



Northside
Achievement
Zone



EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY TOOLKIT

A family guide to creating a culture of achievement at home, beginning prenatally through a scholar's transition to kindergarten.

In partnership with



**Check out our
videos here!**

Welcome to the Northside Achievement Zone's early childhood family resource guide. This guide was developed with the belief that parents and caregivers are children's first and most important teacher. Our children are learning through the context of relationships and the world around them. They take in each experience and are enriched by the culture that surrounds them each day. All of this development begins prenatally, before the child is born into this world. Once the child is born, development continues to happen rapidly, and because of this, children are always learning!

Our hope for this guide is that it can support parents and caregivers during each stage of development, beginning during pregnancy and continuing until the child transitions to kindergarten. It is meant to celebrate the activities families are already doing with their children and give ideas to expand learning opportunities in the context of the child's environment. We also recognize that there are many appointments and educational opportunities for children in the first five years. We wanted a place for these dates to live to be a reminder to families during their busiest seasons of life.

As you use this toolkit with your NAZ coach or Family Academy Facilitator, consider talking to them about the following questions:

- What are you noticing about your child when they are doing these activities with you?
- Where are you finding joy in activities with your child?
- What are you learning about your child's development?

We hope you remember; you are the best teacher your child will have. Each moment you get to be present with your child matters! These moments happen through playing, singing, talking, reading, dancing, doing hair, bedtime routines, and performing other ordinary interactions we have each day. All of the interactions you have with your child will support their development and prepare them for a lifetime of learning.



Thank you to PNC Bank's Grow Up Great Program for their support in the development of this guide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arielle Handevidt".

Arielle Handevidt
Director of Early Childhood
Northside Achievement Zone

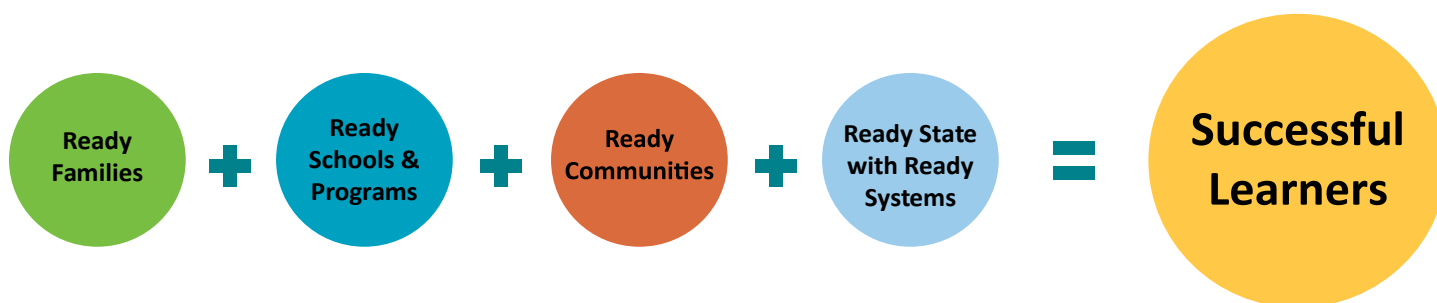


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The Successful Learner Equation



The Successful Learner Equation is used to recognize and uplift the individuals, programs, and systems that contribute to the success of each learner. Adults, programs and systems are responsible for supporting each child. The Successful Learner Equation is grounded in the following beliefs:

- Children are always learning.
- Experiences, skills, and knowledge are tied to family culture.
- A strengths-based mindset is critical to supporting children and families.
- Diversity of all types should be celebrated.
- Instruction should be research based and developmentally appropriate.
- School should be welcoming and joyful for all.
- Adults and systems should support all children wherever they are in their learning progression.

The Successful Learner Equation recognizes four interconnected components that foster successful learners.

-  **Ready families** establish the foundation for their child's health, development and learning within the context of their family's cultural values, norms and beliefs.
-  **Ready schools and programs** deliver high-quality, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive care and education that supports families in nurturing their child's healthy development and learning.
-  **Ready communities** offer services to enhance the health, safety, economic stability, development and learning of children and families within their cultural context.
-  **Ready state with ready systems** provide equitable access to comprehensive services and resources that support families and children from all backgrounds.

Children arrive in classrooms with a wide range of skills, knowledge and unique experiences from a variety of settings. Children are always learning and all age-eligible children are ready to begin school. The Successful Learner Equation reminds us that it is not the responsibility of the child to be "ready" for school. It is the responsibility of adults, programs and systems to be ready to support each child.

"We need schools to get ready for every child in order for every child to reach their highest potential."

~ MN Governor's Education Roundtable

First Trimester

week 1 to the end of week 12

prenatal care

- Have you found an OBGYN or Midwife? Research options in your area.
- Have you heard of doula supports? Talk to your NAZ coach and learn how to engage in this support.
- If you have not started taking prenatal vitamins, now is a great time.
- Schedule your first prenatal visit. Most providers will see you as early as 7–8 weeks.
- Talk to your care provider about items to avoid that could be harmful to the growth and development of the baby. This includes alcohol and certain substances.

development

- Talk with your medical provider about resources to track pregnancy milestones. This could be an electronic resource, book, etc.
- Talk to NAZ coach about enrolling in home visiting.

baby reflections

Here are a set of reflective questions you could process on your own or with someone you trust:

- What kind of feelings are coming up for you around this pregnancy?
- What are your hopes for this baby?
- What support system do you and baby have surrounding you?

wellness

What kind of wellness activities are you engaging in? Here are a few to consider:

- **Sleep** – It's time for the body to heal and restore.
- **Drink water** – did you know that water with fresh lemon supports good digestion?
- **Unplug** – finding time to stay off of social media and the internet each week can help lower stress.

Second Trimester

week 13 to the end of week 26

prenatal care

- Read through second trimester prenatal care strategies and consider each.
- Schedule your prenatal visits with your OBGYN or Midwife. During your second trimester, possible visits will include an ultrasound of baby and a glucose test.
- Look into taking a childbirth education class. An OBGYN, Midwife, Doula, or Home Visitor can support you to find one that is a good fit.

development

- During the 2nd trimester, you may begin feeling your baby move.
- Around 18 weeks, your baby is able to hear their first sound. Their ears will become much stronger over the weeks to come.
- What else have you learned about your baby's development at this time? Share with your NAZ coach or someone you trust.

baby reflections

Here are a set of reflective questions you could process on your own or with someone you trust:

- With the baby now moving, does it change your feelings surrounding pregnancy?
- What are your hopes for your baby's future?
- Who in your life do you want baby to be surrounded by?
- Who will care for your baby when they arrive?

wellness

What kind of wellness activities are you engaging in? Here are a few to consider:

- **Mindfulness** – consider activities such as journaling or breathing activities to continue to care for yourself.
- **Movement** – stretching and going on walks can be great ways to feel good during pregnancy.
- Look back at the 1st trimester wellness activities for more!

Third Trimester

week 27 to the end of pregnancy

prenatal care

- Talk to your OBGYN or Midwife about baby's kicks. It is typical to feel baby move throughout the day.
- Schedule the rest of your prenatal visits with your provider. Talk with them about your birth plan and things you hope for.
- Research and select the pediatrician your baby will see.
- If you are planning to breastfeed, look into ordering a breast pump through your insurance. They are typically covered at no cost.

development

- As the baby continues to develop, consider reading, talking, and singing to the baby while you are pregnant. They can hear you and will recognize your voice when they arrive.
- Ask other loved ones to be a part of the fun! Co-parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, etc. can all talk and sing with the baby too!

baby reflections

- How will you introduce baby to other loved ones in your life?
- When the baby arrives, what feels most important for the care for you and baby in the first few weeks?
- Take time to write a letter to your baby expressing your hopes and dreams for their future.
- Are there boundaries you will want to consider for you and your baby after their arrival?



