

## Language First, Then Literacy

When we think of school and learning, we often think of reading, writing and arithmetic. Consequently, it makes sense that when thinking about preparing children for school, we throw ourselves into encouraging children to identify letters, read words, and write neatly. However, there are many other skills that are imperative to the functioning of children in the classroom and school environment, and many of these are required by the child from the moment they begin school. It's crucial that we ensure that these skills are developed, before focusing on literacy.

Language (understanding and talking), clear speech, and social communication are vital skills to have established prior to the commencement of school. For example, a teacher will expect a child to understand and follow multiple-step instructions, to have the awareness to ask for help if they are confused, and to have the language skills and clear speech to communicate this. Preschool is the time to consolidate these skills, and to identify when there are areas of difficulty so that each child can be best prepared for the school environment in its entirety.

**As a brief guide, below are language, speech, and social communication milestones expected at the following ages:**

	Understanding	Speaking	Speech Clarity	Social communication
<b>3 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow more complex two part instructions (e.g., 'Give me the teddy and throw the ball') without cues</li> <li>Understand simple wh-questions, such as 'what', 'where' and 'who'</li> <li>Understand basic concepts such as 'same' and 'different', 'big' and 'small', 'wet' and 'dry'</li> <li>Sort items into groups when asked (e.g., toys vs food)</li> <li>Recognise basic colours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Say four to five words in a sentence</li> <li>Use a variety of words for names, actions, locations and descriptions</li> <li>Ask questions using 'what', 'where' and 'who'</li> <li>Talk about something in the past, but may use '-ed' a lot (e.g., 'he goed there')</li> <li>Have a conversation but may not take turns or stay on topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% of the child's speech is intelligible (clear).</li> <li>Correctly say the sounds: p, b, m, h, n, w.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take turns and play cooperatively</li> <li>Participate in small group activities</li> <li>Separate easily from primary caregiver</li> <li>Engage in make-believe play</li> <li>Practice conversation skills by talking to self</li> <li>Help put things away</li> <li>Hold fingers up to tell age.</li> <li>Look for missing toys.</li> </ul>
<b>4 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow three step instructions without cues</li> <li>Answer most questions about daily tasks</li> <li>Understand most wh-questions, including those about a story they have recently heard</li> <li>Understand some numbers</li> <li>Show an awareness that some words start or finish with the same sounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use words, such as 'and', 'but' and 'because', to make longer (complex) sentences</li> <li>Describe recent events, such as morning routines</li> <li>Ask lots of questions</li> <li>Use personal pronouns (e.g., he/ she, me/you)</li> <li>Use negations (e.g., don't/can't)</li> <li>Count to five and name a few colours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of the child's speech is intelligible (clear).</li> <li>Correctly say the sounds: p, b, m, h, n, w, t, d, k, g, ng, f, y, s, z, l, sh, ch, j.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use words to invite others to play</li> <li>Use direct requests with justification (e.g. 'Stop that. You're hurting me.')</li> <li>Will act out whole scenes in dramatic play</li> <li>Use language to resolve disputes</li> <li>Express ideas/feelings.</li> </ul>

# Health & Wellbeing



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<p><b>5 years</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow three step instructions (e.g., put on your shoes, get your backpack and line up outside) without cues</li> <li>• Understand time related words (e.g., 'before', 'after', 'now' and 'later')</li> <li>• Understand instructions without stopping to listen</li> <li>• Understand inferential information in stories</li> <li>• Begin to think about meaning of words when learning</li> <li>• Can syllabify words into their smaller parts and identify pairs of rhyming words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use well-formed sentences to be understood by most people</li> <li>• Take turns in increasingly longer conversations</li> <li>• Has good control of elements of conversation</li> <li>• Tell simple, short stories with beginning, middle and end</li> <li>• Use past and future verbs correctly (e.g., 'went', 'will go')</li> <li>• Speak of imaginary conditions (e.g., 'What if...')</li> <li>• Ask meaning of words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% - 100% of the child's speech is intelligible (clear).</li> <li>• Correctly say the sounds: p, b, m, h, n, w, t, d, k, g, ng, f, y, s, z, l, sh, ch, j, r</li> <li>• May still have difficulty saying: v, th.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play competitive exercise games</li> <li>• Use words to invite others to play</li> <li>• Use threats and promises</li> <li>• Ask questions for information</li> <li>• Choose own friends</li> <li>• Like to complete projects</li> <li>• Take more care in communicating with unfamiliar people</li> <li>• Engage in cooperative play (e.g., make group decisions, assign roles, play fairly).</li> </ul>
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If you have any concerns that your child is not meeting an above-mentioned milestone, please speak to your director. They may recommend completing a Health Request form to request a brief screening by the Speech Pathologist.

The OAC Health Team