



# The Hawai'i Early Learning and Development Standards (HELDS)

## Supplemental Guides for Preschoolers

### Initiating Independence: Initiators 36 to 48 months

This Guide was developed by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Children's Center with support from the State of Hawai'i Executive Office on Early Learning and Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education.



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### Initiating Independence: Initiators 36 to 48 Months

The Hawai'i Early Learning and Development Standards (HELDS) describes what young children, ages birth through five, typically should know and/or be able to do at different periods in their developmental progression. During this period the architecture of a child's brain and nervous system is under construction and this development becomes the foundation for learning in the school years. By understanding the HELDS standards and how learning established in an earlier period is the basis for future learning, parents and caregivers can provide children with a strong foundation to become lifelong learners.

#### HELDS Supplemental Guides for Preschoolers

The HELDS Supplemental Guides for Preschoolers is a multi-part series that looks at three distinct periods of development roughly associated with age level. These periods are identified by a hallmark developmental purpose: **Challenging Limits** (24 to 36 months), **Initiating Independence** (36 to 48 months), **Social Negotiation** (48 months to Kindergarten Entry). While these are not the only major aspects of development children address in a given period, they do serve to help illustrate the rapid growth and unique developmental needs of children during a particular period.

*The guides provide information on:*

- Typical toddler or preschooler behaviors within each of the HELDS domains, listed in approximate sequences of development;
- Specific ways in which caregivers can support development and learning; and
- Key preschooler outcomes that result from these supports.

Development is progressive, but children do not step through it in a constant, linear fashion. The age groupings noted here are for convenience in discussion and not intended to be hard definitions of developmental phases. Children move from one developmental phase to the next in their own time

and in their own way. A 3½-year-old **Initiator** may still be demonstrating behaviors relating to the **Challenger** group and taking on behaviors relating to the **Negotiator** group. Experienced caregivers understand this and tailor their practices according to individual needs. These guides provide a starting place for caregivers to reflect on the extent to which their current strategies, interactions, environments, and care plans support optimal individual development. While the examples listed are not exhaustive, they provide an overall picture of healthy development and quality caregiving. The domains noted are loosely defined. Skills and activities noted under a given domain could easily be applied to one or more other domains. They are provided only to give a framework for understanding and discussion.

#### Initiating Independence: Initiators 36 to 48 Months

On the spectrum of human development, this is the age that begins to understand the connection between the individual and a group. Groups may be defined as family, culture, national heritage, or classmates. The child is still very egocentric, but is increasingly aware of the people around her or him and how they may think and act differently than she or he does. Initiating and sustaining interaction now includes the development of cooperative skills and more complex communication skills. To balance forays into the sometimes scary unknown, the 3-year-old will often seek approval and positive feedback from adults, making this group a bit more compliant and willing to please than the 2-year-old group. Demands for greater social interaction propel complex language development and complex thinking. Caregivers who reflect back children's comments with more detail and complex structure help the child develop a stronger language base and close the gap between what is able to be understood and what is able to be expressed. Encouraging the child to discuss experiences and people, real or imagined, in the past, present or future, helps the child develop senses of time, culture, creativity and logic.

# HELDS DOMAIN

## Physical Well-Being, Health and Motor Development

*This domain encompasses physical growth and maturation, including the ability to move and use the body. The Initiator explores the environment with more purpose, confidence and focus, combining knowledge gained from every source into dynamic and creative play.*

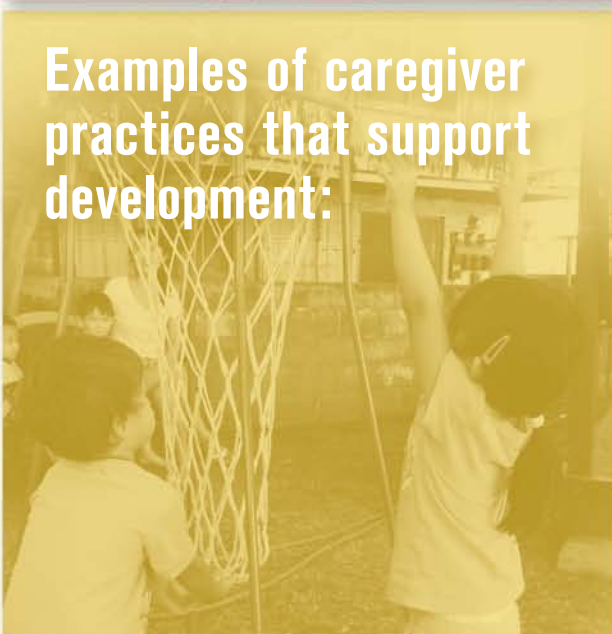
### Examples of typical Initiator behaviors:



- Hops, skips, gallops, and balances on planks
- Completes obstacle courses and climbing activities, but may need to stop to think about each movement before attempting it
- Runs, making sharp turns and sudden stops with jumps or spins to imitate actions seen in media (e.g., superhero, ballerina, mermaid)
- Can maintain a physically active level for up to 10 minutes
- May start off drawing with a writing instrument using one hand, but will sometimes switch and try drawing with the other hand for a bit
- Tries to cut paper with scissors but may change the way they are held and is not very accurate or intentional.
- Dresses and undress with minimal assistance
- Will complete simple health and safety routines (e.g., washing hands and then sitting down for lunch, dressing then flushing then washing after using the toilet) but may need cues to initiate the routine

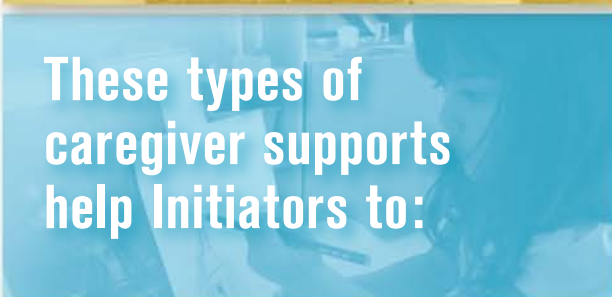


### Examples of caregiver practices that support development:



- Provides opportunities to sustain active play (e.g., run races, obstacle courses of up to five activities, climbing structures, balance bikes)
- Creates obstacle courses that require a variety of large muscle skills (e.g., walking on lines, crawling through tunnels, jumping from hoop to hoop, walking on a beam)
- Provides opportunities for the child to practice using tools in a variety of ways (e.g., spooning food from a serving dish to a plate at lunch time, using a cranking egg beater to mix eggs, using a trowel to dig up weeds)
- Plays games with the child that require hand-eye coordination (e.g., catching balls, soccer, bean bag toss)
- Encourages the child to pour own drink from a small pitcher for lunch or snack
- Provides materials and equipment to challenge small muscle development (e.g., picking up marbles with tongs, clay, lacing forms, scissor cutting)

