



# TROY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Troy Preschool Program  
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Dear Families,

I am very pleased to introduce you to the *Family Guide to Teaching Strategies GOLD Online Assessment*. Teaching Strategies GOLD™ is an integral component of the Troy Preschool Program's approach to planning for, tracking and communicating your child's developmental journey with us. This guide will help you better understand how we use assessment to inform planning for children.

You are a vital partner in documenting and tracking your child's development and learning. No one knows your child better than you do. There are many ways we might exchange information. This year, you have been invited to have access to the *MyTeachingStrategies Family* portal and mobile app, which allows for two-way communication between you and your child's teacher. You will be able to add your own observations and documentation of what your child knows and can do. We will set up family conferences so we can meet with you and review your child's accomplishments and progress. We will provide you with a report that highlights what your child is able to do in different areas of development and learning three times throughout the school year.

Our partnership with you in documenting your child's developmental journey is very important to us. We hope you will find this *Family Guide* to be helpful in further understanding our approach to child assessment and GOLD™, the state of the art online tool that we use to do that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Maxey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pam Maxey  
Director of Early Childhood Education  
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# Introduction

Families often wonder:

- What are the most important skills my child needs to have to be ready for school?
- How do the teachers find out what my child knows and can do?
- How will the teachers ensure that my child is developing and learning as expected?
- How can I find out about my child's progress?
- What can I do at home to help my child gain the skills and knowledge to be ready to succeed in school and in life?

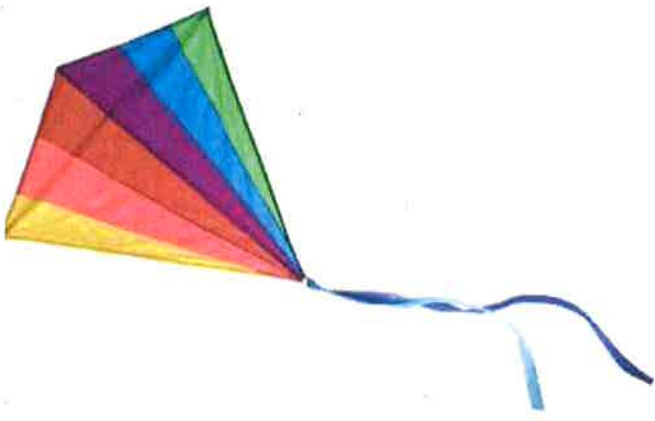
In our program, we use a system of ongoing assessment that answers your questions. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online helps us plan for each child and ensure that every child is making progress. We know how important these early years are to children's success in school and in life. Like you, we want to do everything we can to give your child a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

There are two parts to this guide. Part 1, "Understanding Assessment," explains how assessment enables us to make decisions about *what* to teach, *when* to teach it, and *how* to plan the right experiences for every child. Part 2, "Using *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® Online," gives detailed and illustrated instructions to help you find and use the tools and resources available for all families. You will learn how to upload your own observations of your child and view the observations and reports that highlight your child's development and learning.



# Understanding Assessment





Assessment is the ongoing process we use to find out what every child knows and can do. It helps us discover each child's strengths, skills, interests, and needs so we know how to help every child experience success. Our assessment system also enables us to exchange information with families so, together, we can ensure that your child is progressing.

The assessment system we use does *not* involve testing children. We learn about children by carefully observing what they do and say as they participate in everyday activities in the classroom. We know that each child is an individual, with different interests, skills, strengths, and needs. The more we learn about each child, the better we can plan experiences that are just right: sufficiently challenging and engaging.

### **What Is Being Assessed and Why?**

When assessing children, we observe and nurture the skills and knowledge we want them to acquire in our program. Assessment, therefore, is closely linked to our curriculum. To teach effectively, we have to know *what* to teach, *when* to teach particular skills, and *how* to teach in ways that help each individual child develop and learn.



## Knowing What to Teach

What we teach is guided by 38 objectives that address all aspects of children's development and learning. The experiences and learning activities we plan each day are designed to help children acquire these abilities.

You will no doubt find that the objectives for development and learning are ones that are also important to you. You have watched your child growing and learning since birth.

Every day you have seen your child developing new abilities, such as

- learning how to relate positively to others and how to control emotions;
- developing physical skills, gaining increasing control of both large and small muscles;
- acquiring thinking skills, solving problems, and figuring out how things work; or
- understanding the meaning of words and using words to communicate.

