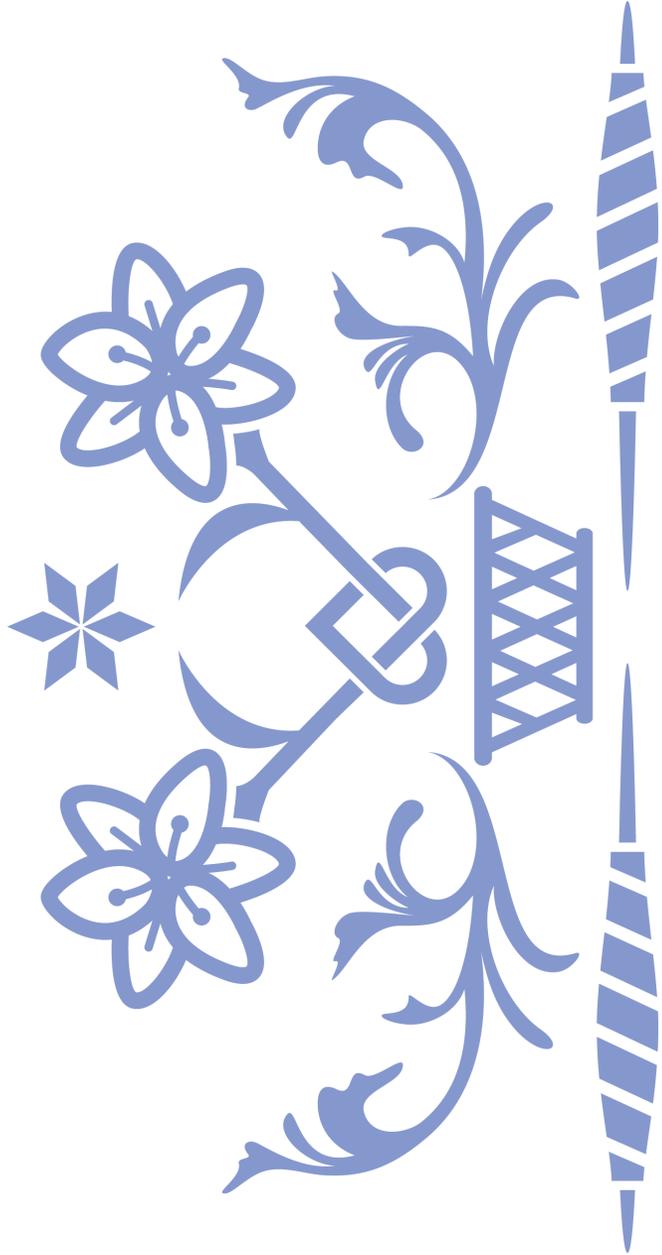


# Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart

## DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

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Children Ages  
Three to Four Years Old



- ◆ What to Expect
- ◆ Ways to Support Development
- ◆ Areas of Concern

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## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

# SOCIAL MILESTONES: RELATIONAL

- ◆ Imitates parents and friends
- ◆ Understands mine vs. his or hers
- ◆ Can respond to family members

# SOCIAL MILESTONES: PLAY

- ◆ Increase in imaginative play – more fantasy and pretend but also more unrealistic fears
- ◆ Takes an interest in interactive games (red light green light or duck, duck, goose)
- ◆ Plays with or alongside other children
- ◆ Often takes turns in games
- ◆ Can play “mom” and “dad”

Children graduate from onlooker play, observing others but not joining them, to parallel play, playing side by side and mimicking each other's action but not true involvement of each other in play. Often they move in to associative play, where children play with each other but not for a common goal or theme. Your child often shows more interest in playing with people than toys.

# EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Show affection for familiar people
- ◆ Shows a wide range of emotions, including happy, sad, angry or bored
- ◆ An improvement (or decrease) in separation anxiety
- ◆ Self control begins to improve when angry or upset
- ◆ Shows concern for a crying friend
- ◆ May get upset with major disruptions or changes to routine
- ◆ More independent
- ◆ Can dress and undress self
- ◆ Views self as whole person with mind, body, and feelings

## WAYS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



It is important to note that children develop at different rates. Those of you with more than one child or a friend with a child close in age can see how no two children develop at the exact same rate. While some skills will come easily and naturally to your child, others they may find more challenging. Even though these milestones are under the header of “Three to Four Years Old,” you may see some of them begin to emerge as early as two and as late as their Kindergarten year.

