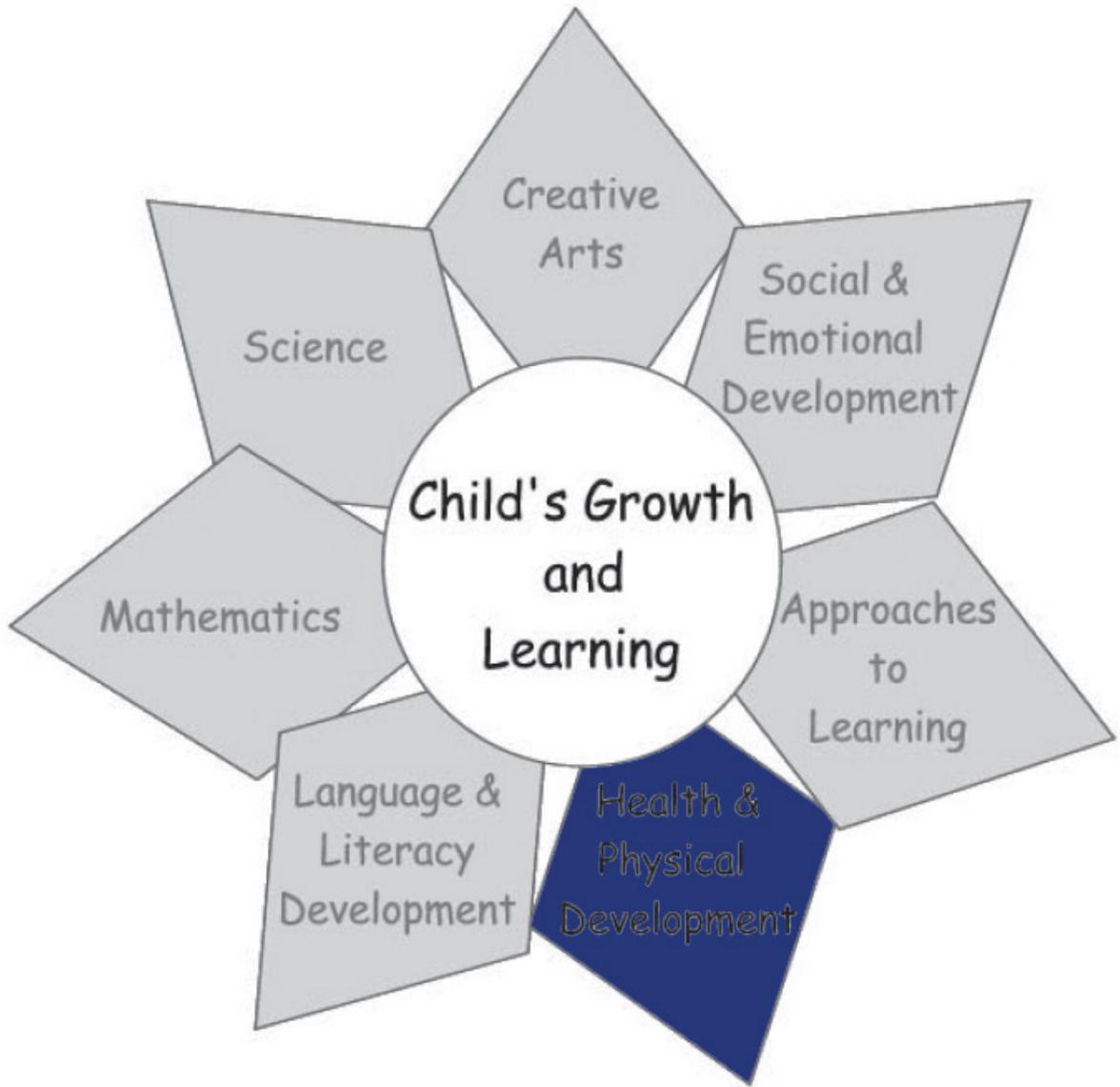


Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3 to 5



Health & Physical Development

Fine (Small) Motor Skills HP.01
Gross (Large Motor Skills HP.02
Health Status and Practices HP.03
Nutrition HP.04

Activities which promote physical development along with health and safety should be integrated into all areas of learning. Activities should be structured to encourage preschool children to explore their world, promote coordination and strength, enhance thinking skills, and develop an “I can do it” attitude in a secure environment. Adults should ensure that children’s health, physical activity, safety and nutrition needs are met, and that those activities contribute to the overall health and well-being of children. Young children need indoor and outdoor space and facilities that allow them to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate physical activities.

