

Toddler Learning Standards and Benchmarks

A toddler is 12 to 36-months-old according to the Centers for Disease Control ([CDC](#)). Accordingly, toddler education is for 1 to 3-year-olds. However, some experts in the field use different age groupings. Midcontinent Research International (McRel) divides toddlers into two groups: a younger toddler (8 to 18-months) and an older toddler (18 to 36-months).

Because of the comprehensive nature of McRel's research we have chosen to highlight their standards and benchmarks in order to better help you the teacher serve the children in the most effective ways possible.

Age-related standards and benchmarks are important because they give us a very good idea of what

McRel defines 5 standards for younger toddlers. They are:

- Standard 1. [Children develop physical abilities and healthy practices](#)
- Standard 2. [Children develop trust and emotional security through positive relationships, self-awareness, and self-regulation](#)
- Standard 3. [Children use imitation, exploration, and play to acquire knowledge and solve problems](#)
- Standard 4. [Children develop the ability to understand the world around, including mathematical and scientific](#)
- Standard 5. [Children develop the ability to communicate](#)

The McRel standards do not incorporate many of the spiritual aspects of life. Heretofore, anything to do with spirituality was considered unmeasurable and/or associated with particular religions or philosophies. The reality is quite different.

Spirituality relates to both the inner development and outward growth of the individual. Spirituality is based on the cultivation, development, and expression of universal values and virtues, such as the Golden Rule. Morals are relative to time and place, culture and religion. Universal values and virtues are not.

These values and virtues play a central role in all the great religions of the world. They are the fundamental basis of civilization, society, and family, and they provide the framework which governs individual conduct.

As such, we propose to modify the excellent educational standards that currently exist to incorporate the spiritual aspects of human reality. Here are show suggestions for toddler educational standards:

- Standard 1. Children develop physical abilities and healthy life-style practices
- Standard 2. Children develop virtues and emotional security through positive relationships, self-awareness, and character building
- Standard 3. Children use observation, exploration, imitation, and play to develop spiritual sensitivities, acquire knowledge, and solve problems
- Standard 4. Children develop the ability to understand the world around, including physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realities
- Standard 5. Children develop the ability to empathize, communicate, and serve

Benchmarks for the revised standards have not been delineated yet.

Standard 1. Children develop physical abilities and healthy practices

1. Shows characteristics of healthy development (e.g., grows appropriately according to height and weight charts; gets adequate sleep, demonstrates the stamina and energy to participate in daily activities)
2. Participates in personal care routines (e.g., grasps cup; feeds self finger food; cooperates with mouth-care, hand-washing, diapering, dressing, and bathing)
3. Gains motor control and balance using the large muscles in the body (e.g., cruises, crawls, walks)
4. Moves body, arms, and legs with coordination (e.g., repeats movements, pushes or pulls a toy, throws a ball, uses riding toys)
5. Controls small muscles in hands (e.g., mimics hand clapping or waving good-bye, uses pincher grasp, points with index finger)
6. Develops hand-eye coordination to manipulate objects (e.g., transfers an object from hand to hand; uses a spoon, toy hammer, or crayon; squeezes objects; stacks blocks; turns pages of a book)

Standard 2. Children develop trust and emotional security through positive relationships, self-awareness, and self-regulation

1. Shows interest in and engages with other children (e.g., engages in simple back-and-forth interactions with peers, plays with one or two preferred playmates, imitates other children's actions)
2. Develops secure relationships with familiar adults (e.g., cries when parent leaves, seeks comfort from familiar adult in new situations, follows a parent or teacher physically around the room)
3. Demonstrates awareness of the feelings of others (e.g., watches another child who is crying or laughing, offers a toy to another child who is upset, squeals with joy when other children are happy and excited)
4. Engages in more complex social interactions (e.g., uses gestures and vocalizations to get specific responses from others, uses another's emotional expressions to guide own responses, imitates behavior, moves to be beside another child)
5. Demonstrates awareness of own characteristics, thoughts, and feelings (e.g., points to parts of his/her body when asked; expresses likes and dislikes for food, objects, and people)