Third Trimester

week 27 to the end of pregnancy

wellness

Consider a few reflective activities to support your wellness.

Body scan meditation – it can help you get in touch with areas of your body that may be experiencing discomfort.

- While taking deep breaths, notice your feet.
- Notice your belly.
- Notice your chest.
- Notice your shoulders and arms.
- Notice your hands.
- Notice your neck and throat. Soften your jaw and facial muscles.
- Notice your whole body. Where are you holding tension? Are you able to let it go?

Journaling questions to consider:

- When I think about birth, I am feeling _____. Where are you noticing confidence? Where are you noticing stressors?
- After having my baby, I am feeling _____. Where are you noticing confidence? Where are you feeling overwhelmed?

Read through the first and second trimester activities for more wellness considerations.



Planning for Birth and Baby's Arrival

week 37

- ☐ Pack your hospital bag with the items you may need/want during labor and delivery. Many hospitals have essential postpartum care products, so talk to your provider about what will be available to you and baby.
- ☐ Consider writing down your birth preferences to share with your provider and other members of your care team. This could include a partner, family member, doula, or other person that will be present when baby arrives.
- ☐ Install the baby's car seat in the vehicle that they will be coming home in. Hospitals require a baby to leave in a car seat if they are riding home in a vehicle.
- ☐ Begin to practice labor relaxation methods.
- ☐ Talk to your support team (OBGYN, midwife, doula, family member, etc.) about preferences for your baby. For example, how long would you like to have skin to skin time after birth? Let your team know what your wishes for your baby are.
- ☐ After the baby is born, contact your pediatrician's office to schedule your baby's first well-child visit. This visit will typically happen anywhere from 2–10 days after the baby leaves the hospital.
- ☐ Will you be going back to work once the baby is born? If so, finding quality care for your child will be important. Parentaware.org can provide options for quality child care in your area. Talk to your NAZ coach about scholarship options to help cover the cost of child care.
- ☐ Talk with your doula or NAZ coach about postpartum planning.



BIRTH to **ONE YEAR OLD**



One Month Old

talk

While bathing your infant, talk to them about the different steps in the process. For example "I have soap on the washcloth and am washing your arms, now your hands, and then your legs."

sing

Before your baby goes to sleep at night, pick a song that you can sing to them. Singing the same song each night can help babies feel safe because it becomes predictable and familiar over time.

play

Tummy time! Place your baby's chest to yours as a playful tummy time position that can build neck strength.



Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule and attend your child's 1 month well-child visit with your child's medical provider.
- ☐ Did you know that you can schedule multiple well-child visits at a time? Talk to the scheduling team at your infant's clinic about making more than one appointment at a time.



Two Months Old

talk

When talking with your baby, take time to notice their response. They may begin making noises back in response to your words.

play

Take 10–15 minutes a day to do skin to skin contact with your baby. This is a great way to bond with your baby and work on healthy emotional development.

read / storytell

It is never too early to read to your baby. Pick a short book or story to read to them during the day.

Developmental milestones

- ☐ Calms down when spoken to
- ☐ Makes sounds other than crying
- ☐ Moves both arms and legs
- ☐ Looks at your face
- ☐ Reacts to loud noises
- ☐ Opens hands briefly
- ☐ Seems happy to see you when you walk up to them
- ☐ Watches you as you move
- ☐ Holds head up when on tummy
- ☐ Smiles when you talk
- ☐ Looks at a toy for several seconds





Three Months Old

talk

While looking at your baby, talk with them by asking questions or describing what is going on around you. Take time to pause and notice your baby respond with a laugh or smile. This type of interaction is called serve and return! You could include a song and use different voices (low, high, soft) and notice now they respond.

play

Place your baby on a playmat or blanket on the floor where they can have toys hanging above their head. At 3 months, babies will begin to grab for toys, even if it is only for a short amount of time.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 4 month well-child visit with the medical provider.
- ☐ [Watch this video](#) and explore all of the different options offered by Minneapolis Public Schools for your early childhood scholar.





Four Months Old

talk

Lay your baby belly down on a blanket on the floor. Lay in front of them so they can see your face and talk about what they are doing. "You are so strong! Look at you hold up your head!" This can encourage tummy time while also building communication skills.

play

Hold your baby on your lap facing you and see if you can make them smile or laugh. Blowing belly bubbles or making a silly face are two ideas.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 4 month well-child visit with your child's medical provider.
- ☐ Talk with your NAZ coach about what programs are available for your scholar. Consider opportunities such as the school district, an early learning center, home visiting, or a NAZ Family Academy course.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Smiles on their own to get your attention
- ☐ Makes sounds back when you talk to them
- ☐ Holds head steady without support when you are holding them
- ☐ Chuckles (not full laugh) when you try to make them laugh
- ☐ Turns head towards the sound of your voice
- ☐ Holds a toy when you put it in their hand
- ☐ Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention
- ☐ If hungry, opens their mouth when they see breast or bottle
- ☐ Uses arm to swing at toys
- ☐ Makes sounds like "ooo" or "ahhh" (cooing)
- ☐ Looks at hands with interest and brings hands to mouth
- ☐ Pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy.



Five Months Old

talk

Take your baby on a walk around the house or outdoors and describe what you see. "Look, did you see the bird flying into the tree?" or "Look at the oranges on the counter"

sing

Introduce a new song to your baby. If it is a song with hand motions, allow your baby to watch you do the motions or even allow them to do the motions by moving their arms.

play

Introduce your baby to new, safe objects (object should not be able to fit in their mouths). Allow them to explore through their senses. They may try to grab the object and place it in their mouths. This is a great way to build hand-eye coordination and get to know the world around them.



Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 6 month well-child visit with the medical provider.



Six Months Old

talk

By 6 months, your baby is beginning to explore solid foods. When you are feeding your baby, talk about the different foods they are trying; what it looks like, how it tastes, smells, feels, etc. These are all new experiences.

play

Sit behind your baby on the floor and allow them to practice sitting. To make things more fun, place a mirror in front of them so they can see themselves!

read / storytell

Before laying your baby down to sleep, tell them the story of their day. Try to cover as many details as you can.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 6 month well-child visit with your child's medical provider.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Know familiar people
- ☐ Blows "raspberries" (sticks tongue out and blows)
- ☐ Closes lips to show they don't want more food
- ☐ Likes to look at themselves in the mirror
- ☐ Makes squealing noises
- ☐ Rolls from tummy to back
- ☐ Laughs
- ☐ Puts things in their mouth to explore them
- ☐ Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy
- ☐ Takes turns making sounds with you
- ☐ Reaches to grab a toy they want
- ☐ Leans on hands to support themselves when sitting



Seven Months Old

talk

Look through a photo album or photos on your phone of familiar family members and friends. Name each person for your baby and encourage them to repeat you. Repeating might be babble, and that is okay!

sing

Sing a familiar song to your baby. While singing the song, add in clapping to the beat. Notice how your baby reacts to the clapping. There could be laughter or even clapping along.

play

Spend time with your baby blowing bubbles! Blow bubbles in different directions to encourage head movements, scooting, or crawling towards the bubbles.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Talk with your NAZ coach about what programs are available for your scholar. Consider opportunities such as the school district, an early learning center, home visiting, or a NAZ Family Academy course.





Eight Months Old

talk

Begin talking to your baby about standing and sitting down through a repetitive game. You can help pull them up and say, “you are standing” and help sit them down and say, “you are sitting”. This activity can build more words into their vocabulary and can help them with physical skills.

sing

Find things around the house to make music with your baby. You could use pots and pans, rice in a tube, or any instruments your family plays.

play

Play a game of peek-a-boo with your baby. You can hide behind your hands or an object like a blanket. What do you notice your baby doing?



Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 9 month well-child visit with the medical provider.



Nine Months Old

talk

Talk to your baby using their name and see how they respond. Encourage other family members and friends to do the same.

sing

Sing "if you are happy and you know it" with your baby. As you go through the verses of the song, replace the word happy with other feelings words such as "sad."

play

Hide a toy under a blanket while your baby is watching. Ask your baby, "where did it go?" Your baby may react with confusion and excitement at this game; that encourages a new skill.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 9 month well-child visit with your child's medical provider. This well-child visit may include a developmental screening called the ASQ.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- ☐ Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo
- ☐ Bangs two things together
- ☐ Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised
- ☐ Makes different sounds like "mamamama" and "babababa"
- ☐ Gets to a sitting position by themselves
- ☐ Looks when you call their name
- ☐ Lifts arms to be picked up
- ☐ Moves things from one hand to the other
- ☐ Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries)
- ☐ Looks for objects when dropped out of sight
- ☐ Uses fingers to "rake" food towards themselves
- ☐ Sits without support



Ten Months Old

talk

Hide a toy under a blanket while your baby is watching. Ask your baby “where did it go?” and encourage them to find it. If you did this activity at 9 months, did anything change for your baby?

sing

What is your baby’s favorite song? Sing it with them during the day and encourage them to sing along

play

Encourage your baby to draw using chunky crayons. They are developing their motor skills every day.

read / storytell

While on a walk with your baby, make up a story about the things you are seeing. For example, “Once upon a time there was a baby who was walking to the park with her dad. On the way, they saw a blue bird in a nest”





Eleven Months Old

talk

Practice greetings with your baby. When someone is coming into your home, model waving and saying "hi." When someone is leaving, model waving and saying "goodbye."

sing

While holding your baby's hands and standing behind them, walk them around the house while singing a song.

play

Play a game of pat-a-cake with your baby. Notice what actions they are able to do on their own. Encourage them to learn more actions by showing them with your hands.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 1 year well-child visit with the medical provider.





One Year Old

talk

There may be times where you choose to tell your baby no. Notice how they react. At 1 year, they may begin to pause or stop when you say no.

sing

Time to sing happy birthday to your baby!! Celebrate your baby and all the things you have learned together.

play

Take out baby blocks and cups/bowls that the blocks can fit into. Allow your baby to practice placing the blocks into the cups/bowls.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 1 year well-child visit with your child's medical provider.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Plays games with you like pat-a-cake
- ☐ Puts something in a container, like a block in a cup
- ☐ Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it
- ☐ Waves "bye-bye"
- ☐ Looks for things they see you hide, like a toy under a blanket
- ☐ Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food
- ☐ Calls parent "mama" or "dada" or other special name
- ☐ Pulls up to stand
- ☐ Understands "no" (pauses briefly or stops when you say it)
- ☐ Walks, holding onto furniture

ONE to TWO YEARS OLD





Thirteen Months Old

talk

Are you noticing more words from your child? Help build their language by repeating what they say and talking often to them about what is going on around them.

play

Take out a bin and fill it with water and your child's favorite floating toys, cups, spoons, etc. Take time to play with them in the water, pouring from cup to cup or moving toys around the bin.

read / storytell

While reading a story with your child, find ways to intentionally show your child affection. This may be through allowing them to cuddle into your side or giving them a hug when the story is finished.



Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ [Watch this video](#) and explore all of the different options offered by Minneapolis Public Schools for your early childhood scholar.



Fourteen Months Old

sing

Play a game of pat-a-cake with your child. Do they like clapping their hands or patting their hands against yours? They may show you excitement at these new skills!

play

Do you know other families with children around the same age as your child? Plan a time to get them together and play. Notice how they may be copying each other while they play. This is all an important part of development!

read / storytell

While reading a story, allow your child to help you turn the pages.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 15 month well-child visit with the medical provider.
- ☐ Is your scholar enrolled in a high quality early learning center? If not, talk with your NAZ coach or other NAZ staff about what early childhood centers we partner with and get connected! Scholarship options are available.



Fifteen Months Old

talk

During mealtime, encourage your child to pick up their foods and bring them to their mouths. Describe the different foods they are trying. Think about the color, texture, taste, etc. as you describe it. "These raspberries are red and bumpy!"

sing

Think of a song you loved as a child and sing it with your child. Is it something with hand movements? Teach your child these movements if they don't already know.

play

Grab a crayon and paper and allow your scholar to color. Scribbling is the first stage of development for writing skills.

Appointments / Parent Education

Attend your child's 15 month well-child visit with your child's medical provider.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does it
- ☐ Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada" like "ba" for "ball" or "da" for "dog"
- ☐ Follows directions given when both a gesture and words are used. Eg. they give you the toy when you hold out your hands and say, "give me the toy."
- ☐ Uses fingers to feed themselves some food
- ☐ Shows you an object they like
- ☐ Looks at familiar object when you name it
- ☐ Tries to use things the right way like a phone, cup, or book
- ☐ Claps when excited



Sixteen Months Old

talk

When your child is experiencing big emotions (sadness, anger, happiness, etc.), talk to them about these feelings. Describe what it might be like for them. For example, "I can see you are really sad. You have tears running down your cheeks. Come here. Would you like a hug?"

play

Add a sensory activity to your child's week that activates and stimulates their senses. This could be playing with water, sand, play dough, or other textured items they can touch with their hands or feet.

read / storytell

Tell your child a story about their day. If you were with them, try to describe as many details as you can. If they attend school or child care, ask their caregiver/teacher what they did today and describe it back to them later in the day.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Talk with your NAZ coach about what programs are available for your scholar. Consider opportunities such as the school district, an early learning center, home visiting, or a NAZ Family Academy course.
- ☐ What does your child's bedtime routine look like? Are you struggling with sleep? [Create a routine for your child](#) that follows a similar schedule each night. It might be dinner, bath, book, and tuck in. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.



Seventeen Months Old

talk

Find items from around the house to make a ramp for your child to drive cars down or roll balls down. Talk with your child using language like “roll, vroom, ramp, ball, car, etc.” to continue to build more language.

sing

While cleaning up toys, sing a clean up song with your child. One you might know: “clean up, clean up, everybody, everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share.”

play

While at a playground, work with your child to begin to climb the equipment with your close supervision. You might start to notice they can crawl or step up the stairs with assistance.

read / storytell

Tell your child about a fun memory you have as a child playing. If you can't think of one, use your imagination and make up a fun story about a memory a child might have.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 18 month well-child visit with the medical provider.



Eighteen Months Old

talk

As you are getting your child dressed, talk to them about the different items they are putting on. Encourage them to push their arm through the sleeves of their shirt or assist you in other ways they are ready for.

play

Take a walk around your block and allow your child to walk while holding your hand. Since walking is a new skill, they may find joy in this new independence.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 18-month well-child visit with your child's medical provider. During this visit, they may complete a developmental screening called the ASQ.
- ☐ What is your bedtime routine? Create a routine for your child that follows a similar schedule each night. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Moves away from you but looks to make sure you are close by
- ☐ Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" and "dada"
- ☐ Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- ☐ Tries to use a spoon (if spoons are used in your home)
- ☐ Points to show you something interesting
- ☐ Follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you a toy when you say "give it to me"
- ☐ Scribbles
- ☐ Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help
- ☐ Puts hands out for you to wash them
- ☐ Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- ☐ Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes
- ☐ Helps you dress themselves by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot
- ☐ Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car
- ☐ Feeds themselves with their fingers



Nineteen Months Old

talk

Provide your child with a cup of water with no lid at mealtime to practice. Use language to help them be successful such as, "look, you are picking up your cup with two hands. Take it slow when you drink."

sing

Sing a song that involves counting. Some songs to consider are "Five Little Monkeys" or "Five Green and Speckled Frogs." This is a good way to begin to build math skills while having fun.

play

Play a game of chase with your child. It can be done indoors or outdoors. You might say, "I'm gonna get you," with a smile on your face and allow them to practice running.

read / storytell

Read a story with your child. On each page, ask them to point to different objects. If they can't find them, provide them with support by taking their finger and pointing to it. This can help build your child's vocabulary.