The development of fine (small) motor and gross (large) motor skills, as well as self-help skills, is a critical part of the development of the preschool child. Practicing and promoting these skills through play fosters children’s sense of achievement, reinforces positive interactions with peers, and provides the foundation for academic performance in such areas as writing, reading, behavior, and school attendance.

Young children who are healthy and safe are more prepared for school. Health and school readiness begin long before a child enters a kindergarten classroom. “Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten. These differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).”

Rising childhood obesity in America is a national crisis. Childhood obesity is linked with numerous negative effects that can follow them throughout their lifetime, including greater risk for other health problems such as asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Lack of physical activity and poor nutrition are significant contributors to childhood obesity. Caring adults can build awareness and teach the decision-making skills needed to identify healthy diet and activity options. Young children adopt healthy habits more easily and are able to apply these habits over a longer period of time than older children. Early intervention is key.



Fine (Small) Motor Skills

(HP.01)



Widely Held Expectations

- Child uses finger and hand control to operate and use small objects to demonstrate fine motor coordination
 - Uses eye-hand coordination to perform a variety of tasks
 - Develops fine motor skills through participation in activities
 - Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks
- Child explores writing, drawing and painting materials

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:

- Participates in activities which require the use of small muscles (buttoning, squeezing, writing, drawing, cutting, etc.)
- Handles small objects with growing skill (stringing small beads, pegboard, etc.)
- Pulls caps off markers and puts them back on firmly, easily uses scissors, pencils, etc.
- Puts small building blocks together and pulls them apart with relative ease
- Opens/closes lids on containers, pours from a pitcher

The Adult:

- Provides adequate time, materials, and adaptations for fine (small) motor skills (drawing, handwriting development, use of computer keyboard/mouse, musical instruments, and any appropriate adaptable devices, etc.)
- Provides relevant and challenging activities to help children build more advanced fine motor skills according to each child's developmental skills (materials of varying sizes and types to support the stages of writing from scribbles to symbols to letters)
- Provides child size tools whenever possible (scissors, silverware, pitchers)
- Scaffolds activities, such as, children use play dough or modeling clay to build up fine motor skills for holding a paint brush or adapted pencil grip for writing

The Environment Includes:

- Tools, workbench, clay, toys, puzzles, blocks, beads, keyboards, touch screens, switches
- Variety of materials for writing, drawing, and creating 3-D objects
- Seating options with tables at tummy level and feet on the floor
- Trays and containers for spatial awareness while doing activities

Strategies to Support Small (Fine) Motor Skills

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Play “Toss a Bean Bag” to a friend. When finished with the activity have each child throw their bean bag into a basket. This will help so not everyone is transitioning at one time and will keep them busy while waiting for their turn to go.
- Tape a piece of construction paper so it hangs off the edge of a child-size table. Have the child sit on the floor and cut “up” the paper. The child has to hold his scissors with the thumb up while being able to practice cutting without having to hold the paper.
- Have children use their finger muscles to squeeze tweezers/chopsticks to pick up pom-poms and place them in an ice cube tray.
- Weave twigs or yarn through a fence outdoors.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Use verbal, visual, and physical cues to help children know what to do and encourage active involvement in routines.
- Support participation by adapting materials and activities to meet the individual needs of each child, (paper/outlines with raised color lines, adaptive rubber stamps, scissors with hand over hand or squeeze function, tracing templates, sand paper under drawing paper, slant boards with clips to hold paper, easels, dressing aids such as zipper pulls, Velcro closures and elastic shoelaces).
- Start with what children can and want to do to avoid feeling discouraged, and to work toward independence.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Encourage children to model the language, actions, and help each other with materials and equipment, and respond positively to their attempts to communicate.
- Work with interpreters, cultural mediators and/or other community members if staff does not speak the children’s home language.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Be aware of gestures, touch and other social rules of the cultures of the children. For example, a pat on the head is not acceptable in some Asian cultures, snapping fingers is used for animals in some Hispanic cultures and is insulting to use with people.
- Provide materials from a variety of cultures such as cooking and eating utensils, play food, dress up clothing, jewelry, scarves, multiethnic dolls, puppets, and musical instruments.
- Involve family members to encourage the development of physical skills. View video clip, “[Jenni’s Story](#)” from Results Matter website for an example.
- Invite family or community members to share and teach children about the stories from their cultures, traditions, and music, and tell why they are valued. For example, children may learn to make tortillas or paper maché, weave, pottery, painting, embroidery or gardening.

