



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of  
Higher Education

## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF FUTURE SUCCESS FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3

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### Overview

All infants, toddlers, and children in Massachusetts – with the support of parents, family members, educators, and community members – will develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary for college, career, and lifelong success.

The Commonwealth has identified essential competencies across the cognitive, social and emotional, linguistic, and physical domains that should be demonstrated by our youngest citizens from birth through grade 3 in order to ensure that they are on the pathway to future success.

In order to build a strong foundation for learning and growth, all children must have access to and participate in enriching and stimulating experiences starting at birth; as such, the Commonwealth has also identified foundational experiences that will lead to the development of these competencies.

In 2013, our Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and our Board of Higher Education adopted the [Massachusetts Definition of College and Career Readiness](#)\*, which identified for the first time in the Commonwealth's history the academic knowledge, workforce readiness skills, and essential qualities that students need to demonstrate to successfully complete entry-level, credit-bearing college courses, participate in certificate or workplace training programs, and enter economically viable career pathways.

***The essential competencies that are presented in this document are the precursors for the knowledge, skills, and qualities that were identified in the 2013 Definition of College and Career Readiness.***

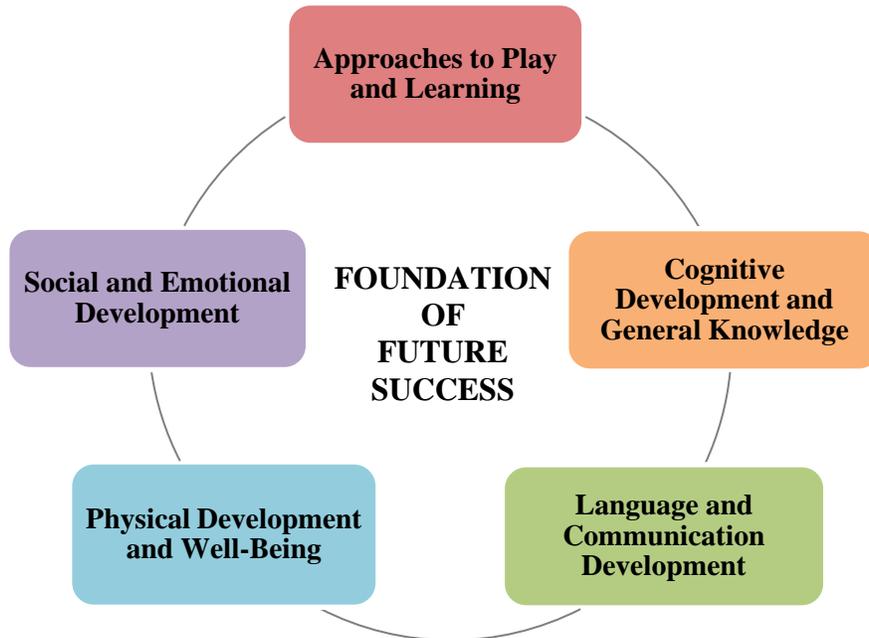
Given the critical importance of the early years of a child's life, the Commonwealth will develop and implement new and innovative birth through grade 3 strategies that reflect a growing body of research about early childhood development and also increase alignment between the early education and K-12 sectors.

In addition, the Commonwealth's education, social services, and other agencies will work in partnership with educators, parents and family members, community members, local and state leaders, and other key stakeholders to create healthy, dynamic, and positive environments within which our youngest citizens can thrive.

\* <http://www.mass.edu/library/documents/2013College&CareerReadinessDefinition.pdf>

## Learning and Growth Across Multiple Domains

Building a strong foundation for learning and growth requires equal emphasis on all of the domains of early childhood development, acknowledgment of how these domains are interrelated, and recognition of individual abilities, strengths, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and needs. Children from birth through grade 3 who are on the path to college, career, and lifelong success will build competencies in five areas.



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## Foundational Experiences and Essential Competencies

All children from birth through grade 3 are active participants in their own learning. Parents, family members, educators, and community members will cultivate and nurture the development of these competencies and will promote children’s construction of knowledge in a developmentally appropriate manner and sequence. Continuous access to emotionally and physically safe; culturally, linguistically, and developmentally inclusive; and high-quality learning and play experiences in homes, educational settings, and communities, will lead to the development of these competencies.

- **Approaches Toward Play and Learning**

All children from birth through grade 3 will develop curiosity and a sense of wonder about the world around them and excitement about exploration and learning; increase confidence about their ability to gain knowledge and skills; and build the ability to be proactive, independent, and collaborative learners.

*Essential experiences provide opportunities for discovery, problem solving, and the acquisition of knowledge through interesting and interactive activities; promote creativity, cooperativeness, and persistence; and support individualized growth, learning, and multiple pathways to success.*

- **Cognitive Development and General Knowledge**

All children from birth through grade 3 will interact with adults and peers, objects, and materials in their environment and learn how to think and reason. They will develop curiosity and knowledge about the world around them, learn to recognize that they are active contributors to their environment, and continually enhance their ability to acquire and utilize multisensory knowledge and skills.

*Essential experiences promote the active exploration of both physical and social environments; provide opportunities to explore linguistic, artistic, mathematical, and scientific concepts, including the quantification, classification, and categorization of objects; and promote inquiry and the exploration of numbers, letters, words, sounds, and stories.*

- **Language and Communication Development**

All children from birth through grade 3 will learn how to use sounds, gestures, and language to effectively and creatively express emotions, thoughts, and needs; interact and exchange information with adults, peers, and other individuals; develop knowledge and ideas; and build the skills necessary for reading and writing proficiency (in multiple languages as applicable).

*Essential experiences promote the creation of language- and literacy-rich environments – those that celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity – in the home and community, and these experiences also provide continuous opportunities for expanding vocabulary; engaging in active conversation and storytelling; developing listening skills; and building the skills needed to read, write, and respond to / ask questions in multiple media.*

- **Physical Development and Well-Being**

All children from birth through grade 3 will have access to primary preventive health care and mental health care, and opportunities in their home and learning environments that will enable them to achieve physical developmental milestones as well as gain gross, fine, sensorimotor, and oral motor skills.

*Essential experiences promote physical safety; include indoor and outdoor movement and fitness activities; and provide opportunities to develop healthy eating, nutrition, and exercise habits.*

- **Social and Emotional Development**

All children from birth through grade 3 will develop and maintain trusting, healthy, and positive interactions and relationships with both adults and peers; develop a positive sense of self and self-efficacy; express a healthy range of emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; understand the role of social interactions; and develop the skills needed to regulate attention, impulses, and behavior.

*Essential experiences provide emotional stability, security, and mental well-being; promote the development of self-regulation and executive functioning skills; increase social awareness; create positive and enriching opportunities for social exploration, growth, the development of*

*caring relationships, and interactive learning with both peers and adults; and promote the development of collaborative and positive relationships between early educators and families.*

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All children who demonstrate the identified competencies from birth to grade 3 will have the foundational knowledge, skills, and qualities necessary for continuous academic growth and success.

In partnership with educators, parents and family members, community members, local and state leaders, and other key stakeholders, the Commonwealth will develop supplementary materials – including guidance documents, instructional materials, and tools – that will enhance learning and growth opportunities for children in educational settings, homes, and communities.

By ensuring that all of our youngest citizens are on the pathway to college, career, and lifelong success, we will ensure the intellectual, civic, and economic prosperity of the Commonwealth.