel confident about speaking aloud, without fear of criticism.
- talks with and listens to the child, frequently encouraging the sharing of experiences and ideas.
- keeps questions to a minimum by using conversation starters such as "I wonder what is going on there?" to encourage the child to use a greater number of complex words in his/her response.



Guideline 4: Print Awareness

Children acquire an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words. Children learn to make the connection between sounds and letters.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- rereads favorite stories and uses storytelling to encourage the use of new and interesting words.
- provides a print rich environment.
- models reading and writing for many different purposes.
- provides opportunities to become familiar with letter names and sounds.
- draws attention to the relationship between pictures and words.

Guideline 5: Print Development

Children acquire the ability to write through a sequence of stages: writing using scribble-like markings; writing using individual letter-like marks or mock letters; writing using recognizable, random letter strings; writing using semi-phonetic spelling; and writing using phonetic spelling.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- writes down words and stories dictated by children
- provides literacy-rich environments that allow real opportunities for writing
- provides child with a variety of writing materials
- asks child to “read” his/her writing
- gives encouragement and positive feedback to help the child acquire a sense of being a writer.



Mathematics and Numeracy

Guideline 1: Numeracy Relationships

Children develop the ability to think and work with numbers easily, to understand their uses, and describe their relationships.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- uses a variety of strategies, including questioning, commenting, and counting, to prompt children to think about quantity and number words.
- uses number words and numerals, including zero, in meaningful everyday activities.
- provides objects in the environment with naturally occurring number relationships, such as clocks, timers, calendars, rulers, etc.
- models the “adding to” and “taking away” of objects, making note of what is happening mathematically while, for example, playing with unit blocks.
- provides opportunities for the child to count, divide and/or share in everyday contexts.

Guideline 2: Classification and Comparison

Children apply mathematical skills through counting, sorting, and comparing objects. Children describe their thinking and observations in everyday situations.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- uses words that describe and classify characteristics of items in the child’s environment, pointing out colors, shapes, and sizes.
- engages in conversations with the child about quantity and comparisons as the child interacts with materials throughout the day.
- asks the child to verbally describe why he/she sorted or classified objects in a certain way.
- provides opportunities for the child to guess the amount or size of something as he/she works to gain an understanding of concepts like more, less, bigger, and smaller.
- provides a variety of objects and situations for working with 1: 1 relationships.



Guideline 3: Pattern Recognition and Reproduction

Children learn to identify and describe patterns using mathematical language. They develop the ability to reproduce patterns they see and to create new ones.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides an environment that is rich in shapes, sizes, colors, and textures.
- helps the child recognize patterns in his/her environment.
- offers hands-on activities to explore and describe patterns and relationships involving numbers, shapes, data, and graphs in problem-solving situations.
- encourages the child to create, identify, and describe patterns in objects, designs, pictures, movement activities, and recurring events.
- provides opportunities for the child to create his/her own patterns for others to follow or extend using prompts.
- helps the child recognize and describe sequences in nature, daily routines, and in stories.
- builds on the child's understanding of a series by making changes and additions in materials by, for example, varying the number of blocks, sizes or shapes of blocks.

Guideline 4: Geometric Shapes and Directional Words

Children build the foundation for recognizing and describing shapes by manipulating, playing with, tracing, and making common shapes using real objects in a variety of activities. Children learn spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space within their physical environment.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- assists the child in identifying shapes in the environment.
- provides geometric materials in a variety of shapes and sizes.
- provides a variety of materials to create and represent shapes.
- gives the child opportunities to describe the position, direction, and distance of objects in relation to themselves.
- uses and encourages the child to use language and physical gestures to demonstrate directional words (inside, outside, behind, in front, above, below, over, under, next to, near, far) with people and things in the environment.



Guideline 5: Measurement Relationships

Children begin to use measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships. They apply the characteristics of length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time to real life situations in order to construct concepts of measurement. They begin to develop skills of estimation.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides opportunities for the child to experiment with measuring.
- encourages the child to practice measuring with standard and non-standard or arbitrary units of measure (whole body, pieces of string, unit blocks).
- posts charts and posters with measurement language.
- helps child create simple measurement charts and graphs.
- talks about measurement concepts during everyday activities.
- provides opportunities to estimate length, quantity, etc.

Guideline 6: Problem Solving

Children build a foundation for solving problems by formulating questions and possible solutions individually and with others based on their observations and experiences.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- uses graphs, charts, and symbols to organize and interpret information and to show relationships.
- provides a variety of shapes and materials that may be broken into parts and brought back together again (for example, unit blocks, puzzles).
- encourages the child to experiment with many different ways to solve problems (“I wonder if there is another way to do this”).
- provides opportunities to integrate science and math (for example, “Which sponge is bigger? A wet one or a dry one? How do we find out?”).
- allows the child to struggle with a challenge before stepping in to help.
- asks open-ended questions to encourage the child to come up with his/her own ideas.
- when asked to provide assistance, guides the child in a productive direction and expects him/her to take the next steps in solving the problem.