Twenty Months Old

talk

When your child wakes up for the day, talk about what you are going to be doing that day. It might sound like, “first we are going to get dressed and then we will drive to school. I will be going to work and picking you up when I’m done.” This can help your child start to understand routines in their day.

sing

Is your child beginning to sing along with familiar songs? Pick a song you know your child likes and sing along with them.

play

Allow your child to play with other children around their age to begin to work on peer-to-peer skills. This could happen with family, friends, ECCE, the library, etc.

read / storytell

Find items around your home to make up a story to tell your scholar about. It could be toys, food, other people, etc. Be creative! As you talk about the items, point to them or allow your scholar to touch them.





Twenty-One Months Old

talk

When your child is showing a big emotion (sad, happy, angry), talk with them about what they might need during that time. "I see you are sad. Would you like a hug?" or, "I see you are so happy; I'm glad you are having fun!"

play

If you haven't already, introduce your child to coloring! This can be done with chunky crayons, markers, or other tools you feel comfortable using with them.

read / storytell

Read a familiar story before bed. Notice how your child is reacting to the story. Do they seem to remember parts of it?

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Have you had a chance to explore [ECFE](http://ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/ecfe) (Early Childhood Family Education)? If not, look into signing up for a class. It is a great way for your child to play with other children and you to learn alongside parents with children the same age. For information, visit ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/ecfe



Twenty-Two Months Old

talk

If you spend time away from your child, ask them how their day was. If you can describe what their day might have been like, you can begin building more language around schedules.

sing

Pick a song you know your child likes and sing along with them. See how many words they know and celebrate this milestone!

play

While playing with a toy your child has more than one of (blocks, balls, etc.), work on counting. When you say, "one, two," do they repeat you?

read / storytell

Have you visited the library with your child? Most libraries in the area have spaces that are friendly for young children.





Twenty-Three Months Old

talk

If your child notices someone else's emotions (another child gets hurt), encourage a conversation with them to help build empathy. "Did you see _____ fall? That must have hurt. Should we go see if they are okay?"

sing

Begin supporting your child to learn a hand washing routine. Sing a song about hand washing as they learn the steps. One you might consider is to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Soap and water, wash and scrub, Get those germs off rub-a-dub, Twinkle, twinkle little star, Look how clean my two hands are.

play

Allow your child to practice kicking a ball. Modeling first may help them build this skill.

Appointments / Parent Education

- ☐ Schedule your child's 2 year well-child visit with their medical provider.

**TWO to THREE
YEARS OLD**

Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- ☐ Points to at least two body parts when you ask them to show you
- ☐ Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate
- ☐ Eats with a spoon (if spoons are used in your home)
- ☐ Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation
- ☐ Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes
- ☐ Kicks a ball
- ☐ Points to things in a book when you ask, like, "where is the bear?"
- ☐ Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; eg. Holding a container and taking the lid off
- ☐ Runs
- ☐ Says at least two words together, like "more milk"
- ☐ Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- ☐ Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help
- ☐ Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them
- ☐ Says two or more words with one action word, like "doggie run"
- ☐ Shows simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a small stool to reach something
- ☐ Takes some clothes off by themselves, like loose pants or an open jacket
- ☐ Shows you what they can do by saying, "look at me!"
- ☐ Names things in a book when you point and ask, "what is this?"
- ☐ Follows two-step instructions like, "put the toy down and close the door"
- ☐ Jumps off the ground with both feet
- ☐ Follows simple routines when told, like helping pick up toys when you say, "it's time to clean up"
- ☐ Says words like "I," "me," or "we"
- ☐ Shows they know at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, "which one is red?"
- ☐ Turns book pages one at a time when you read to them
- ☐ Says about 50 words
- ☐ Uses things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food
- ☐ Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids

Appointments/Parent Education

- ☐ Attend your child's 2 year well-child visit with your child's medical provider. During this visit, they may complete a developmental screening called the ASQ.
- ☐ Watch this video and explore all of the different options offered by Minneapolis Public Schools for your early childhood scholar.
- ☐ Talk with your NAZ coach about what programs are available for your scholar. Consider opportunities such as the school district, an early learning center, home visiting, or a NAZ Family Academy course.
- ☐ Is your scholar enrolled in a high quality early learning center? If not, talk with your NAZ coach or other NAZ staff about what early childhood centers we partner with and get connected! Scholarship options are available.
- ☐ Is your child showing signs of readiness to potty train? Check out this article to see if it might be a good time to start this milestone.
- ☐ Schedule and attend your child's 2.5 year well-child visit with your child's medical provider. During this visit, they may complete a developmental screening called the ASQ.
- ☐ Interested in sending your child to Three School at Minneapolis Public schools? School placement for scholars begins in February for those scholars that turn 3 before Sept. 1st. Find out more at www.explorempls.org.
- ☐ What is your bedtime routine? Create a routine for your child that follows a similar schedule each night. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.
- ☐ Work with your NAZ coach to check out the resource Help Me Connect to better understand what resources are available to your child in the state of Minnesota.
- ☐ Schedule your child's 3 year well-child visit with the medical provider for around your child's 3rd birthday.
- ☐ Receive fun facts and easy tips each week with ideas on how you can promote your child's learning through Think Small's Parent Powered Text Line.



Twenty-Four Months Old

sing

Sing a song while your child washes their hands. One you might consider is to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Soap and water, wash and scrub, Get those germs off rub-a-dub, Twinkle, twinkle little star, Look how clean my two hands are.

play

While at a playground, encourage your child to climb up the stairs and go down the slide with your supervision.

Do you notice any changes in this skill? Are they able to do this more independently than before?

read / storytell

While reading with your child, ask them to point to different items in the book.

"Where is the bear?" or "Do you see the apples in the tree?"



Twenty-Five Months Old

talk

Are you noticing your child use new words? Practice using two word sentences like "more please" or "I sit" by either repeating your child's language or stating it first and allowing them to repeat you.

sing

Sing a song with numbers like "One, Two Buckle my Shoe" or "Five Little Ducks" to encourage counting through music.

read / storytell

While reading with your child, ask them to point to different items in the book. "Where is the bear?" or "Do you see the apples in the tree?"





Twenty-Six Months Old

sing

Check out this video by MacPhail Center [for Music](#) on how to combine singing and books with your child.

play

While your child is around other children, notice how they play. Do they play next to each other? Or with each other? Both of these are normal ways to play and great ways to learn to interact with others!

read / storytell

While reading with your child, allow them to sit on your lap or close by. This can promote the relationship they have with you while also developing early literacy skills.





Twenty–Seven Months Old

talk

Ask your child to follow a two step direction like, “pick up the block and put it in the box.” If they need more help, walk them through the steps. Celebrate with your child when they are able to do it!

play

Take time to play pretend with your child. This could be playing kitchen or something else. Allow your child to take the lead and watch their creativity grow!

read / storytell

While reading a story with your child, find ways to intentionally show them affection. This may be through allowing them to cuddle into your side or giving them a hug when the story is finished.