From a very early age, your child has been gaining knowledge and skills in five important content areas:

**Literacy:** enjoying stories and books, understanding how print works, learning the alphabet and the sounds of words and letters

**Math:** comparing sizes and shapes, recognizing patterns, counting and using numbers

**Science and Technology:** observing and experimenting to learn about objects and living things and using tools and technology to do tasks

**Social Studies:** learning about people—how they live, how they change, and where they live

**The Arts:** exploring music, dance, and dramatic play and expressing ideas with art materials



The 38 objectives for development and learning are based on research, include the skills and knowledge that predict children's school success, and are aligned to state early learning standards. This reassures us—and you—that we are focusing on the most important skills and knowledge that children need to acquire in the first 5 years of life.

The objectives are organized into 10 areas of development and learning, including 2 for English- and dual-language learners. Many of the objectives are broken down into 2 or more smaller objectives called “dimensions.” These dimensions clarify all the skills that are relevant to each objective. On the next page, you will find a complete list of all the objectives for development and learning for children from birth through kindergarten.

# Objectives for Development & Learning

## Social-Emotional

- 1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors**
  - a. Manages feelings
  - b. Follows limits and expectations
  - c. Takes care of own needs appropriately
- 2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships**
  - a. Forms relationships with adults
  - b. Responds to emotional cues
  - c. Interacts with peers
  - d. Makes friends
- 3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations**
  - a. Balances needs and rights of self and others
  - b. Solves social problems

## Physical

- 4. Demonstrates traveling skills**
- 5. Demonstrates balancing skills**
- 6. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills**
- 7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination**
  - a. Uses fingers and hands
  - b. Uses writing and drawing tools

## Language

- 8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language**
  - a. Comprehends language
  - b. Follows directions
- 9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs**
  - a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
  - b. Speaks clearly
  - c. Uses conventional grammar
  - d. Tells about another time or place
- 10. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills**
  - a. Engages in conversations
  - b. Uses social rules of language

## Cognitive

- 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning**
  - a. Attends and engages
  - b. Persists
  - c. Solves problems
  - d. Shows curiosity and motivation
  - e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
- 12. Remembers and connects experiences**
  - a. Recognizes and recalls
  - b. Makes connections
- 13. Uses classification skills**
- 14. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present**
  - a. Thinks symbolically
  - b. Engages in sociodramatic play

## Literacy

- 15. Demonstrates phonological awareness**
  - a. Notices and discriminates rhyme
  - b. Notices and discriminates alliteration
  - c. Notices and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound
- 16. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet**
  - a. Identifies and names letters
  - b. Uses letter-sound knowledge
- 17. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses**
  - a. Uses and appreciates books
  - b. Uses print concepts
- 18. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts**
  - a. Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations
  - b. Uses emergent reading skills
  - c. Retells stories
- 19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills**
  - a. Writes name
  - b. Writes to convey meaning

## Mathematics

- 20. Uses number concepts and operations**
  - a. Counts
  - b. Quantifies
  - c. Connects numerals with their quantities
- 21. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes**
  - a. Understands spatial relationships
  - b. Understands shapes
- 22. Compares and measures**
- 23. Demonstrates knowledge of patterns**

## Science and Technology

- 24. Uses scientific inquiry skills**
- 25. Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things**
- 26. Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials**
- 27. Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment**
- 28. Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks**

## Social Studies

- 29. Demonstrates knowledge about self**
- 30. Shows basic understanding of people and how they live**
- 31. Explores change related to familiar people or places**
- 32. Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge**

## The Arts

- 33. Explores the visual arts**
- 34. Explores musical concepts and expression**
- 35. Explores dance and movement concepts**
- 36. Explores drama through actions and language**

## English Language Acquisition

- 37. Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English**
- 38. Demonstrates progress in speaking English**

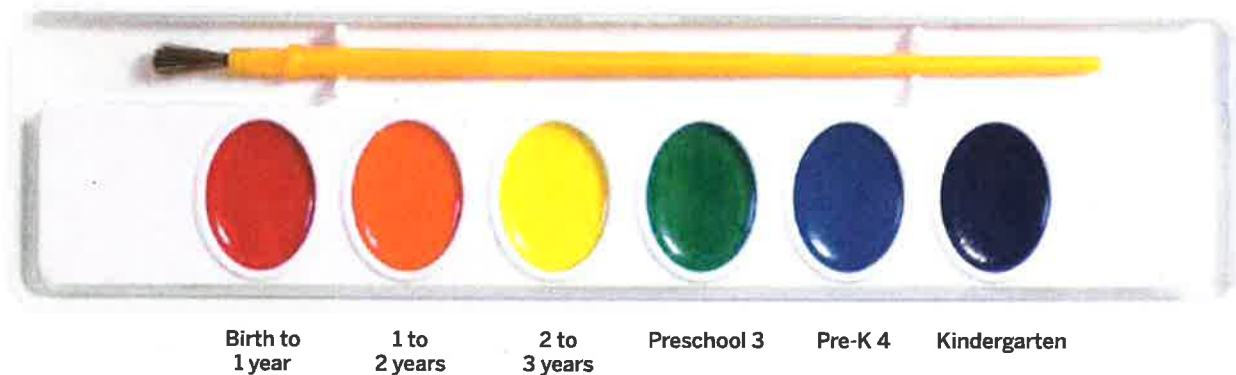


## Deciding When to Teach

When we help children develop these skills and abilities depends on three things:

- what we know about child development,
- what the research shows are realistic (widely held) expectations for children from birth through kindergarten, and
- what we learn about each child's abilities.