Gross (Large) Motor Skills

(HP.02)



Widely Held Expectations

- Child develops gross motor skills:
 - Coordinates both hands to manipulate large objects
 - Continues to develop body flexibility and coordination
- Child uses indoor and outdoor gross motor equipment safely and appropriately
- Child develops coordination, balance, spatial awareness and strength through gross motor activities

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:

- Engages in daily structured and unstructured physical activities, such as marching, hopping, running, dancing, pulling wagons, pushing boxes, rolling, propelling or mobility devices
- Engages in complex movements, such as, balancing, climbing, going up and down steps with alternating feet, riding a tricycle, skipping, throwing, catching, bouncing and kicking a ball
- Begins to use vocabulary associated with movement and body parts, such as, eyes, arms, catch, climb, pull

The Adult:

- Acknowledges and supports children's natural tendencies to move and be active throughout the day (avoid using physical activity as a reward or punishment)
- Provides adequate time (1-2 hours throughout the day) for children to practice, explore, and expand their motor skills
- Supports variations in gross (large) motor development, indoors and outdoors
- Plans for outdoor activities on a daily basis

The Environment Includes:

- Equipment and materials to encourage hopping, running, jumping, dancing, climbing and other gross (large) motor skills
- A variety of safe and accessible outdoor equipment (climbing apparatus, swings, tunnels, slides, tricycles, wagons, etc.)
- Open space for movement and exploration, both indoors and outdoors, that meets safety standards, with areas designated for riding toys and obstacle courses

Strategies to Support Gross (Large) Motor Skills

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- When playing games like Duck-Duck-Goose, instead of children selecting who they will touch, have them draw a craft stick with a friend's name on it. This encourages gross motor activity, reading, and ensuring everyone has a turn!
- Ask children to move like their favorite animals when transitioning children to another area.
- When children cannot go outside to play, set up an obstacle course where children walk around, skip, climb over, and under, etc.
- Challenge children to extend and vary their skills. "Try to throw the ball farther," or "I wonder if you can kick it a different way."
- Ensure the learning environment is spacious enough to accommodate children in wheelchairs and/or several children. All children require a lot of space to move and explore.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Adapt the environment and materials/equipment, both indoors and out, to support participation, (enclosed swings, flat surfaces and wide aisles for wheelchairs, ramps between play areas, switch-operated riding toys, mat, lap weights, cylindrical pillows, wedges, and non-slip materials used to facilitate positioning; textured balls of different sizes with bells or beeper or glitter for hearing- or visual-impaired children).
- Provide physical guidance/support for children having difficulty with motor tasks. For an example of how to use playground equipment to increase muscle strength, view "[Jacob's Story](#)" from Results Matter website.
- Include picture schedules and communication boards for individual activities, and assistance from other children as needed.
- Place equipment at various levels to provide access to children with limited motor skills.
- Orient a child with special needs to play areas and objects like steps, curbs, and uneven surfaces before use.
- Use tape on floor to define areas and highlight path to play areas.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Break process down into simple steps, demonstrate actions by modeling, and use labels and pictures.
- Teach movement words in both the home language and English with the help of interpretive resources.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Include a variety of cultures and physical characteristics in visual representations.
- Invite family and community members to share and teach children about their traditions, songs, music, musical instruments, dances, or games.