It is also important to note that it is common for a child to regress temporarily while developing other sets of skills or when a big change has happened in their lives. However, the child should be able to bounce back within a couple of weeks.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Allow your child to explore her senses
- ◆ Play with your child, wholly focused on the play
- ◆ While playing with your child, allow her to take the lead and tell you what to do and how to play
- ◆ Reflect her feelings to help her better understand her emotions, pay attention to emotions around them, and build on the connection between parent and child
- ◆ Talk to your child
- ◆ Encourage play dates between children, observing their methods of interaction and communication

Play is a child's language of communication. They will often replay events happening in their lives that bother them or confuse them, in order to process them.



When playing, only institute limits when necessary, i.e. hitting, throwing, hurting or damaging toys out of anger.



Allow your child to come up with solutions to “problems” that arise during play to help building their problem-solving tool kit and their critical thinking skills.



When helping children solve problems, reflect emotions on both side of the problem, validating each person’s emotions and modeling a calm and empathetic response to one another.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

## WAYS TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Create a routine for your child that allows them the space to play, time with you, and time to read together.
- ◆ Explain expectations of the child and what the child can expect when entering a new situation.
- ◆ Practice calming techniques both when calm and when angry, such as: [balloon breathing](#), [bubble breaths](#), [butterfly hugs](#), or read one of the books on the resource site in the Charging Toward Success blog.
- ◆ Offer your child a lot of [choices](#) when they are behaving well: Only offer 2 choices at a time - both of which you are comfortable with. One of my favorites is “do you want to play for one more minute or 5 more minutes?” You ask this when you have 5-10 minutes left before you actually need to stop playing and the child feels like they are in control.
- ◆ With children this age, when [disciplining](#), the shorter the conversation, the better.

Children do not always have the language to work through their frustrations, concerns or fears at this age, so they respond in a more outward – sometimes physical, sometimes emotional – way. Often a misbehavior is a response to a need not being met: child needs attention, child is hungry, child is overwhelmed, or child is overtired.

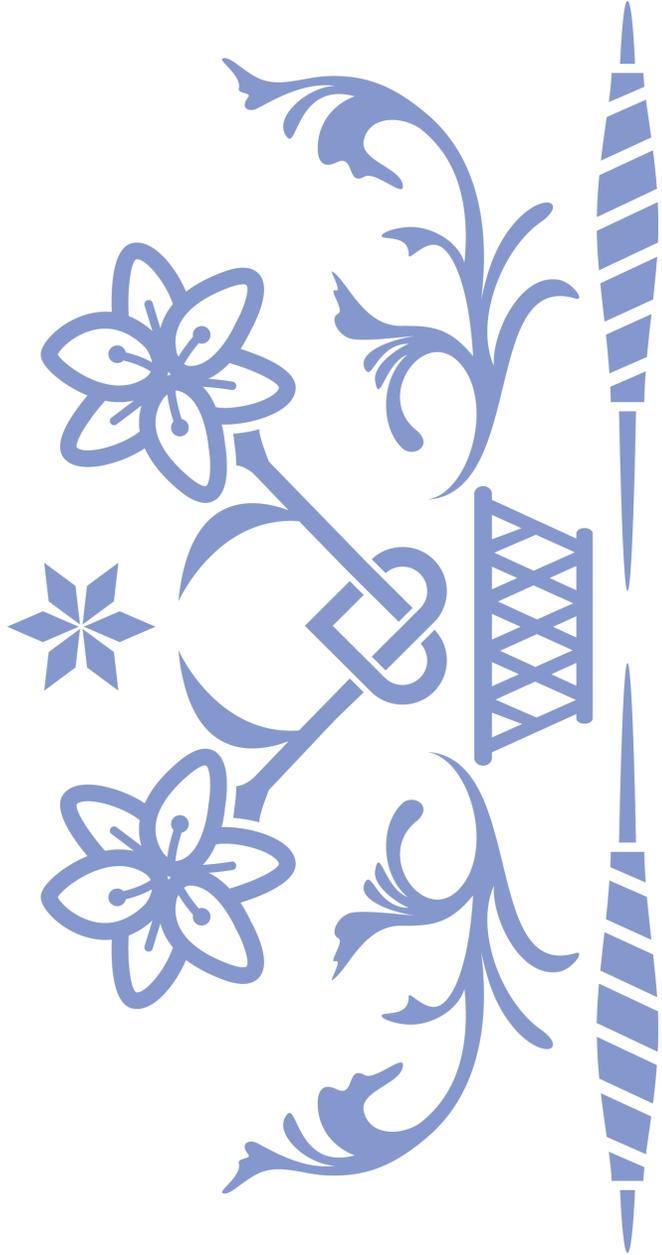
- ◆ Aggression: hitting, biting, pushing, throwing a tantrum
- ◆ Screaming
- ◆ Choosing to flee during the fight-flight-or-freeze stress reaction
- ◆ Having difficulty sitting still