Twenty-Eight Months Old

talk

When your child is experiencing big emotions, try to explain what they might be feeling. "I see tears coming down your face; are you sad?" or "It is okay to be angry, but we can't hit. Would you like a hug?"

sing

Are you noticing your child enjoying certain songs more than others? They may begin to have preferences towards certain things. Sing their favorite song and notice how they react.

play

Set up an obstacle course for your child that allows them to practice jumping. This could be jumping over toys (cars, blocks, etc.) or doing something outdoors (drawing the course with chalk).



Twenty-Nine Months Old

talk

While getting ready for outdoors, talk with your child about helping you get their jacket on. "Can you pick it up and put your arms in? Wow, you are getting good at that!" Describing the steps to getting ready for outdoors can encourage your child to learn and use more words.

sing

Is your child potty training? While taking a bathroom break, add a song to the routine. Consider a song like Daniel Tiger's "When You Have to Go Potty, Stop and Go Right Away!"

play

While coloring with your child, help them to identify colors. Soon they should begin to identify at least one color on their own.





Thirty Months Old

talk

Practice with your child saying their name. If they aren't able to say their name now, they should be meeting this milestone soon! Take it one step further and begin to write their name for them. Hang it somewhere they can see it frequently.

play

Take out the crayons or markers and draw shapes together. Model drawing a circle and allow your child to copy you.

read / storytell

Take time while eating dinner to tell your child a story. This could be something you make up or a story about something that happened. Mealtime is a great time to enjoy family stories.



Thirty-One Months Old

talk

Talk with your child about basic safety in the home and out in public; "the stove is hot; don't touch," or "we need to hold hands."

sing

Put on some music and have a dance party!

play

If the weather allows, take your child outside to play. Nearby playgrounds can allow your child to build motor skills and get out energy.

read / storytell

Does your child have a favorite book or story? Ask them to choose what you read and see how much of the story they can repeat after you.





Thirty-Two Months Old

talk

Are you noticing your child start to ask more questions? They are beginning to use words like "who," "what," "where," and "why" about familiar things. Encourage them to explore asking questions by modeling this for them. "Where is mommy?" or "what is daddy doing?"

play

Find a string and something with a hole (Cheerios, pretzels, etc.). See if you child can begin to place these onto the string. It is a fun way to build fine motor skills and make a treat!

read / storytell

Find a positive story with characters that look like your child. Representation can mean a lot for children.





Thirty-Three Months Old

talk

Take time to have a conversation with your child. Are you noticing they are able to talk back and forth with you for at least two exchanges? Celebrate this new skill and continue to build on it!

sing

What were some of your favorite songs as a child? Introduce your child to a new one that you used to love.

play

Do you have shaving cream and a bit of patience? Allow your child to play shaving cream at the table or outdoors. It can be good for sensory development. Alternatives to shaving cream could be Play-doh, slime, rice, or water.

read / storytell

Does your family have an elder in your life? Ask if they have a story they could share with your child. It could be a memory from their childhood or a story they heard growing up.



Thirty-Four Months Old

talk

Ask your child to tell you what they do in the morning when they get up. Practice reviewing their routine (wake up, go to the bathroom, brush my teeth, eat my breakfast).

sing

Do you or anyone in your family play an instrument? Ask them to play a song for your child to get exposure to live music.

play

What do you like to do for fun? Pick an activity to share with your child. It could be cooking, baking, painting, or other hobbies you might have.

read / storytell

Take a trip to the library to check out books. Did you know your child can get their own library card?





Thirty-Five Months Old

talk

When talking with your child, challenge yourself to tell them things they can do versus things they can't do. If a child is standing on a chair, "can you please sit down on your chair?" can help direct the child's behavior to something you want to see.

sing

Find different items from around your house to make music with. This could be recycled tubes and rice/beans or pots and pans with spoons. Get creative and involve the whole family.

play

Play a game of "I Spy" with your child. Indoors, you might say "I spy with my little eye something that is red." Add descriptive words like fuzzy, hard, bumpy, etc.

read / storytell

Talk about the different parts of a book with your child. Help them to identify the cover, back, and spine of the book. Show them how to turn the pages and the direction of the text.





Thirty-Six Months Old

talk

Talk with your child about what makes them feel comfortable versus uncomfortable. Examples could be temperature (hot/warm/cold), feelings (sad/mad/happy), or activities (eating, playing, riding in the car). Children can begin to notice the way they feel and help them to manage emotions.

sing

Ask your child what their favorite song is. Play or sing this song with them to engage in something they enjoy.

play

Allow your child to practice waiting by using “first, then” statements such as, “first, I will make dinner, then I will play with you. Can you play with your cars while you wait?”

read / storytell

Ask your child if they can tell you a story about a “favorite” they might have. This could be their favorite day, animal, activity, etc. If they have trouble, ask questions like, “what happened first” or “what happened next?” You can also model telling a story about your “favorite” day.



THREE to FOUR YEARS OLD



Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave them like at childcare drop off
- ☐ Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like "running", "eating", or "playing"
- ☐ Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them
- ☐ Notices other children and joins them to play
- ☐ Says first name, when asked
- ☐ Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- ☐ Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- ☐ Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time
- ☐ Puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket
- ☐ Asks "who," "what," "where," or "why" questions, like "where is mommy/daddy?"
- ☐ Draws a circle, when you show them how
- ☐ Uses a fork (if forks are used within your home)

Appointments/Parent Education

- ☐ Kindergarten will be here before you know it! Check out the [MPS Getting Ready for Kindergarten](#) guide.
- ☐ Watch this [video](#) and explore all of the different options offered by Minneapolis Public Schools for your early childhood scholar.
- ☐ Check out NAZ's Starting Kindergarten Skills Checklist at the end of the toolkit. Work with your NAZ coach to get it printed and keep it somewhere you can see it. Working towards these skills with your scholar is a step towards supporting their readiness for school.
- ☐ A month before your scholar's third birthday, schedule their 3 year well-child visit with their primary care provider.
- ☐ Interested in sending your child to High Five at Minneapolis Public schools? School placement for scholars begins in February for those scholars that turn 4 before Sept. 1st. Find out more at www.exploremps.org
- ☐ Before your child enters Kindergarten, it is required that they are screened at the district. In Minneapolis, this is called Screen at Three. Schedule your screening with the school district by visiting ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/screen or calling 612.668.3715.
- ☐ What is your bedtime routine? Create a routine for your child that follows a similar schedule each night. It might be dinner, bath, book, and tuck in. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.
- ☐ Work with your NAZ coach to [check out the resource Help Me Connect](#) to better understand what resources are available to your child in the state of Minnesota.
- ☐ Is your scholar enrolled in a high quality early learning center? If not, talk with your NAZ coach or other NAZ staff about what early childhood centers we partner with and can get you connected! Scholarship options are available.



January

sing

Continue to help your child to learn a handwashing routine. Sing a song about handwashing as they learn the steps. One you might consider is to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Soap and water, wash and scrub, Get those germs off rub-a-dub, Twinkle, twinkle little star, Look how clean my two hands are.

play

Getting ready for outdoor time in the winter can be difficult. Turn it into a game of Simon Says. "Simon says, put on your hat. Simon says jump into your snowpants"



February

talk

Take time to have a conversation with your child. Are you noticing they are able to talk back and forth with you for multiple exchanges? Celebrate this new skill and continue to build on it!

read / storytell

Find stories about topics of safety to read to your child. This could include fire safety, community safety (using crosswalks), staying safe at home (chemicals, etc.). You might find stories at the library or online stories (YouTube). Take time to talk with your scholar about how to be safe in different spaces.





March

talk

Work on rhyming sounds with your child. Some beginning rhymes they might know are "cat-hat," "fox-box," or "boy-toy."

play

If the weather allows, take time to get outside and play in the snow. See what your child decides to do with their imagination.

read / storytell

While reading a story with your child, find ways to intentionally show your child affection. This may be through allowing them to cuddle into your side or giving them a hug when the story is finished.