Health and Safety Practices (HP.03)



Widely Held Expectations

- Child develops an awareness of health, nutrition, physical activity, and safety
 - Shows growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting
 - Develops knowledge and skills about what to do in case of injury or emergency
 - Identifies potentially harmful objects, substances, or behaviors, knows to leave them alone and tell an adult
- Child develops an understanding of the need for daily physical activity and rest

Learning in Action

The Child:

- Participates actively in games, indoor/outdoor play, and other forms of physical activity that enhance overall health and wellness
- Follows program safety rules with few reminders and recognizes signs of danger
- Uses good hand washing skills (after toileting, eating, wiping nose, handling animals)
- Recognizes the importance of doctor and dentist visits as a positive experience

The Adult:

- Provides time and safe space for daily physical activity and sufficient rest
- Provides instruction and explanation (using simple directions) for basic health and safety rules
- Models health and safety practices during regular activities including meals/snacks/dental care
- Provides opportunities to practice necessary emergency drills (fire, tornado, emergency)
- Provides health education for children and families to be aware of the implications of childhood obesity, environmental toxins, such as lead, and preventative health care (regular doctor and dentist visits)
- Supports child in obtaining regularly scheduled preventative doctor and dental visits

The Environment Includes:

- Access to indoor and outdoor play spaces that are safe and supportive for quality daily physical activity
- Procedures and signs for emergency evacuation and written health and safety policies
- Child size sinks, soap that is readily available, paper towels, footstools if needed, etc.
- Picture schedules with instructions for hand washing, tooth brushing and steps in toileting posted for children to follow in daily self-care routines

Strategies to Support Health and Safety Practices

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Encourage children to actively engage in physical activity daily.
- Have regular fire drills during different times of the day. Have children practice leaving from different exits, but still meet in the same consistent place. This helps children prepare for real emergencies.
- Experiment with foods that are processed differently (raw apples, applesauce, dried apples) and have children vote for which they like best. Chart their responses and display the charts. Discuss the process of processing the food.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Modify materials/activities to promote skills that enable a child to care for his own needs.
- Use sensory cues to indicate placement of items: auditory or visual cues can be used to prompt during routine times.
- Provide adaptive materials to support participation in daily living skills (hair and tooth brush with curved, enlarged handle, switch-adapted electric tooth brush/ toothpaste dispenser, adaptive potty chair/stool, laminated picture communication board for choices).
- Review and adapt routine times to increase participation.
- Encourage peers to model the actions and help with materials and equipment.
- Keep activities simple and open-ended so that every child can be successful.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Use videos, pictures and simple words to describe the action and show process/illustrate steps to perform health and safety practices and express their needs.
- Intentionally makes connections in home language with concepts taught when possible.
- Provide health education, written health and safety policies/procedures for children and families in their home language.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Use books, materials and posters that include authentic photographs/illustrations that accurately reflect the cultures of all children and families.
- Use authentic photos from families whenever possible.

Nutrition (HP.04)



Widely Held Expectations

- Child shows knowledge of healthy eating and lifestyle habits
 - Demonstrates knowledge that some foods are healthier than others
 - Uses manners during meals/snacks, including asking for seconds
- Child begins to develop interest in foods and eating styles of other cultures
- Child begins to distinguish more or less healthy foods, and understand that healthy foods help them to grow and give them energy to play and think
- Child begins to understand where foods come from and how they are produced

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:

- Tries new foods, eats a variety of foods, and passes food, taking child-sized portions
- Uses dramatic play and learning experiences to gain awareness of where different kinds of foods come from and how they are prepared

The Adult:

- Provides a pleasant, supportive environment with sufficient time for all children to eat
- Encourages children to serve and feed themselves, and assist with setup and cleanup, using child-sized utensils if possible.
- Joins children at the table, eating and drinking the same food and drink, modeling and encouraging them to try new or less favorite foods
- Helps children determine if they are still hungry before additional food is served or if they are full before taking additional food or removing the plate
- Provides opportunities for children to prepare and try a variety of healthy snacks and nutritious foods, providing water throughout the day
- Recognizes (and is supportive) that families have different food preferences and eating habits and solicits input from families about eating patterns and cultural food preferences
- Stays current with an individual child's food allergies and provides substitutes as needed
- Provides dramatic play props, pictures, stories and books to represent many cultures
- Provides first hand experiences such as gardening, field trips to local farms, cooking, etc.
- Ensures that food is not used as a reward or punishment to encourage or discourage behaviors

