

What You Can Do to Help Your Children Learn at Home

Sometimes after a long day at work or home, it may be hard to take time to play with your child or read books together. This may be hard, but this kind of attention has a big impact on your child and could help make your job as a parent more fun, and maybe easier.

You Are Your Child's First and Most Important Teacher

The way you talk with your child makes a big difference in how your child thinks and feels. It may even make a difference in the kind of person your child will become.

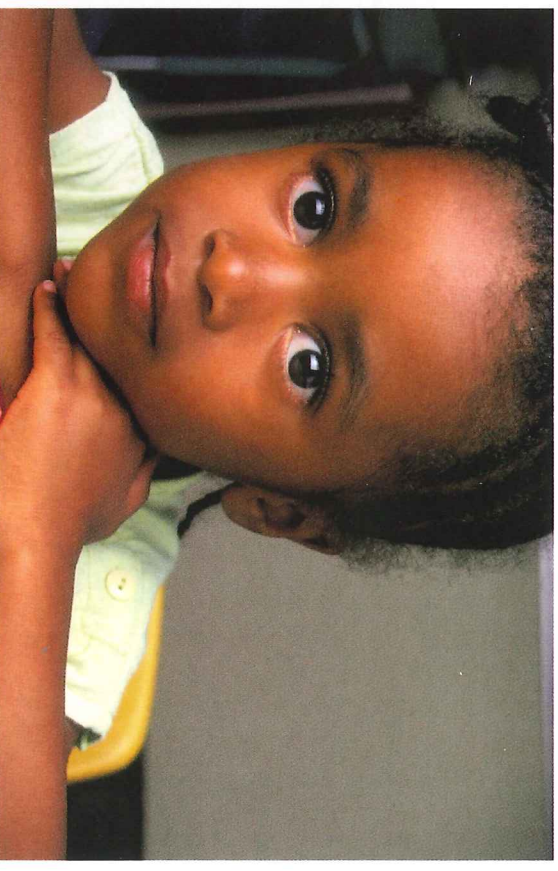
Teachers and parents can work together, planning similar activities for children at school and at home.

Thank you for enrolling your child in our education and care programs, and trusting us to help and guide them in being successful in school and life.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S CURRICULUM

A Guide for Parents



What Happens in Dane County Parent Council's Preschool Educational Programs

This booklet has information about our curriculum, *Creative Curriculum*, our *GOLD Assessment system*, and our *School Readiness Goals*.

Dane County Parent Council
Madison, Wisconsin 53711

2096 Red Arrow Trail
(608) 275-6740

How Your Preschool Child Learns

Your child is at a special age when children are learning all the time. Children learn best by being active and asking lots of questions. A preschool child is very curious about the world.

The more active children are in their play, the more they learn and remember. Children's play is their work.

We believe that the more children are engaged in their play that understanding language, learning about the world, solving problems and getting along with others will help them achieve success in school and life.

Through play, children develop their ability to express feelings, ideas and needs. They learn to listen, take turns and consider the feelings of others.

Imagination and creativity are also skills that are developed in pre-school play.

Our staff support each child's development through consistent, gentle guidance and nurturing relationships. Building positive relationships is key to the success in the classroom.

No other child is exactly like your child. No one knows your child better than you do. You can help your child's teachers by sharing what is happening at home.

Children are learning every minute of the day. They learn from the way we organize the classroom, from the daily schedule, from activities, and from their outdoor play.

Reading Every Day with Your Children Will Help Them Become Good Readers

Every parent wants their child to be good in reading, writing, math and science, and to be successful in school and life. Your child's teachers share these same goals.

The Classroom

Our classrooms are set up for learning. Children have many opportunities to make choices, use their own ideas, experiment, and take responsibility for their work. Our classroom environments support our play-based learning.

Here's what you'll see at Head Start:

- Materials are on low shelves and neatly arranged.
- Picture and word labels are on containers and shelves.
- There are clearly separated interest areas—blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, science, a quiet library, sand and water activities, a writing area, music and movement, computers, and an outdoor area.
- Many different kinds of learning materials are in each of these areas, so that no matter where children choose to play, they are always learning.