April

talk

With spring coming, it is a great time to talk to your child about the different seasons. Talk about season words (fall, winter, spring, summer) and ask your child what they know about each season.

sing

[Check out this video by MacPhail Center for Music](#) on how to combine singing and books with your child.

read / storytell

Visit the library with your child and allow them to get a library card if they don't already have one. Take time to pick out books and bring them home to read. Take it one step further and pick out a book for yourself. Modeling reading to scholars can be a powerful way to encourage reading.



May

sing

Put on some music and have a dance party!

play

Spring is here! Go on a Music of Spring Scavenger hunt with your child. [Here is a guide to get you started.](#)

read / storytell

Take time while eating dinner to tell your child a story. This could be something you make up or a story about something that happened. Mealtime is a great time to enjoy family stories.



June

talk

Ask your child to tell you all the things they love about themselves. During this time, you can add what you love about them. Make a list and hang it somewhere they can see.

play

It is warming up and the perfect time to visit the park. Consider visiting a park in the neighborhood. Swimming or running around at North Commons or Bethune Park are fun choices!

read / storytell

While reading a story, talk with your child about letter names and letter sounds like, "That's an L, and L sounds like...."





July

talk

While your child is getting dressed, have them tell you what they are putting on, and encourage them to say colors.

sing

While on a walk (indoors or outdoors), sing "The Ants go Marching" with your child. This can be a fun way to enjoy singing while also working on math skills.

play

Play games that include recognizing shapes and letters. Search for certain letters on signs or on grocery store items.

read / storytell

Have you heard of the CARE strategy in NAZ's Family Academy course? Practice using this strategy while reading to your child. C: Use descriptive comments when reading to your child. A: Ask open-ended questions to help your child think of what comes next. R: Respond to your child with praise. E: Expand on what your child says.



August

talk

Talk with your child about their routine for getting dressed. Ask about the steps they might know in the process. Use words like "first," "then," "next," "last" to help them learn the order in which they do something. Allow them time to practice getting dressed on their own.

play

When deciding on what to play, give your child choices to nurture independence and self-worth. It can also allow children to have a positive sense of control.

read / storytell

Tell your child a story about a time you felt frustrated. Tell them what strategies you used to calm down such as deep breathing, walking away, or talking to someone.



September

talk

When you are talking, try to write down words your child says. When your child watches you write, they learn a lot about how written language works.

sing

Before bedtime, allow your child to pick 2–3 songs to sing before they go to sleep as a part of the nighttime routine.

play

Encourage your child to draw a picture of themselves. See how many body parts they include and help them label what they have identified.

read / storytell

Find a story about apples and read it with your child. Take it one step further and do an apple tasting! See how your child describes the different types of apples.



October

talk

Practice using math words that your child will use in school, such as "count," "more," "less," "the same," and "measure."

sing

Ask your child to sing their favorite song for you. When they are singing, clap along to encourage them.

play

Open up a pumpkin and let your child explore inside! Talk about the different textures, smells, and sounds they may be experiencing. To take it one step further, bake the seeds or pumpkin and allow them to taste.

read / storytell

When reading with your child, practice naming the parts of a book. Some words to include might be "front of book/cover," "back of book," "spine," "author," or "illustrator."



November

talk

Take time to notice when your child is doing something positive and provide them with praise. Being specific can be beneficial to encourage future positive behavior. An example might be, "I really appreciated how you helped your sister put on her shoes. Thank you!" or, "I noticed that you did not yell even though you were really mad. I'm proud of you!"

sing

Explore new genres of music with your child. This could include Jazz, classical, R&B or others. Ask your child what their favorite is.

play

Try baking with your child: It could be making bread, cupcakes, muffins, etc.! This can be a good time for building relationships, as well as learning new skills.

read / storytell

Seek out books with positive stories that represent your family's identity through characters that look like your child. Do you notice them responding to the book in a different way? Seeing themselves in stories can build self-worth.



December

talk

Place different textured items in a paper bag and ask your child to reach in the bag without looking. As they are feeling each item, ask them to describe what they are feeling. You can introduce new words or use familiar words to describe the items. Some words that might be used are "soft," "bumpy," "smooth," "hard," "squishy," etc. Allow them to guess what each item is.

sing

Put on a freeze dance song for your child and allow them to practice starting and stopping their movements. This activity is great for development of control.

play

Spend time outdoors in the snow with your child. If you aren't able to go outside, bring the snow in and enjoy the conversations about the different senses you experience with snow.

read / storytell

Practice letters using sensory materials. This could be Play-doh, shaving cream, snow, etc. Form the letters or use your finger to trace the letter in the snow.

FOUR to FIVE YEARS OLD



Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog)
- ☐ Changes behavior based on where they are (place of worship, library, playground)
- ☐ Names a few colors of items
- ☐ Unbuttons and buttons
- ☐ Asks to go play with children if none are around, eg "can I play with Alex?"
- ☐ Says sentences with four or more words
- ☐ Tells what comes next in a well-known story
- ☐ Holds a crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist)
- ☐ Comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a friend.
- ☐ Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme
- ☐ Draws a person with three or more body parts
- ☐ Likes to be a "helper"
- ☐ Answers simple questions like, "what is a coat for?" or "what is a crayon for?"
- ☐ Serves themselves food or pours water, with adult supervision

Appointments/Parent Education

- ☐ A month before your scholar's fourth birthday, schedule their 4 year well-child visit with their primary care provider.
- ☐ If your child turns five before September 1st, school enrollment process for Kindergarten is right around the corner for your scholar. Visit www.explorempls.org to understand the three-step process of getting your scholar enrolled. If your scholar turns five after September 1st, consider enrolling them in the High Five preschool program.
- ☐ [Watch this video](#) and explore all of the different options offered by Minneapolis Public Schools for your early childhood scholar.
- ☐ Before your child enters Kindergarten, it is required that they are screened at the district. In Minneapolis, this is called Screen at Three. Schedule your screening with the school district by visiting ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/screen or calling (612) 668-3715.
- ☐ Check out NAZ's Starting Kindergarten Skills Checklist at the end of the toolkit. Work with your NAZ coach to get it printed and keep it somewhere you can see it. Working towards these skills with your scholar is a step towards supporting their readiness for school.
- ☐ Kindergarten will be here before you know it! Check out the [MPS Getting Ready for Kindergarten guide](#).
- ☐ What does your child's bedtime routine look like? Are you struggling with sleep? [Create a routine for your child](#) that follows a similar schedule each night. It might be dinner, bath, book, and tuck in. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.
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January

talk

Talk with your child about their routine for getting dressed. Ask about the steps they might know in the process. Use words like "first," "then," "next," "last" to help them learn the order in which they do something. Allow them time to practice getting dressed on their own.

sing

Have your child gather different items from around the house. Once they have the items gathered, encourage them to make up a song using the different items they found. For example, if they found a toy car, have them use the word "car" in their song.

read / storytell

Take time while eating dinner to tell your child a story; this could be something you make up or a story about something that happened. Mealtime is a great time to enjoy family stories.



February

talk

Use math words that your child will use in school, such as "add," "subtract," "measure," "weigh," and "equals."

sing

Ask your child to sing their favorite song for you. When they are singing, clap along to encourage them.

read / storytell

Find stories about topics of safety to read to your child. This could include fire safety, community safety (using crosswalks) or, staying safe at home (chemicals, etc.). You might find stories at the library or online stories (YouTube). Take time to talk with your scholar about how to be safe in different spaces.



