

**Construct Progressions, Performance Descriptors,
Rationale, and Alignment to Standards
(NC Preschool Standards and NC Standard Course of Study)**

Domain

Approaches to Learning

Claim

Students can maintain focus and persevere to accomplish collaborative tasks whether those tasks are chosen by them, or assigned to them.

Construct

Engagement in Self-Selected Activities

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Learning Progression: Attentiveness and Focus

ENGAGEMENT in SELF-SELECTED ACTIVITIES		
Understanding	Skills	Performance Descriptors
Children understand that daily classroom routines provide opportunities for them to make choices of interest.	A. Wanders, examining many options for self-directed tasks in the classroom environment, but does not settle with one particular choice.	<p>The child is in the block corner observing other children using file cards and markers to make road signs. The child notices activity in the dramatic play center and moves to that area of the classroom. The child may interact briefly with the dress-up clothes and hats, but decides to leave and go to the sand table.</p> <p>In the media center, the child is given an opportunity to choose a book to be checked out. The child walks from shelf to shelf and mimics the action of peers by pulling the books off the shelves. Before the child takes an interest in any book, the child notices other peers in a different location of the media center. The child drops a book on a table to migrate to that other area in the media center. The child repeats the action of pulling books from shelves, without selecting any particular book.</p>
Children understand that making choices allows them to pursue their interests.	B. Begins to make purposeful choices for self-directed tasks that are highly engaging and begins to sustain engagement in a chosen task.	<p>The child chooses to enter the dramatic play center and stays there to explore the materials. For example, begins to remove manipulatives from the stove, the cupboard, etc., and piles them in the middle of the dramatic play table. The child might be exploring the materials, turning them upside down, dropping them on the floor, but does not appear to be trying to accomplish a specific task.</p> <p>The child chooses the math center and stays there to explore materials. For example, the child dumps all of the counting bears onto the table and sets them up in random ways.</p>
Children understand that they can make a plan and accomplish a task of interest to them, even when there are other things going on around	C. Sustains engagement in a self-directed task, ignoring task-irrelevant information and low-level distractions from peers or other	<p>The child begins to build in the block corner. The child then removes a collection of blocks from the storage shelf and piles them near the foundation. The child proceeds to build until all of the chosen blocks are used, ignoring the possible distractions of other children also building nearby.</p> <p>The child goes to dramatic play and chooses a spatula or large spoon. The child doesn't stop to play in the kitchen, but takes the utensil to the puppet corner and uses the utensil as a</p>

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them.	classroom activities.	puppet while performing a puppet show.
Children understand that when they are working toward completion of a plan, there may be distractions and interruptions, but that their task will be there when they get back.	D. Sustains engagement in self-directed activities, while increasingly resisting distractions. Resumes or re-engages in activities following interruptions.	<p>The child goes to the bookmaking center and selects materials such as paper, the stapler, and markers for making a book. Another child comes over to show off a Lego® structure. After stopping to admire the Lego® structure, the first child returns to making the book. But before the book is completed, the entire class has to stop what they are doing to go to lunch. After lunch, the teacher allows children to return to what they were doing, and the child continues with that task until the book is completed.</p> <p>The child goes to the painting easel, produces a painting, and leaves it to dry. Later in the free choice time, the child returns to the art center, takes the dried painting, and uses pieces from the collage box to further develop the design by gluing pieces onto the painting.</p>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rationale

“Attention-related skills such as task persistence and self regulation are expected to increase the time during which children are engaged and participating in academic endeavors. Research has shown that signs of attention and impulsivity can be detected as early as age 2.5 but continue to develop until reaching relative stability between ages 6 and 8 (Olson, Sameroff, Kerr, Lopez, & Wellman, 2005; Posner & Rothbart, 2000). Studies linking attention with later achievement are less common, but consistent evidence suggests that the ability to control and sustain attention as well as participate in classroom activities predicts achievement test scores and grades during preschool and the early elementary grades (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Raver, Smith-Donald, Hayes, & Jones, 2005). These attention skills, which are conceptually distinct from other types of interpersonal behaviors, are associated with later academic achievement, independent of initial cognitive ability (McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Yen, Konold, & McDermott, 2004) and of prior reading ability and current vocabulary (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003). Examining attention separately from externalizing problems has clarified the role of each in achievement, suggesting that attention is more predictive of later achievement than more general problem behaviors (Barriga et al., 2002; Hinshaw, 1992; Konold & Pianta, 2005; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Normandeau & Guay, 1998; Trzesniewski, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Maughan, 2006)” (Duncan et al., 2007, p. 1430).

From *Engaging and Re-Engaging Students in Learning at School* (2008): “Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conclude: Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.”

Alignment to Standards (NC Foundations for Early Learning & Development and the NC Standard Course of Study (Common Core & Essential Standards))

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) consists of the Common Core State Standards and NC Essentials Standards. As Local Education Agencies embrace the NCSCOS, they will work to empower educators to use a variety of instructional approaches that address the diverse needs of their students. These efforts will be made to improve the academic performance of *all* students. The NCSCOS does not define these varied instructional practices. Nor does it define how students should approach the learning of these standards.

The NCSCOS provides what students should know and be able to do when meeting the expectations for grade specific standards. However, the introductory sections of the NCSCOS documents encourage best practices and provide explanations of effective learning cultures. These

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descriptors bring clarity to possible ways to provide opportunities for students to exhibit these approaches to learning behaviors. These instructional support components of the NCSCOS documents compliment the standards and provide guidance to educators as they develop a desirable pedagogy that allows students to learn by taking risk and overcoming challenges to acquire new knowledge. For example, the introduction to the NC Essential Standards for K-2 Social Studies states that there are two primary purposes of social studies. “The first is to develop young people who are knowledgeable, critical, and capable of making informed decisions about the world and their place in it. The second purpose is to prepare young people to participate actively and responsibly in a culturally diverse, democratic, and increasingly interdependent world.” Within this context Goal APL-7 of *Foundations* (see below), although not directly stated in the K-3 standards, may be observable when lessons are designed to allow for independence, setting goals and demonstrating initiative.

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (Foundations) does address *how* students approach learning in the early years. The above Learning Progression: Attentiveness and Focus is specifically aligned to a subdomain of the Approaches to Play and Learning Domain found in *Foundations*. This subdomain is called Attentiveness, Effort, and Persistence. The two goals that support this subdomain are directly aligned to the above progression. These goals are:

Goal AP-7 Children demonstrate initiative

Goal AP-8 Children maintain attentiveness and focus

The learning progression reflects the specific Developmental Indicators within these Goals as well.

Resources

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