The Environment Includes:

- Books, audio recordings, visual media, and pictures about familiar foods and nutrition habits from around the world
- Dramatic play center props (foods, dishes, utensils, pans, cookbooks, gardening props, etc.)
- Visuals of healthy food choices including the new "food plate" model to learn food groups

Strategies to Support Nutrition

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Sort pictures of junk food and healthy food. Bring in flyers from your local grocery store. Let the children sort, cut out and glue the junk food in one group and the healthy food in the other group. This is a great fine motor activity as well as a pre-math activity.
- Chart which foods come from the ground and which ones come from the tree. Have the children classify the foods according to their origins. This activity teaches math skills, too.
- Plant an ingredient garden or have each child bring in a vegetable and prepare a class/group soup or a salad.
- At snack and meal times, comment on color, shape, and textural appearance of food.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Frequently discuss and implement special dietary needs and strategies suggested by families and professionals into daily routines and menu.
- Adapt and modify routine times and tools to support children's participation in meals/food activities with others.
- Promote independence in daily mealtime routines by ensuring adaptive materials are used.
- Provide physical guidance/support in using equipment when needed.
- Use verbal, visual (visual schedule and/or simple picture communication boards), and physical cues (sign language) in interactions and activities to promote participation in nutrition activities.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Encourage hands-on and sensory experiences such as touching, holding, exploring, tasting, smelling and manipulating.
- Provide materials from a variety of cultures, such as cooking and eating utensils, play food, menus from local ethnic restaurants, and empty packages from ethnic foods.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Explore various ways food is grown, prepared, served and used in different cultures.
- Create an environment in which children encounter food, objects, pictures, and people that they can identify with their culture.

Print Resources

- Active for Life: Developmentally Appropriate Movement Programs for Young Children*, Stephen W. Sanders (2002).
- Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Age 5 (2nd ed.)*, National Association for Sports and Physical Education (2009).
- Big Body Play: Why Boisterous, Vigorous, and Very Physical Play is Essential to Children's Development and Learning*, Frances M. Carlson (2011).
- Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents*, American Academy of Pediatrics (2008).
- Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs (3rd ed.)*, Topics include staffing, program activities for healthy development; health promotion and protection; nutrition and food service facilities, supplies, equipment, and environmental health; transportation, play areas, and playgrounds; infectious diseases, children with special needs; licensing, and community action. American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. American Public Health Association (2011).
- Developmental Physical Education for All Children*, David L. Gallahue and Frances Cleland Donnelly (2003).
- Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs (5th ed.)*, Susan Aronson (2012).
- Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines: Connecting Children to Nature (2008)*
http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/nature_education.pdf.
- Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines: Connecting Children to Nature (2008)*,
http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/nature_education.pdf.
- Parachute Games*, Todd Strong and Dale Lefevre. (2006).
- Preschool Health and Safety Matters*, Jody Martin (ed.; 2011).
- Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*, Institute of Medicine Report (2004).
- Preventing Childhood Obesity In Early Care and Education Programs*, American Academy of Pediatrics (2012).
- Preventing Obesity and Promoting Wellness In Early Childhood Settings DVD*, Turn Key Training (2012).
- Recess- It's Indispensable!*, NAEYC Play, Policy and Practice Interest Forum, Young Children (September 2009).

These resources, and many others, may be available for Nebraska residents to borrow from the Early Childhood Training Center's Media Center by visiting <http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/mediactr.html> or by calling 1-402-557-6885 or 1-800-89CHILD.

Online Resources

Annotated Bibliographies (click on link below for a description of topical resources available through the Early Childhood Training Center's Media Center):

[Health and Physical Development](#), created on 5/24/12

[Nutrition](#), updated on 3/19/12

Clover Kid Projects & Activities: <http://liferaydemo.unl.edu/web/child/cloverkid>.

Common Questions on Lead Poisoning:
<http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/LeadQuestions.aspx>.

Nature Explore: a complete program of fun, effective resources to help educators, families and anyone working with children connect with nature. Nature Explore is a collaborative project of Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation
<http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org/>.