### These types of caregiver supports help Initiators to:

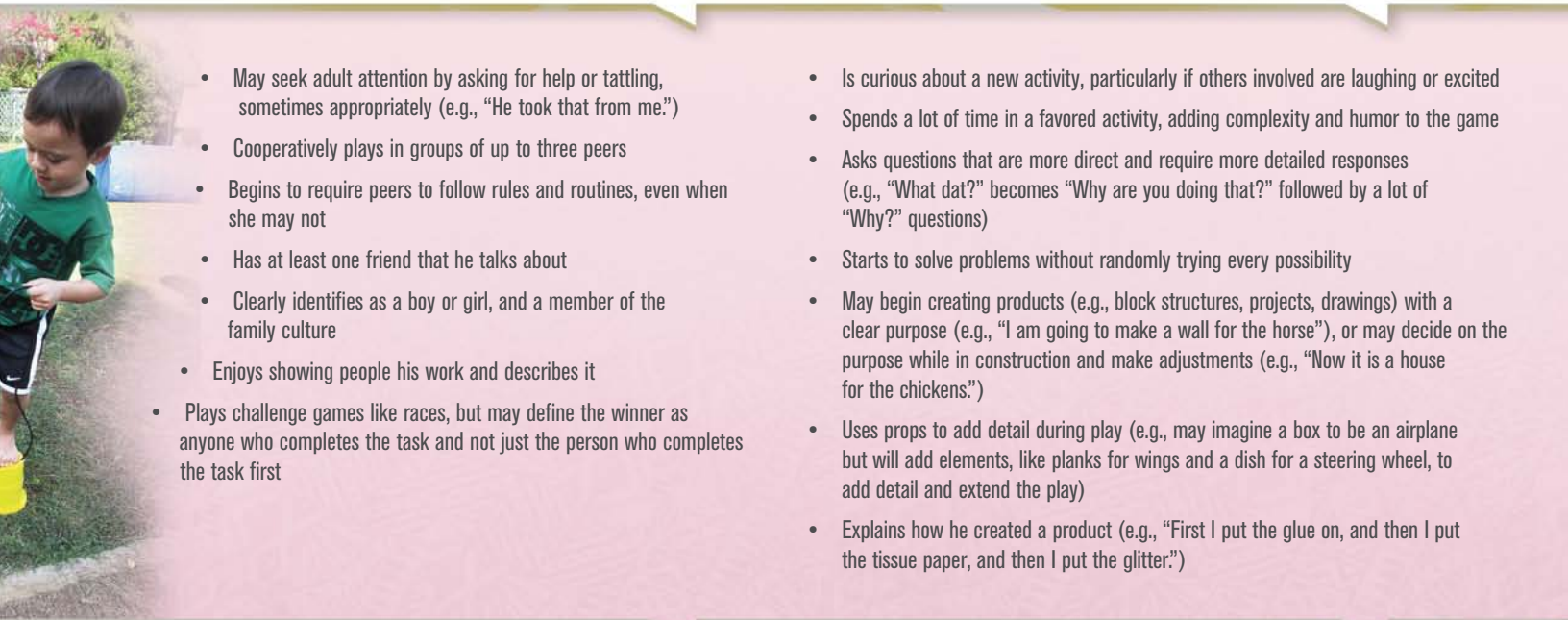


- Build stamina
- Develop a sense of balance and spatial awareness
- Gain more control of muscles
- Begin to understand health and safety routines
- Engage in reasonable risk-taking



## Social and Emotional Development

*This domain includes the ability to regulate behaviors and emotions and to form healthy relationships. The Initiator begins to realize the person next to them can think and act differently than the child does, and may need a lot of help negotiating those differences. Friendships are often based on long-running themes or storylines both parties enjoy. The Initiator enjoys being helpful and receiving lots of positive recognition. The Initiator is able to recover from strong emotions quicker than younger children.*



- May seek adult attention by asking for help or tattling, sometimes appropriately (e.g., “He took that from me.”)
- Cooperatively plays in groups of up to three peers
- Begins to require peers to follow rules and routines, even when she may not
- Has at least one friend that he talks about
- Clearly identifies as a boy or girl, and a member of the family culture
- Enjoys showing people his work and describes it
- Plays challenge games like races, but may define the winner as anyone who completes the task and not just the person who completes the task first

## Approaches to Play and Learning

*This domain encompasses the processes that underlie learning. The Initiator is able to actively demonstrate attention, memory, persistence, curiosity, and problem solving skills with intention. The Initiator feels confident to begin many things but may need encouragement to finish and may need confirmation that it is acceptable to make mistakes. Play becomes longer, more complex, and across domains. Dramatic play, for instance, may include a science investigation of a school pet.*

- Is curious about a new activity, particularly if others involved are laughing or excited
- Spends a lot of time in a favored activity, adding complexity and humor to the game
- Asks questions that are more direct and require more detailed responses (e.g., “What dat?” becomes “Why are you doing that?” followed by a lot of “Why?” questions)
- Starts to solve problems without randomly trying every possibility
- May begin creating products (e.g., block structures, projects, drawings) with a clear purpose (e.g., “I am going to make a wall for the horse”), or may decide on the purpose while in construction and make adjustments (e.g., “Now it is a house for the chickens.”)
- Uses props to add detail during play (e.g., may imagine a box to be an airplane but will add elements, like planks for wings and a dish for a steering wheel, to add detail and extend the play)
- Explains how he created a product (e.g., “First I put the glue on, and then I put the tissue paper, and then I put the glitter.”)

- Maintains a minimal number of appropriate, meaningful, and consistent routines and rules that apply across settings
- Provides opportunities for child to play with a variety of other children from different backgrounds and skill levels for extended periods of time
- Practices basic processes for handling conflict with the child, including role playing and puppet presentations.
- Organizes projects and activities so that groups of three to five children can work together
- Asks open-ended questions about home, family and friends
- Takes an interest in child’s work and asks questions about it
- Introduces games with simple rules, such as turn-taking and sharing (e.g., *Candyland*, *Hi Ho! Cherry-O*, *Hoot Owl Hoot*)
- Provides many open-ended materials throughout the classroom that are periodically rotated (e.g., boxes of varying sizes, lengths of fabric, rope rings, paper tubes of varying sizes)

- Is available when help is needed, but requires the child to define what is wanted or trying to be accomplished
- Models cooperation skills with children and adults
- Has a list of class chores with icons or illustrations that the children may select from
- Creates projects or activities that involve making lists so children can track progress (e.g., writing a recipe, making a shopping list, writing an investigation plan)
- Reviews a daily agenda so children can understand what is or is not available throughout the day (e.g., blocks will be available in the morning but not in the afternoon)