*Teaching Strategies GOLD*® uses a color-coded system to show the widely held expectations for children from birth through kindergarten.



These color bands appear for each objective to show what step we can expect children to be at for each age group or class/grade. The example that follows shows the steps (progressions) for one objective under cognitive development: "Uses classification skills." Under each step, there are examples of what a child might do or say. These examples help us know what to look for when deciding what step a child has reached.



**Objective 13** Uses classification skills

Not Yet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		<p><b>Matches similar objects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts one sock with another sock</li> <li>• Gathers all the vehicles from a shelf</li> <li>• Picks out and eats only the animal crackers</li> <li>• Puts only blue pegs in pegboard; leaves red and yellow pegs to the side</li> </ul>		<p><b>Places objects in two or more groups based on differences in a single characteristic, e.g., color, size, or shape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts all the red beads together and all the blue beads together</li> <li>• Pulls out all the trucks from the vehicle bin</li> <li>• Identifies fabric pieces as being scratchy or soft</li> <li>• Puts pictures into piles of babies, older children, and grown-ups</li> </ul>		<p><b>Groups objects by one characteristic; then regroups them using a different characteristic and indicates the reason</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Says, "These buttons are blue, and these are red"; then resorts buttons into big and little</li> <li>• Points to groups of animals and says, "These are zoo animals and these are farm animals"; then sorts the zoo animals into those with stripes and those without stripes</li> </ul>		<p><b>Groups objects by more than one characteristic at the same time; switches sorting rules when asked, and explains the reasons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizes a sticker collection into groups and subgroups and explains why and how; then creates a new grouping when the teacher makes a suggestion</li> <li>• Creates four piles of shapes: big red triangles, small red triangles, big blue triangles, small blue triangles. Switches when asked to form two groups of all the big and small triangles</li> </ul>	

You will see that the color bands are uneven in length and often overlap. This is because children develop at different rates, and this wide span of development and learning is perfectly normal. It is, therefore, not realistic to expect all children of a given age or class to be at the same point in development and learning at the same time. For example, in reviewing the widely held expectations of the progressions for classification, we learn the following:

- Between 1 and 3 years of age (the orange and yellow bands), children typically begin matching similar objects, the first step in this progression. One child may be 1½ and another almost 3 when each one develops this skill. We would not expect to see any evidence of this ability for a child below 1 year of age (the red color band).
- The second step, placing objects in two or more groups based on one difference, is a skill we can expect to see in children between 3 and 4 years old (the green and blue color bands).
- Some 4-year-old children may be at the third step. They are able to group objects one way, then change to another grouping, and tell us what they did in words. We would expect children in kindergarten to be at this step (the purple color band), and many will be at the last step in the progression.

## Planning the Right Experiences

How we teach and support children's development and learning involves determining what each child knows and can do, and using the teaching strategies in our curriculum to plan the right experiences and activities each day. For example, depending on the children's age and what we learn about each child, we would offer the following types of experiences to promote children's skills in classification:

- Provide materials that are safe for infants and toddlers to explore using all their senses and talk about the characteristics: "That block is smooth and hard."  
"You like rolling that big red ball."
- Model sorting and classifying: "Let's pick up all the cars and put them in this basket."
- Play sorting games with familiar objects, such as sorting different colored blocks or organizing a collection of buttons or bottle caps.
- Sort a collection of objects into categories according to two characteristics and have children guess how we decided to group the objects. Then have children sort the objects, so we have to guess the children's categories.

Because the experiences we plan for children depend on what they already know and what they are ready to learn, ongoing assessment plays an important role in our program.

## How Assessment Works

When we say that *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online is an authentic, ongoing, and observation-based assessment system, it means we

- observe your child during regular, everyday activities;
- document what we see and hear by taking notes, collecting samples of your child's drawings and writing attempts, or taking photos, audio recordings, or video clips;
- exchange information with you to gain a more complete picture of what your child knows and can do;
- compare the information collected to research-based, widely held expectations for children of similar ages or grades; and
- use the information to plan experiences that support your child's learning and meet individual needs, both at home and at school.