When Children do this . . .	They are learning. . .
Gather paper, scissors, and glue for a project	To plan and carry out a task and learning study habits
Discover how many cups of sand fill a pail	To count and measure volume (math)
Scribble on paper using letters and talk about what the scribble says	To use writing as a way to tell a story or share an idea (literacy)
Play with musical instruments, dance and have movement activities	To coordinate their body in space and new terms (fast, slow, freeze, soft, loud).
Play with puzzles	Hand-eye coordination, persistence with a task, and problem solving
Participate in large and small group activities	To listen and understand language, new vocabulary, cooperation, self-control and to be part of a community.

How We Know Children Are Learning

We want to be sure your child is making progress in our program. We don't leave learning to chance. We keep track of what each child knows and can do. This information helps us to plan with you for further teaching and learning.

The teaching team documents children's learning through anecdotal notes and work samples. This information is entered into the GOLD Assessment System to determine what level each child is at in all areas of development.

By carefully observing each day, we find out what children know about letters and words. Then we use this information to plan activities that challenge and excite your child. We don't need tests to find out what preschool children know. Tests are not reliable for this age group. Instead, we observe what children do and take notes.

We collect samples of each child's work—drawings, writing, and photos of their work—and keep them to share with you.

Three to four times during the year we summarize this information and share it with you during parent conferences. At these meetings, we ask you what your child is doing at home. We plan together to support your child's learning and set goals for your child.

Please visit or volunteer in your child's
classroom whenever you can . . .

and see what we do!

The Curriculum

Dane County Parent Council, Inc. has been using the Creative Curriculum since 2006. Creative Curriculum is a research-based framework to help teachers build the creativity, confidence and lifelong critical thinking skills of all of the children in the classroom.

Children learn using all of their senses to explore the environment and materials in the classroom and outdoors, where planned and unplanned activities happen. We stress open-ended questions to extend children's language and we build a community of life-long learners.



GOLD Assessment Information

The GOLD Assessment helps bring data to life. The data can tell a story of each child's progress.

The reports are used on an ongoing basis to guide and inform the instruction for the children. This intentional teacher takes what the children are interested in and supports and extends their learning and development.

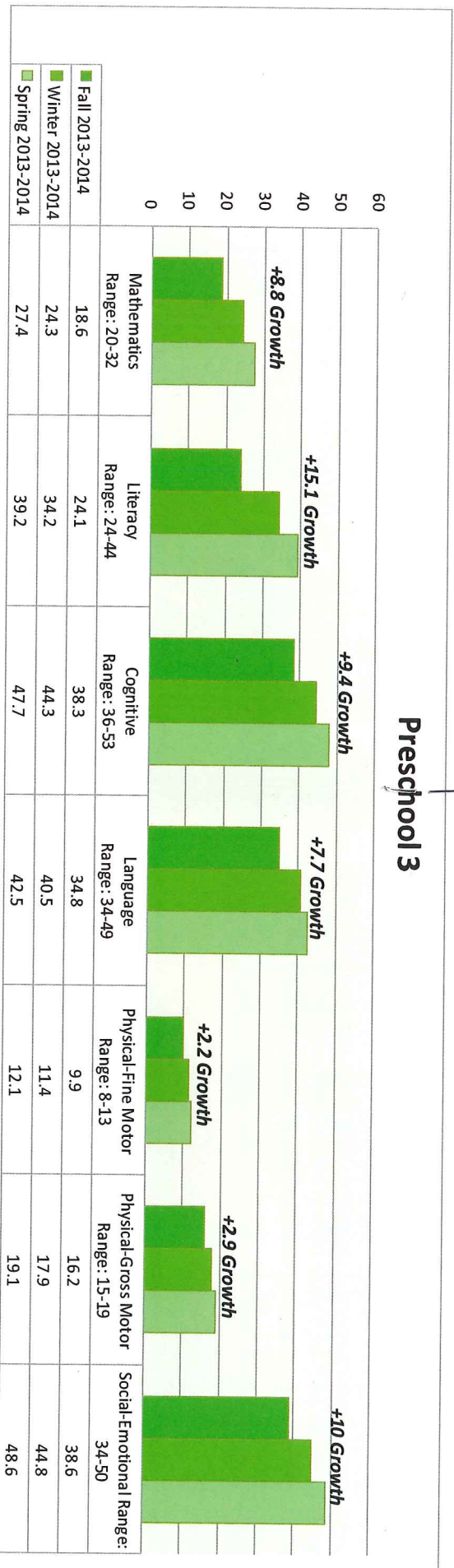
Analyzing the data and adjusting our training and teaching practices with agency support helps to improve child outcomes.