6. Shows confidence in increasing abilities (e.g., expresses satisfaction with what he or she has done by clapping, explores independently, experiments with different ways of making things happen)
7. Responds positively to choices and limits set by adults to help control behavior (e.g., understands simple rules and routines, looks at adult to determine whether a behavior is permitted, makes choices when given options, accepts re-direction)
8. Comforts self when upset (e.g., sucks on fingers or thumb; uses comfort objects, such as a blanket or stuffed animal; seeks out a familiar person, toy, or place) and actively avoids or ignores situations that cause discomfort
9. Expresses a range of emotions through actions, body language, and expressions (e.g., gives hugs to show affection; cries when afraid, laughs or claps when happy; pushes away a toy when frustrated)

Standard 3. Children use imitation, exploration, and play to acquire knowledge and solve problems

1. Uses the information received from the senses to explore and react to the environment (e.g., experiments with the feel and tastes of different foods; adjusts walking for different surfaces; plays with water, sand, and play dough)
2. Focuses attention on a chosen toy or activity (e.g., repeats successful, enjoyable, or predictable experiences; works to reach a goal) and shows a willingness to overcome frustration (e.g., walks, falls down, and gets back up several times; persists in looking for a favorite toy)
3. Imitates others' expressions (e.g., copies gestures, words, or sounds immediately after witnessing them) and actions (e.g., imitates routines that have more than one step, copies actions that they have observed at an earlier time).

Standard 4. Children develop the ability to understand the world around, including mathematical and scientific

1. Experiments with cause-and-effect (e.g., combines simple actions to cause things to happen, makes changes to his/her actions to observe the effect, purposefully repeats actions)
2. Uses a variety of ways to approach a problem, reach a goal, or figure out how something works (e.g., uses trial and error, uses objects as tools, asks for help, mimics others' actions)
3. Remembers familiar people, places, and actions (e.g., remembers people and their typical actions, knows where objects belong, seeks missing objects or people, demonstrates familiarity with the steps of a routine)

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5. Uses objects in the way they were intended (e.g., pretends to feed a doll with a bowl and spoon) and in unconventional ways (e.g., pretends that a banana is a telephone)
6. Understands that there are different amounts of things (e.g., uses signs or words to communicate "more" or "all done") Attends to colors, shapes, and sizes (e.g., looks at crayons before choosing a color, plays with a shape sorter and stacking containers, matches two objects that are the same, places a lid on a container)
7. Understands simple spatial relationships (e.g., uses trial and error to discover how things move and fit in space, uses a landmark to find an object, explores spaces with their bodies)

Standard 5. Children develop the ability to communicate

1. Responds to the language of others (e.g., enjoys the sounds and rhythms of language, pays attention to what the speaker is looking at or pointing to, cries in response to sudden loud noises or angry voices)
2. Shows understanding of simple questions and one-step requests in a familiar context (e.g., looks at an object when asked where it is; responds appropriately to directions such as waving bye-bye, retrieving an object, or sitting down)
3. Uses gestures and words to communicate in short back-and-forth interactions (e.g., initiates interactions; takes turns speaking; imitates words, signs, and gestures)
4. Uses consistent sounds, gestures, signs, and some words to communicate needs, wants, and interests (e.g., uses made-up "words," uses expressions such as "uh-oh," names a few familiar favorite objects, shakes head "no")
5. Listens and participates while being read to by selecting a favorite book, pointing, turning pages, and labeling pictures or drawings.
6. Shows an interest in simple songs, rhymes, sounds, and finger plays (e.g., makes the sounds of animals or things, such as trains; makes motions for familiar games, such as "pat-a-cake")
7. Notices print in the environment (e.g., looks at posters and other pictures on the walls, recognizes a sign or logo that they see often)
8. Makes marks or scribbles on paper with a large crayon or marker

Source: [McRel](#)