

Essential Skills for Children Entering Kindergarten

Early Childhood Center, IIDC, Indiana University

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Essential Skills for Successful School Readiness
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The work included in this document represents emerging findings from research we have conducted with kindergarten teachers in Indiana. It represents our effort to identify common essential skills for children to have to successfully enter kindergarten. The skills that are presented are a subset of the skills we originally investigated. The skills that are included have been found to be at least “important” by a majority of kindergarten teachers we surveyed. Items that are **bold** were found to be essential by the large majority of teachers surveyed, and were important across multiple kindergarten routines. These skills were identified as critical for children to have when entering kindergarten. Without one or more of these skills, the child would need additional levels of support and instruction.

Together, these items provide a menu that kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and community early care and education providers can use to assess what is critical for children to know within their community. The skills are organized into a checklist format that allows for individuals or teams to check off which skills are Not Important, Important, and Critical for including in school readiness assessment systems and early education curricula.

Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University-Bloomington.

The information presented herein does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the funders or the Trustees of Indiana University, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Approaches to Learning		Not Important	Important	Critical
The child's positive attitude, enthusiasm, and motivation to apply their knowledge and skills to further their understanding of the world.				
ATTENTION	1. Watches and listens to stories to completion (≥10 minutes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2. Stays on task during adult-directed activities (≥10 minutes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
INITIATIVE/CURIOSITY	3. Exhibits a willingness to approach new challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	4. Seeks out & interacts with a variety of activities, books, materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	5. Shows a curiosity and independent interest in activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PERSISTENCE	6. Concentrates on tasks despite interruptions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	7. Continues to work beyond what is easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	8. Learns new skills through perseverance and repetitive practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	9. Sees a simple task to completion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SELF-DIRECT	10. Makes choices after considering alternatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Cognition and General Knowledge		Not Important	Important	Critical
Children's thinking skills, including the development of symbolic and problem-solving skills.				
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE	11. Gives information about where he/she lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	12. Gives name, age, and gender upon request	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	13. Identifies categories of common objects (e.g., animals, cars, food)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	14. Identifies circles and squares	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	15. Names members of his/her family and their relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	16. Recognizes 5 colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MATHEMATICAL SKILLS	17. Counts a number of items, such as objects, up to five	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	18. Identifies objects that do and do not belong in a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	19. Recalls information about the immediate past	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCIENCE SKILLS	20. Applies previously learned information to new situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	21. Seeks out others for help with unsolved problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Language Development The child's ability to effectively communicate with others, and their development of early literacy skills.		Not Important	Important	Critical
COMMUNICATION	22. Asks and answers simple questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	23. Asks for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	24. Communicates needs and wants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	25. Understands and follows directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	26. Listens to gather information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	27. Shares information and ideas using multiple words	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	28. Uses speech that is understandable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EARLY READING	29. Holds book right side up, looking at and turning pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	30. Points to and names at least six letters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	31. Recognizes own name in isolated print	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EARLY WRITING	32. Copies or writes own name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	33. Dictates something for an adult to write down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	34. Draws pictures or symbols to share an idea with someone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	35. Uses the correct grasp of writing tool	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TELLS STORIES	36. Asks and answers simple questions about a story being read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	37. Talks about a story being read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	38. Tells and retells familiar stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	39. Tells one thing that happens in a familiar story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	40. Tells simple story from pictures and books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Physical Well-being & Motor Development The child's health status, gross and fine motor skills, and development of early healthy habits.		Not Important	Important	Critical
ENERGY/STAMINA	41. Actively explores the entire environment, indoors and outdoors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	42. Completes daily routines independently and with sufficient energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	43. Is rested sufficiently to engage in normal routines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	44. Participates actively in games, play, and other forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEALTH & SAFETY	45. Brushes teeth daily and practices good oral hygiene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	46. Completes basic responsibilities related to daily needs (washes, toileting)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	47. Disposes of bodily wastes in sanitary ways	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	48. Follows basic health and safety rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	49. Identifies potentially harmful substances and takes appropriate action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	50. Identifies source of pain or discomfort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	51. Knows and follows emergency drill procedures of the setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	52. Removes and puts on clothing with limited assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MOBILITY, ACCESS, MANIPULATION	53. Appropriately manipulates toys, learning materials (e.g., scissors, writing tools), and objects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	54. Maintains control and balance in stationary positions (e.g., sitting, standing) to access table or floor activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	55. Moves independently and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	56. Uses various eating utensils to feed self independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social and Emotional Development Skills		Not Important	Important	Critical
The child's ability to regulate and express emotions, form relationships, and function within family and community expectations				
FOLLOW RULES & ROUTINES	57. Accepts guidance and directions from familiar adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	58. Changes activities and/or focus in response to teacher/adult request	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	59. Follows daily routines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	60. Follows different rules and routines in different place	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	61. Follows directions and responds to limits set by teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	62. Follows simple classroom rules (e.g. knows how to sit in circle, wait for a turn, works without interrupting others)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	63. Tells the consequences of not following rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RELATIONSHIPS	64. Engages in reciprocal conversations with familiar adults & peers			
	65. Establishes relationships with familiar adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	66. Expresses empathy and caring for others (e.g., shows concern for others)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	67. Follows steps in simple social interaction routines (e.g. takes turns speaking, greets people)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	68. Plays cooperatively with others during activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SELF REGULATION	69. Controls feelings of frustration, distress, and anxiety when challenged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	70. Resolves conflicts in socially acceptable ways (e.g. uses language or seeks adult)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	71. Uses words to express feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP	72. Seeks out and maintains an ongoing friendship with at least one other child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	73. Shares materials with peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	74. Takes turns in group activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>