We cannot achieve this without your support to continue working with your child at home. Our partnership supports your child's development and learning.

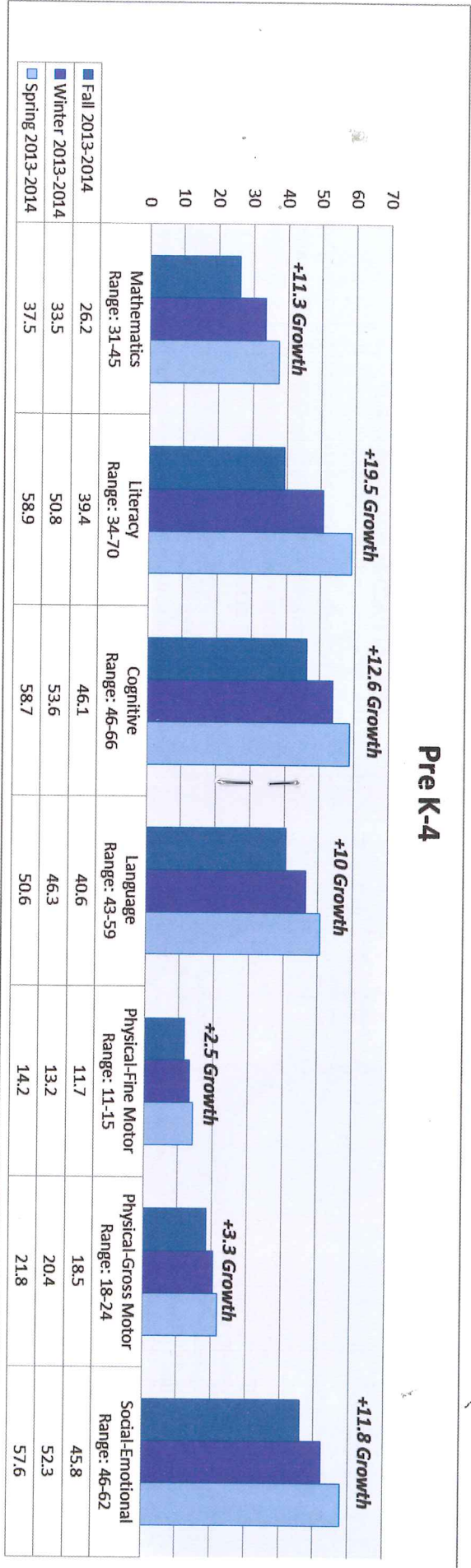
Creative Curriculum GOLD Assessment

The children are assessed three times per year using the Creative Curriculum GOLD Assessment. The following graph shows the total point growth of our children from the 2013-2014 program year. We are pleased with the continued growth of our preschoolers in all area domains of development. We appreciate and encourage all families to be engaged in their child's education both at school and at home. In these early years it is important for children to be encouraged, supported, and to be excited about learning.