- Engage in cooperation skills
- Understand parameters of appropriate behavior
- Demonstrate self-worth and a sense of belonging
- Engage in independent problem-solving

- Demonstrate a sense of competence
- Begin to expand length of focus
- Demonstrate curiosity
- Demonstrate perseverance

## Cognition and General Knowledge

*This domain includes thinking, reasoning, and using information to acquire knowledge and understanding of one's world. The Initiator is clearly moving into an understanding of cause and effect, but may have a hard time separating fantasy from reality. They may have a hard time focusing on more than one thing at a time.*

- Sorts items based on large categories or based on personal experience, and may change the categories as the activity progresses
- Starts to make predictions and conclusions but may use unique logic (e.g., when asked how a cup sank, may respond, "Fairy dust.")
- Begins to understand cause and effect relationships (e.g., after rolling a ball down a ramp several times, the child can predict that if a block were placed on the ramp the ball would stop)
- Can count small groups of objects (less than eight) using one-to-one correspondence.
- Begins to play games with rules, like "Duck, Duck, Goose," but may get lost on the way around the circle and may view rules as flexible
- Sings songs and taps out beats, often without volume control and often without regard to anyone else who may be singing
- Begins making 3-dimensional structures to represent something (e.g., a block structure to represent a house, a blob of play dough to represent a dog), and uses these structures in dramatic play

- Provides a variety of manipulatives that are similar and not similar for sorting and classifying, adding rings or bowls
- Provides a number of open-ended experiment areas inside and outside the classroom (e.g., a small water table to experiment with sink/float, gear boxes, ant farm)
- Provides a range of musical instruments that allow for pattern differentiation (e.g., xylophone with changeable tone bars, drums of varying sizes and depths)
- Expands dramatic play area to include a themed area (e.g., kitchen, fire station, vet hospital)
- Provides a number of larger or more complex tools to use in exploring (e.g., small shovels and rakes, prisms and kaleidoscopes, light boxes)
- Sings longer songs, including those with hand movements or that are paired with sign language
- Provides various materials for exploration of 2- and 3-dimensional art

- Develop conscious awareness of patterning
- Develop senses of comparison and contrast
- Engage in experimentation and exploration
- Demonstrate expansive expression

## English Language Arts and Literacy

*This domain encompasses response to and use of communication. The Initiator continues to massively enlarge vocabulary use, adding appropriate pronouns and prepositions to the ever-growing list of adjectives as the gap between what can be understood and what can be expressed begins to close. The Initiator begins to break down book parts, understanding that the book needs print for things to be said, and that print is made up of words that have meaning. The Initiator also begins to understand that specific letters are needed to make up his name, but may miss the need for a specific order.*

- Storytelling is longer and more detailed, often including long strings of "and then..."
- Enjoys the rhythm and repetition of words in rhymes, songs, and poems
- Enjoys the play with words sometimes engaging with really bad jokes or puns
- Wants to retell familiar stories with props (e.g., capes, hats, puppets, felt illustrations), but must tell them as close to the original as possible
- Draws with a bit more definition and detail, spacing elements to show distinction, though body parts may be missing from figures
- Squiggles (signifying cursive) and strings of circles (signifying print) may be used to represent the written word of a story or a letter to a parent
- Draws a square that looks different from a triangle
- Follows three-step instructions that are unrelated to each other (e.g., "Please put your blanket away, pick up a book and stand by the lamp.")

- Documents activities with the child, including photos, artifacts, and dictated explanations
- Reflects back child statements to expand vocabulary and complexity (e.g., Child: "I saw a cockroach!" Adult: "You saw a brown cockroach scurrying across the carpet?")
- Provides access to many books using repetitive language (e.g., *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*), rhymes (e.g., *The Cat in the Hat*), or silly words (e.g., *There's a Wocket in My Pocket*)
- Writes the child's dictated explanation of a piece of art on the art piece, spelling out the child's name as it is written
- Labels cubbies with just the child's name

- Ask focused questions
- Build a sense of story
- Engage in language play
- Demonstrate detail in expression



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## Downloads

Hawai'i Early Learning and Development Standards (HELDS) and all the supplemental material can be found at:  
[p3hawaii.org/HELDS/standards](http://p3hawaii.org/HELDS/standards)

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