## Observing What Children Do and Say

The most authentic way to discover what children know and can do is to observe them as they participate in daily activities in the program. Like you, we observe children all the time. The observations we do for assessment are more intentional. We are watching and listening to gain information on specific aspects of their development and learning.

The 38 objectives for development and learning give us a focus for our observations. During everyday experiences, we take note of what children do and say. Here are a few examples of this kind of intentional observation:

- During mealtimes with a group of 4-year-olds, we always sit and talk with the children. We note when a child is able to engage in conversations of at least three exchanges (Objective 10a, "Engages in conversations"), and when the child regularly seeks to play with one or two other children (Objective 2d, "Makes friends").
- When we read books to the children, we observe to find out whether children are able to respond to questions about the story (Objective 18a, "Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations") and whether children are able to retell a familiar story using pictures as cues (Objective 18c, "Retells stories").
- In the Toys and Games area, we might observe a child stringing colored beads in a simple repeated pattern, such as red, blue, red, blue (Objective 23, "Demonstrates knowledge of patterns") and then accurately counting the beads and announcing, "I have 18 beads on my necklace" (Objective 20a, "Counts").

We observe children over time and at different periods of the day to be sure we capture an accurate picture of what each child knows and can do. With your access to *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online, you will be able to add your own observations to help us create a more complete picture of your child's development and learning.

### Keeping Track of What We See and Hear

To ensure that we have a record of what we observe, we

- keep written notes of what children do and say and date each note;
- collect samples of children's work, such as drawings and writing;
- take photographs of children's constructions or artwork or examples of how they are demonstrating a particular skill;
- sometimes capture a child's actions on video or what a child says with an audio recording; and
- use checklists to note when children have demonstrated certain abilities, such as how a child throws and catches a ball or what letters a child can identify.

The examples of what your child knows and can do are kept in a portfolio that we can share with you via *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online. This portfolio is a secure place; only you, your child's teacher, the program administrator, and anyone else whom the three of you authorize are able to access your child's portfolio items.

### Exchanging Information With Families

No one knows your child better than you do. To have a complete picture of each child's strengths, needs, interests, and abilities, communication with families is essential. There are many ways we might exchange information.

When you enroll your child in our program, we are eager to hear about your hopes and dreams for your child, your child's past experiences and special interests, and any insights you can share to help us understand and get to know your child. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online allows you to communicate directly with the teachers and to add your own observations and documentation of what your child knows and can do.

If your child is learning English as a second language, or learning another language, we want to support your child in strengthening both languages. We will provide you with a short "Home Language Survey" to help us get to know your child's abilities in understanding and speaking a second language.

Throughout the year, we will set up family conferences so we can meet with you and review your child's accomplishments and progress. We will provide you with a report that highlights what your child is able to do in different areas of development and learning. The conference is an opportunity for us to share our observations, look over samples of your child's work, and hear what you are observing about your child's progress. We will plan together how we can support your child's development and learning at home and at school. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online invites families to communicate and share information about their children, and offers a rich selection of activities designed specifically for each child that can be used at home.

## Examining Progress

We regularly review the information we have collected in each child's portfolio to determine what step a child has reached in the progression for each objective. We know what reasonable expectations are for each objective and dimension, and where most children of a particular age-group or class/grade are likely to be at the beginning or end of a program year.

As stated earlier, children develop at very different rates, and there is a wide range that can be considered typical development for any age group or grade. We use the information we have collected to decide which step best describes the child's skills, knowledge, and behavior related to each objective. We ask ourselves two questions:

- Is the child making progress?
- Is the child performing within widely held expectations? If not, why?

There might be several reasons a child is behind what is expected. It could be that the child has not had sufficient experiences to develop the skill or understanding. In that case, we know we have to give more attention to providing the support the child needs. It may also indicate that a more in-depth assessment may be necessary to identify what is preventing the child from progressing.

## Summarizing and Using What We Learn

The last step in the assessment process is summarizing what we have learned about each child's progress on all the objectives, and then using the information to plan for each child and for the group of children. Because *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online covers all areas of development and learning, we have a complete picture of every child. We know where a child's development and learning is progressing as expected, and what areas need more focus and attention. We will share a "Development and Learning Report" with you online that summarizes what your child's knowledge and skills currently are, and where you can expect your child to go next.

The activities we offer children each day can be adapted based on what we know of each child's abilities. We can modify any activity to make it simpler or more complex so all children can participate successfully. This is the great value of our assessment system. It not only connects to our curriculum, it also offers families access to many easy-to-use activities at home that are designed to address each child's level of development and learning. If there are activities that we think are just right for you to use with your child at home, we will share them with you online.