Preschool 3



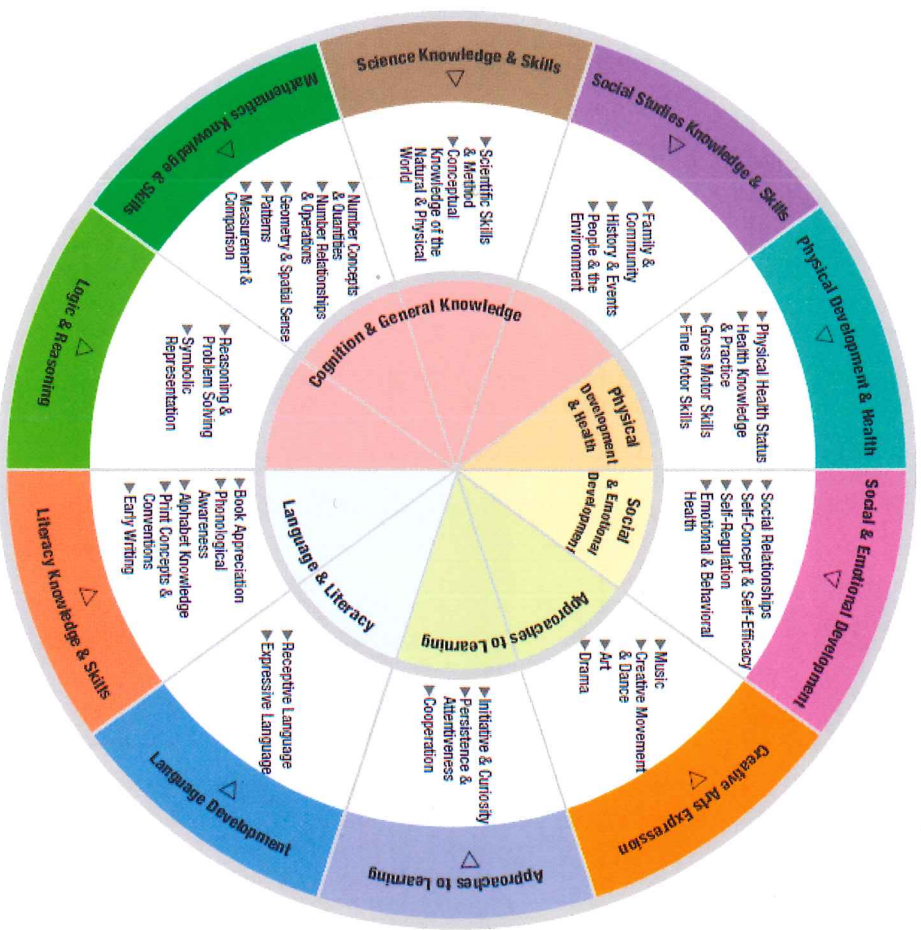
Pre K-4



The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework

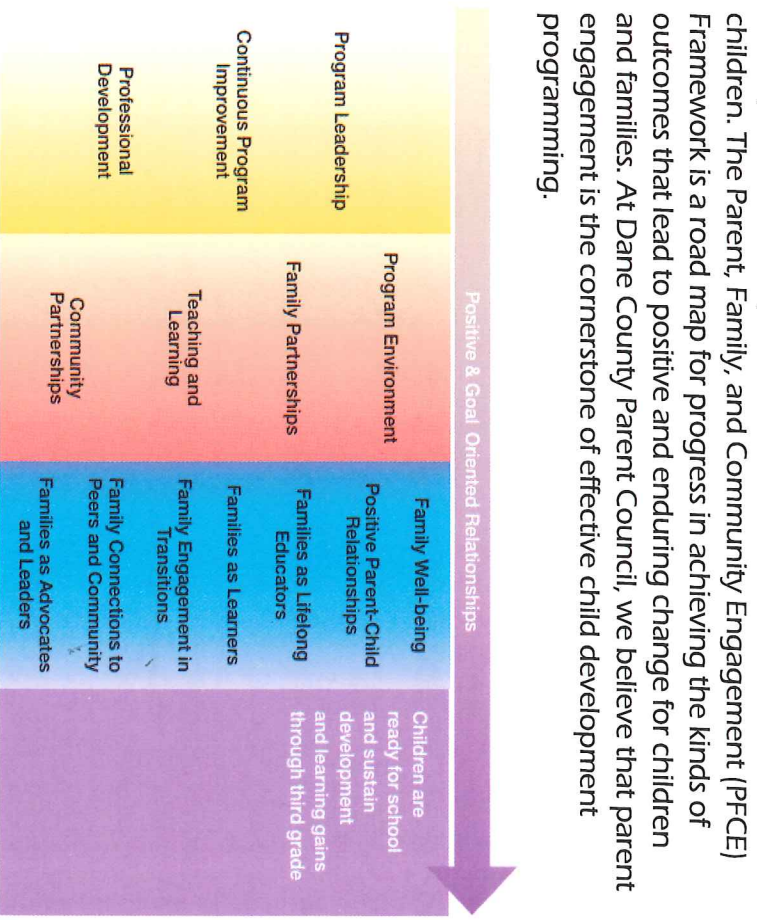
Promoting Positive Outcomes in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children 3-5 Years Old