March

sing

Put on a freeze dance song for your child and allow them to practice starting and stopping their movements. This activity is great for development of control.

play

Try baking with your child. It could be making bread, cupcakes, muffins, etc.! This can be a good time for building relationships, as well as learning new skills.

read / storytell

Tell your child a story about a time you felt frustrated. Tell them what strategies you used to calm down such as deep breathing, walking away, or talking to someone.



April

sing

Continue to support your child to learn a handwashing routine. Sing a song about handwashing as they learn the steps. One you might consider is to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Soap and water, wash and scrub, Get those germs off rub-a-dub, Twinkle, twinkle little star, Look how clean my two hands are.

play

Encourage your child to draw a picture of themselves. See how many body parts they include and help them label what they have identified.

read / storytell

While reading a story with your child, find ways to intentionally show your child affection. This may be through allowing them to cuddle into your side or giving them a hug when the story is finished.



May

sing

While on a walk (indoors or outdoors), sing “The Ants go Marching” with your child. This can be a fun way to enjoy singing while also working on math skills.

play

It is warming up and the perfect time to visit the park. Consider visiting a park in the neighborhood. Swimming or running around at North Commons or Bethune Park are fun choices!

read / storytell

Have you heard of the CARE strategy in NAZ’s Family Academy course? Practice using this strategy while reading to your child. C: Use descriptive comments when reading to your child. A: Ask open-ended questions to help your child think of what comes next. R: Respond to your child with praise. E: Expand on what your child says.



June

talk

Allow your child to tell you a story. While they are talking, focus on looking in their direction and giving them signals that you are paying attention: One way might be repeating what they say or asking questions about their story. Do you notice anything about how they respond to this type of feedback?

sing

Explore new genres of music with your child. This could include Jazz, classical, R&B or others. Ask your child what their favorite is.

play

Spring is here! Go on a Music of Spring Scavenger hunt with your child. [Here is a guide to get you started.](#)

read / storytell

Practice letters using sensory materials. This could be Play-doh, shaving cream, sand, etc. Form the letters or use your finger to trace the letter in the sand.



July

talk

Take time to notice when your child is doing something positive and provide them with praise. Being specific can be beneficial to encourage future positive behavior. An example might be: "I really appreciated how you helped your sister put on her shoes. Thank you!" or "I noticed that you did not yell even though you were really mad. I'm proud of you!"

sing

[Check out this video by MacPhail Center for Music](#) on how to combine singing and books with your child.

play

When deciding on what to play, give your child choices to nurture independence and self-worth. It can also allow children to have a positive sense of control.



August

sing

Put on some music and have a dance party!

play

Encourage your child to use their imagination and play with other children. This could be at home with family or at the park with other children. If they are having trouble thinking of something, set the stage. "Pretend you are a wolf living in the woods" or "pretend you work as a chef in a restaurant"

read / storytell

When reading with your child, practice naming the parts of a book. Some words to include might be "front of book/cover," "back of book," "spine," "author," or "illustrator."



September

talk

Place different textured items in a paper bag and ask your child to reach in the bag without looking. As they are feeling each item, ask them to describe what they are feeling. You can introduce new words or use familiar words to describe the items. Some words that might be used are "soft," "bumpy," "smooth," "hard," "squishy," etc. Allow them to guess what each item is.

sing

Before bedtime, allow your child to pick 2–3 songs to sing before they go to sleep as a part of the nighttime routine.

play

Have you introduced your child to any games? Starting with a simple card game like "Go Fish" or a board game like "Candyland."

read / storytell

Find a story about apples and read it with your child. Take it one step further and do an apple tasting! See how your child describes the different types of apples.



October

talk

Take out a piece of paper and something to write with (crayons, pencil, etc.) and ask your child to draw what you describe. For example, if you want them to draw a person, you might start by saying, "first, draw a circle. Then draw two eyes in the circle. Next draw a nose and a mouth." Be as descriptive as you can and see if you can introduce new words.

play

Collect recycled materials at home such as paper towel tubes, leftover paper, boxes, paper bags, food boxes, etc. See what you and your child can make together out of the materials.

read / storytell

Find a story to share with your child about writing letters to mail to someone. This could be a book from the library or a story you tell your child about a time you wrote a letter. Spend time thinking of someone to write a letter to and allow your child to practice this skill.



November

sing

Can you find things around the home to make instruments with your child? This could be materials like cardboard tubes, boxes, rice, dried bean, beads, etc. This could also be pots, pans, and wooden spoons. Set a timer and allow your child to play the instrument that they have created. Remind them when the timer goes off; it is time to be done playing their instrument.

play

Open up a pumpkin and let your child explore inside! Talk about the different textures, smells, and sounds they may be experiencing. To take it one step further, bake the seeds or pumpkin and allow them to taste.

read / storytell

Seek out books with positive stories that represent your family's identity through characters that look like your child. Do you notice them responding to the book in a different way? Seeing themselves in stories can build self-worth.



December

talk

Ask your child to tell you all the things they love about themselves. During this time, you can add what you love about them. Make a list and hang it somewhere they can see.

sing

Have your child gather different items from around the house. Once they have the items gathered, encourage them to make up a song using the different items they found. For example, if they found a toy car, have them use the word "car" in their song.

play

If the weather allows, take time to get outside and play in the snow. See what your child decides to do with their imagination.

read / storytell

Visit the library with your child and allow them to get a library card if they don't already have one. Take time to pick out books and bring them home to read. Take it one step further and pick out a book for yourself. Modeling reading to scholars can be a powerful way to encourage reading.

FIVE YEARS OLD to KINDERGARTEN



Developmental Milestones

- ☐ Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children
- ☐ Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read it or tell it to them
- ☐ Names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them
- ☐ Names some letters when you point to them
- ☐ Sings, dances, or acts for you
- ☐ Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges
- ☐ Uses words about time like "yesterday," "tomorrow," "morning," or "night"
- ☐ Button their own buttons
- ☐ Does simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after eating
- ☐ Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall)
- ☐ Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities. Eg. Arts and crafts or story time (screen time does not count)
- ☐ Hops on one foot
- ☐ Tells a story they heard or made up with at least two events. Eg. a cat was stuck in a tree and a firefighter saved it.
- ☐ Counts to 10
- ☐ Writes some letters in their name

Appointments/Parent Education

- ☐ A month before your scholar's fifth birthday, schedule their 5 year well-child visit with their primary care provider.
- ☐ The school enrollment process is right around the corner for your scholar. Visit www.explorempls.org to understand the three step process of getting your scholar enrolled in Kindergarten.
- ☐ Work with your NAZ coach to check out the resource Help Me Connect to better understand what resources are available to your child in the state of Minnesota.
- ☐ Check out NAZ's Starting Kindergarten Skills Checklist at the end of the toolkit. Work with your NAZ coach to get it printed and keep it somewhere you can see it. Working towards these skills with your scholar is a step towards supporting their readiness for school.
- ☐ Before your child enters Kindergarten, it is required that they are screened at the district. In Minneapolis, this is called Screen at Three. Schedule your screening with the school district by visiting ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/screen or calling 612.668.3715.
- ☐ Kindergarten will be here before you know it! Check out the MPS Getting Ready for Kindergarten guide.
- ☐ What does your child's bedtime routine look like? Are you struggling with sleep? Create a routine for your child that follows a similar schedule each night. It might be dinner, bath, book, and tuck in. Keeping consistent routines at bedtime can help your child get better sleep.
- ☐ Is your scholar enrolled in a high quality early learning center? If not, talk with your NAZ coach or other NAZ staff about what early childhood centers we partner with and can get you connected! Scholarship options are available.



