

Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success

Infant-Toddler Foundations is here! This book will help caregivers support infant's and toddler's early development. It describes the characteristics, skills, and knowledge that North Carolina hopes its children will develop from birth to 36 months of age. Wandering through the pages of *Infant-Toddler Foundations* is like being on a treasure hunt – there are so many hidden gems!

First, find the emeralds: the **Guiding Principles**. They highlight how children grow and learn. Each principle has practices for adults who work with young children to follow.

Guiding Principles and Practices

1. Nurturing and responsive caregivers are essential for healthy growth and development.
 - Build positive relationships with children.
 - Support positive relationships between children and all of the important adults in their lives.
2. Each child develops within a culture.
 - Respect and value the diversity of children and families.
3. Each child is unique.
 - Respect each child and work to meet his or her unique needs.
4. Each child develops as a whole.
 - Promote the development of the whole child.
5. Development begins before birth and continues throughout life.
 - Promote prenatal care and education.
 - Help children and families make smooth transitions, and strengthen programs for children of all ages.
6. Development occurs in predictable patterns.
 - Know typical patterns of development and be able to recognize variations.
7. Infants and toddlers are active learners and they learn through play.
 - Set up environments to encourage active exploration and play.
 - Get involved and follow children's interests during their play.
 - Inform parents, colleagues, and policy makers about the importance of active learning and play.
8. ALL children are children first.
 - Promote inclusion and high quality inclusive settings for ALL children.
9. Everyone in a child's life plays a role in his or her development.
 - Work together with colleagues, families, administrators, policymakers, and communities to support young children's development.

Next locate the pearls: **Guidelines for Five Domains of Development and Learning**. Each domain has its own special symbol and color to represent it. For example, Health and Physical Development is purple and its symbol is a hand. The domains are divided into sub-areas to focus on specific areas of development. Suggested activities and interactions frequently support more than one area of development.

Under each domain are sections labeled **What to Look For** and **What to Do**. What to Look For is a list describing what infants, young toddlers and older toddlers may begin to do. The three age levels are a general guide. They overlap to show that children develop at their own pace. What to Do offers ways to support learning and development of ALL children ages birth to three: typically developing children, children at risk for developmental delays, children with disabilities; and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Finally, search for the diamond that sparkle. **Real World Stories**. Caregivers will see themselves in these stories. Their daily interactions with infants and toddlers are essential for children's development and learning from birth through age five. Check out *Foundations. Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for North Carolina for Guiding Their Success*, the companion document for **Infant-Toddler Foundations** on www.osr.nc.gov.