The *Framework* represents the foundation of the Head Start Approach to School Readiness. It aligns with and builds from the five essential domains of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals development. The *Framework* can be used to guide curriculum, implementation, and assessment to plan teaching and learning experiences that align to school readiness goals and track children's progress across developmental domains. The domains and domain elements apply to all 3 to 5 year olds in Head Start and other early childhood programs, including dual language learners and children with disabilities.



Introducing the Parent, Family, Community Engagement Framework

Parent and family engagement in Head Start is about building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a road map for progress in achieving the kinds of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. At Dane County Parent Council, we believe that parent engagement is the cornerstone of effective child development programming.



School Readiness Goals

For parents and families, school readiness means that they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teacher.

School readiness goals are broad statements of the knowledge and skills that we want all children to achieve as they enter kindergarten. These are high expectations for children's progress across all of the domains listed on the Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

Dane County Parent Council has developed the following **School Readiness Goals** for all children:

Social Emotional

- Children will demonstrate the emotional well-being and social competence needed to interact effectively with caregivers and peers. Parents and families will develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

The most important goals of our curriculum are for children to get along with others and love learning. We want your child to become an independent, self-confident, curious learner who works well with others. Children do best in school when they are able to make friends, cooperate and control their feelings.

Physical Development and Health

- Children will move with purpose and coordination during daily activities.
- Children will demonstrate safe and healthy practices.

Children take part in teacher-led planned movement and gross motor activities for 30 minutes each day. This is in addition to free play outdoors.

Approaches to Learning

- Child will demonstrate interest and engagement in meaningful learning experiences, persistence, initiative, and a desire to learn through meaningful group experiences and activities.
- Children will engage in imaginative play and express themselves creatively through music, movement, and art.

Research shows that if children start kindergarten with a strong set of attitudes and skills that help them "learn to learn," they will be more successful. They need experiences where they can make choices, finish a task and use materials in a creative way. Adults need to provide encouragement and acknowledgement.

Language and Literacy

- Children will demonstrate receptive and expressive language skills which show the ability to comprehend language and use spoken language to communicate.
- Dual Language Learners will demonstrate increased competency in their home language while also developing proficiency in English.
- Children will develop a strong foundation for becoming successful readers by developing alphabetic, phonological, and phonemic awareness.
- Children will demonstrate familiarity with writing tools and use writing to represent thoughts or ideas.

Encourage your child to use words to talk with others; help them to understand the purpose of print; assist them in recognizing letters—especially those in their names; learn simple words and begin writing.

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Children will explore their environment through observation, comparison, making predictions, and developing hypotheses to gain a better understanding of information and activities.
- Children will demonstrate an understanding of numbers, counting, spatial relationships, and patterns.
- Children will develop and display a sense of self confidence in their abilities, and a strong identity that is rooted in their family and culture.

Math is more than just knowing numbers and counting. It's about organizing information, comparing, and recognizing shapes.

In our preschool, children can be scientists every day as they play. We have living things and objects for them to take care of, watch and explore.

Children are naturally curious about where people live, what jobs they do, and how they take care of the environment. This is known as social studies.