Science

In the Early Learning Guidelines for Science, children are guided to explore the following basic scientific concepts:

- models (representation of a real object)
- constancy and change
- scale (size, distance, etc.)
- patterns and relationships
- cause and effect
- structure and function (relationship between the way something is built and what it does)
- diversity among objects and organisms in the natural world
- natural systems (for example, weather, the human body)

NOTE: Exploration of science concepts follows the steps of the scientific method.

Guideline 1: Formulation of Questions

Children will learn to ask questions about the world around them, the first step in the scientific method, based on observations, experiences, and interests.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides opportunities in the child's environment for exploration and listens to and follows up on children's questions.
- uses language associated with science and math (science, investigation, research, predict, hypothesis, experiment, conclusion, order, compare, sequence, spatial relations, etc.)
- observes children's activities and interests
- asks open-ended "What if?" and "How?" questions and comments with "I wonder . . ."
- is curious about the world and routinely asks questions about it.



Guideline 2: Prediction

Children will learn to predict answers and form hypotheses, the second step in the scientific method.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- extends the child's learning by encouraging the child to make predictions.
- encourages and supports opportunities for children to plan and select science related activities, such as the mechanics of how things work and natural processes.
- extends the child's thinking and learning by posing problems, responding to and encouraging the child's questions and adding complexity to tasks.
- uses language associated with science, math and discovery.
- allows children the gift of time to engage in exploration and discovery.

Guideline 3: Experimentation

Children will learn to conduct experiments in order to test their predictions, the third step in the scientific method.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides a variety of tools needed to measure things, solve problems and make discoveries.
- encourages both planned and spontaneous investigations, based on children's questions and predictions.
- helps children notice, explore, test and describe cause and effect.
- helps children make comparisons and find patterns and relationships in objects and the environment.
- helps children manipulate objects and substances to make discoveries.



Guideline 4: Observation and Recording

Children will learn to observe and record findings, the fourth step in the scientific method.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- sets up the environment to provide opportunities to observe, investigate and ask questions.
- assists the child in recording observations and results of scientific investigations.
- guides the child to look for patterns, relationships, and properties.
- uses language associated with science and math.
- allows the child the gift of time to engage in discovery.
- provides opportunities for the child to create own patterns for others to follow and/or extend patterns.
- makes materials available to record findings (paper, markers, clip boards, etc.).

Guideline 5: Formation of Conclusions

Children will learn to form conclusions, the fifth step in the scientific method.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- guides the child's observations with questions and comments in order to help the child make connections with what is observed.
- provides materials and experiences to support concepts.
- uses language associated with science.
- acts as a guide and facilitator to help children find needed information.

Guideline 6: Communication of Results

Children will learn to communicate final results, the sixth step in the scientific method.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- supports and assists the child in describing discoveries and recording observations through drawings, charts, and graphs.
- provides materials needed for the sharing of findings such as paper, glue, scissors, markers, camera, pencils, etc.
- uses language associated with science
- ensures the child time to share findings with others.



Social-Emotional Development

Guideline 1: Sense of Self

Children begin to identify who they are as a person (such as likes, dislikes, interests, strengths) and develop competence and confidence in their unique abilities. They grow into themselves, differentiating themselves from parents and others.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- offers support that provides some challenge leading to success.
- allows the child time to practice a new skill.
- creates a safe environment to encourage risk taking.
- encourages the child to self-evaluate (“Was that easy or hard for you?”).
- engages in genuine conversations with the child based on the child’s activities and interests.
- celebrates the child’s accomplishments by using specific encouraging words.
- adapts materials and routines to meet the child’s individual strengths, interests, and needs.
- respects and accepts the child.
- values a partnership with other people in a child’s life.

Guideline 2: Self-Regulation

Children identify and express their feelings in non-hurtful ways, recognize the impact their behavior has on others, and practice self-control.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- listens to the child at the child’s eye level and provides guidance.
- offers safe choices.
- allows the child to experience natural consequences within safe limits.
- displays empathy for others.
- helps the child see links between non-verbal communication (such as facial expressions) and feeling words.
- in ambiguous situations, helps child avoid jumping to a conclusion about the behavior, motives and feelings of others.
- actively teaches, models, and encourages problem-solving skills (“What could you do instead of pushing Justin to let him know how you feel?”).



Guideline 3: A Caring Community

Children feel secure as they develop relationships of trust with adults and other children in their expanding world beyond the family. They begin to recognize social cues and become sensitive to other's feelings.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- promotes a sense of community and interdependence within the group ("This room belongs to all of us and we all need to take care of it").
- models appropriate social behaviors with other adults and children.
- supports children joining play groups.
- supports and models empathy.
- embraces both similarities and differences of children and families.

Guideline 4: Pro-Social Environment

(an environment that fosters security, safety, independence, and communication, primarily by balancing consistent routines and transitions with flexibility)

Children follow routines with increasing independence and handle variations without discomfort. They make their preferences known in increasingly mature ways and respond to adult guidance appropriately. Children begin to make friends and build relationships with both peers and adults.

A child can be supported by an adult who

- provides the child with the stability to meet the child's individual needs.
- communicates with the child at the child's eye level.
- provides opportunities for choices.
- observes evidence of stress and adapts activities accordingly.
- provides reminders and rituals at transition times.
- engages in activities with the child.
- promotes social play opportunities.