January

sing

Begin supporting your child to learn a handwashing routine. Sing a song about handwashing as they learn the steps. One you might consider is to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Soap and water, wash and scrub, Get those germs off rub-a-dub, Twinkle, twinkle little star, Look how clean my two hands are.

read / storytell

Take time while eating dinner to tell your child a story. This could be something you make up or a story about something that happened. Mealtime is a great time to enjoy family stories.



February

talk

Talk with your child about their routine for getting dressed. Ask about the steps they might know in the process. Use words like "first," "then," "next," "last" to help them learn the order in which they do something. Allow them time to practice getting dressed on their own.

read / storytell

Find stories about topics of safety to read to your child. This could include fire safety, community safety (using crosswalks), staying safe at home (chemicals, etc.). You might find stories at the library or online stories (YouTube). Take time to talk with your scholar about how to be safe in different spaces.





March

sing

Put on some music and have a dance party!

play

If the weather allows, take time to get outside and play in the snow. See what your child decides to do with their imagination.

read / storytell

While reading a story with your child, find ways to intentionally show your child affection. This may be through allowing them to cuddle into your side or giving them a hug when the story is finished.



April

talk

Use math words that your child will use in school, such as "add," "subtract," "measure," "weigh," and "equals."

play

Encourage your child to use their imagination and play with other children: this could be at home with family or at the park with other children. If they are having trouble thinking of something, set the stage: "pretend you are a wolf living in the woods," or, "pretend you work as a chef in a restaurant."

read / storytell

Have you heard of the CARE strategy in NAZ's Family Academy course? Practice using this strategy while reading to your child. C: Use descriptive comments when reading to your child. A: Ask open-ended questions to help your child think of what comes next. R: Respond to your child with praise. E: Expand on what your child says.



May

talk

While with family or friends, encourage your child to ask for what they might need from other safe adults. For example, if they need a glass of water, encourage them to ask their auntie, "can I have a glass of water please?"

sing

Check out this video by MacPhail Center for music on how to combine singing and books with your child.

play

Spring is here! Go on a Music of Spring Scavenger hunt with your child.

read / storytell

Visit the library with your child and allow them to get a library card if they don't already have one. Take time to pick out books and bring them home to read. Take it one step further and pick out a book for yourself. Modeling reading to scholars can be a powerful way to encourage reading.



June

talk

Take time to notice when your child is doing something positive and provide them with praise. Being specific can be beneficial to encourage future positive behavior. An example might be, "I really appreciated how you helped your sister put on her shoes. Thank you!" or "I noticed that you did not yell even though you were really mad. I'm proud of you!"

sing

While on a walk (indoors or outdoors), sing "The Ants go Marching" with your child. This can be a fun way to enjoy singing while also working on math skills.

play

When deciding on what to play, give your child choices to nurture independence and self-worth. It can also allow children to have a positive sense of control.



July

talk

Place different textured items in a paper bag and ask your child to reach in the bag without looking. As they are feeling each item, ask them to describe what they are feeling. You can introduce new words or use familiar words to describe the items. Some words that might be used are "soft," "bumpy," "smooth," "hard," "squishy," etc. Allow them to guess what each item is.

sing

Put on a freeze dance song for your child and allow them to practice starting and stopping their movements. This activity is great for development of control.

play

Have you introduced your child to any games? Starting with a simple card game like "Go Fish" or a board game like "Candyland" is a good way to start.

read / storytell

Tell your child a story about a time you felt frustrated. Tell them what strategies you used to calm down such as deep breathing, walking away, or talking to someone.



August

talk

Take out a piece of paper and something to write with (crayons, pencil, etc.) and ask your child to draw what you describe. For example, if you want them to draw a person, you might start by saying, "first, draw a circle. Then draw two eyes in the the circle. Next, draw a nose and a mouth." Be as descriptive as you can and see if you can introduce new words.

sing

Ask your child to sing their favorite song for you. When they are singing, clap along to encourage them.

play

It is warming up, and it's the perfect time to visit the park. Consider visiting a park in the neighborhood. Swimming or running around at North Commons or Bethune Park are fun choices!

read / storytell

When reading with your child, practice naming the parts of a book. Some words to include might be "front of book/cover," "back of book," "spine," "author," or "illustrator."



September

talk

Collect recycled materials at home such as paper towel tubes, leftover paper, boxes, paper bags, food boxes, etc. Spend time talking about what you might create.

sing

Before bedtime, allow your child to pick 2–3 songs to sing before they go to sleep as a part of the nighttime routine.

play

Encourage your child to draw a picture of themselves. See how many body parts they include and help them label what they have identified.

read / storytell

Find a story about apples and read it with your child. Take it one step further and do an apple tasting! See how your child describes the different types of apples.



October

talk

Allow your child to tell you a story. While they are talking, focus on looking in their direction and giving them signals that you are paying attention. One way might be repeating what they say or asking questions about their story. Do you notice anything about how they respond to this type of feedback?

sing

Explore new genres of music with your child. This could include Jazz, classical, R&B or others. Ask your child what their favorite is.

play

Open up a pumpkin and let your child explore inside! Talk about the different textures, smells, and sounds they may be experiencing. To take it one step further, bake the seeds or pumpkin and allow them to taste.

read / storytell

Practice letters using sensory materials. This could be play dough, shaving cream, sand, etc. Form the letters or use your finger to trace the letter in the sand.



November

sing

Can you find things around the home to make instruments with your child? This could be materials like cardboard tubes, boxes, rice, dried bean, beads, etc. This could also be pots, pans, and wooden spoons. Set a timer and allow your child to play the instrument that they have created. Remind them when the timer goes off; it is time to be done playing their instrument.

play

Try baking with your child. It could be making bread, cupcakes, muffins, etc.! This can be a good time for building relationships, as well as learning new skills.

read / storytell

Find a story to share with your child about writing letters to mail to someone. This could be a book from the library or a story you tell your child about a time you wrote a letter. Spend time thinking of someone to write a letter to and allow your child to practice this skill.



December

talk

Ask your child to tell you all the things they love about themselves. During this time, you can add what you love about them. Make a list and hang it somewhere they can see.

play

Spend time outdoors in the snow with your child. If you aren't able to go outside, bring the snow in and enjoy the conversations about the different senses you experience with snow.

read / storytell

Seek out books with positive stories that represent your family's identity through characters that look like your child. Do you notice them responding to the book in a different way? Seeing themselves in stories can build self-worth.

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Starting Kindergarten Skills Checklist

There are many things that you can do to establish a great kindergarten foundation and long-term school success:

- ☐ I give my scholar a chance to color, draw, or write daily.
- ☐ I point out letters daily and talk about the sounds they make.
- ☐ I have back-and-forth conversations with my scholar daily.
- ☐ I ensure my scholar is read to several times a week.

- ☐ I point out the names of shapes with my scholar.
- ☐ I talk about patterns using everyday objects with my scholar.
- ☐ I avoid talking about my math abilities in a negative way in front of my scholar.
- ☐ I count and point to things with my scholar.

- ☐ I show interest in my scholar's ideas and the things he/she makes.
- ☐ I praise my scholar when he/she keeps trying after making mistakes.
- ☐ I create fun, stress-free ways for my scholar to hear new information.

- ☐ I help my scholar use words to describe how he/she is feeling.
- ☐ I create opportunities for my scholar to play with others.
- ☐ I coach my scholar when needed.
- ☐ I notice when my scholar pays attention and praise him/her for doing so.

- ☐ I give my scholar time to practice tying, buttoning, or zipping, and offer support as needed.
- ☐ I make sure my scholar is sleeping at least 10 hours on school nights.
- ☐ I ensure my scholar arrives at school on time every day.
- ☐ I have reached out to others in my circle to ask for help with things that are preventing my scholar from arriving at school on time every day.