Understanding physical development in preschoolers <http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-childhood/understanding-physical-development-in-preschoolers>.

National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play Head Start Body Start: resources and ideas for active play and meaningful movement; tools and guidance to enhance play spaces or create an outdoor classroom <http://www.aahperd.org/headstartbodystart/>.

Health and Nutrition Information for Preschoolers
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers.html>.

Healthy Child Care America <http://www.healthychildcare.org/index.html>.

Healthy Child Care: fact sheets and checklists <http://www.epa.gov/childcare>.

Healthy Kids Healthy Future: Recommendations on physical activity, screen time, food and beverages <http://www.HealthyKidsHealthyFuture.org>.

Let's Move! Strategies to put children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years, and information for parents to foster environments that support healthy choices <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.

National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play: resources and ideas for active play and meaningful movement to early childhood programs and family homes, online professional development opportunities <http://www.aahperd.org/headstartbodystart/>.

National Health and Safety Standards and the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) <http://www.whrv.org/NR/rdonlyres/4C89B06B-4ED9-4315-99B3-4B0D7A3F0E0C/10128/NAPSACCBestPracticeRecommendationsforChildCareFaci.pdf>.

Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program: <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/nutritionandwellness.html>

National Center on Health: I Am Moving, I Am Learning; Tips for Families...Active Play, Healthy Eating, Safety & Injury Prevention; Healthy Children are Ready to Learn, etc.
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>

TXT4Tots: a library of short, evidence-based messages focused on nutrition and physical activities targeted to parents and caregivers of children: <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/txt4tots/>

National Education Goals Panel, Essential Domains of School Readiness	Revised Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines Ages 3-5 Domains & Key Elements	Teaching Strategies GOLD® Objectives, Dimensions, and Indicators		Head Start Child Development & Early Learning Framework Domains & Elements	NE K-12 Standards	NE Rule 11 Regs.	NE Child Care Licensing Standards
Physical Development & Health	Health & Physical Development: Fine (Small) Motor Skills (HP.01)	Physical 7a.8.		Physical Development & Health: Fine Motor Skills	LA 0.2.1c	004.05A7	Child Development Program Toys, Equipment and Materials
		Physical 7b.6.			SC 2.2.1c	004.06C 004.06D 004.06E	
	Health & Physical Development: Gross (Large) Motor Skills (HP.02)	Physical 4.8.		Physical Development & Health: Gross Motor Skills	LA 0.1.5b	004.05A7	Outdoor Play Area Fenced Outdoor Play Area
		Physical 5.8.			SS 0.3.1a	004.05A8	
		Physical 6.8.				004.06C 004.06D 004.06E	
	Health & Physical Development: Health Status & Practices (HP.03)	Social Emotional 1c.8.		Physical Development & Health: Health Knowledge & Practice	LA 0.3.1a	004.05A7	Sanitation Inspection Safety Training CPR/First Aid Communicable Diseases Children Excluded Due to Illness Immunizations Napping and Rest Period Medications Environmental Safety Hand Washing
	LA 0.1.5b				004.05A8		
	LA 0.1.1b	004.06C					
	SS 0.1.2b	004.06D					
		004.06E					
Health & Physical Development: Nutrition (HP.04)	Social Studies 29.		Physical Development & Health: Physical Health Status	LA 0.1.5b LA 0.3.1a	004.05A7 004.05A8 004.06C 004.06D 004.06E	Food Service Food Safety	
	Social Studies 30.						
	Language 10.b.6.						

Sources: Teaching Strategies, Inc.: www.TeachingStrategies.com. Revised Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework: [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Assessment/Child%20Outcomes/HS_Revised_Child_Outcomes_Framework\(rev-Sept2011\).pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Assessment/Child%20Outcomes/HS_Revised_Child_Outcomes_Framework(rev-Sept2011).pdf). Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Title 391- Children's Services Licensing: http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/crl_childcare_childcareindex.aspx. Nebraska K-12 Academic Standards: <http://www.education.ne.gov/academicstandards/>. Nebraska Rule 11 Regulations: <http://www.education.ne.gov/legal/webrulespdf/CLEANrule112007.pdf>.