- ◆ Answering a command with “no”
- ◆ Exhibiting some defiance
- ◆ Pushing boundaries
- ◆ Trouble with taking turns and sharing
- ◆ Whining
- ◆ Using baby talk

# DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE MISBEHAVIORS

# WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

- ◆ Shows limited interest in toys, play time or friends
- ◆ Does not respond to or play with other children
- ◆ Is not interested in others; is not having conversations
- ◆ Extreme difficulty separating from parents
- ◆ Shows abnormal aggression
- ◆ Shows extreme fears that interfere with daily activities
- ◆ Is extremely rigid about routines



- ◆ What to Expect
- ◆ Ways to Support Development
- ◆ Areas of Concern

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## ACADEMIC, COGNITIVE, AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

# ACADEMIC MILESTONES: LANGUAGE



Speaks 200-500 words



Answers simple questions



Speaks in sentences of 5-6 words



Connects sentences to same topic (i.e. “I go to the park,” “I slide,” and “I swing”)



Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps



Can name most familiar things



Identifies parts of an object (i.e. “the bikes has wheels, a bell, and a seat”)



Understands words like “in,” “on,” and “under”

# ACADEMIC MILESTONES: LANGUAGE

- ◆ Says first name, age, and gender
- ◆ Names a friend
- ◆ Says words like “I,” “me,” “we,” and “you”
- ◆ Uses some plurals (cats, cars, dogs)
- ◆ Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- ◆ Tells stories
- ◆ Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

# COGNITIVE MILESTONES

- ◆ Asks many “why” questions
- ◆ Correctly names familiar colors
- ◆ Understands the idea of same and different
- ◆ Pretends creatively
- ◆ Remembers parts of a story
- ◆ Understands morning, afternoon, and night
- ◆ Understands the concept of counting, may know a few numbers
- ◆ Can work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts
- ◆ Does puzzles with at least 3 or 4 pieces

# EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING MILESTONES



Completes one step errands



Cleans and puts away items with little assistance



Performs simple chores and self-care tasks with reminders and some physical assistance



Inhibits unsafe or inappropriate behaviors



Identifies/Reflects on thoughts and actions



Understands and follows increasingly complex rules

It is important to match activities to your child's skill level; younger children need a lot of support but also a lot of structure. Expect that your child may not be successful the first time they try these things, and maybe not even the second or third time. It is okay for them to be frustrated and struggle with an activity. This gives you a chance to teach them the coping skills to manage their frustration, and also it is the best way for your child to learn resilience. They need to experience a failure (or failures!) to learn it is both okay to make a mistake and then how to move forward and try again. We often try to save our kids the heartache of failure when really we need to take it as a wonderful learning opportunity to begin again, only this time, much wiser than the last.

WAYS TO  
SUPPORT  
ACADEMIC/  
COGNITIVE/  
AND  
EXECUTIVE  
FUNCTIONING  
DEVELOPMENT

# WAYS TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC/ COGNITIVE/ AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Talk to your child: Use clarifying language to learn proper pronunciation and tense, i.e. “I drink wawa” to “You like to drink water.” This helps model language skills in a non-judgmental way and helps with vocabulary development
- ◆ When your child asks for items that relate to physical states or feelings, talk about how they feel and ask questions about the feelings, i.e. “You want cheese. Oh, you feel hungry!”
- ◆ Watch and narrate your child’s play to help your child understand how language can describe their actions. Questions can be added, such as “What will you do next?” This also helps with reflection and planning, important executive functioning skills
- ◆ Sing songs with your child; this helps promote memory and word identification, i.e. Itsy Bitsy Spider or the ABC song

# WAYS TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC/ COGNITIVE/ AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Song games with movements, like the Hokey Pokey or I'm a Little Teapot, help with working memory, inhibitory control, and challenge attention span
- ◆ Practice naming colors by identifying those you see around you (also a great way to help a child calm down when upset or emotionally activated)
- ◆ Use bedtime to talk about what the child did today and what they can expect tomorrow. You can also talk about books read yesterday and why you will read tonight. Emphasizing the time concepts helps with working memory and sequencing
- ◆ Simple games that have turn taking, i.e. kicking a ball back and forth or playing tag
- ◆ Play "Hide and Seek" with toys and objects to help learn prepositional words
- ◆ Play "Simon Says" with two step instructions, i.e. touch your nose and then clap your hands. Your child can also be the leader and direct you

# WAYS TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC/ COGNITIVE/ AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Play games that require active inhibition like Freeze Dance
- ◆ Do puzzles, which also help with reflection and planning skills
- ◆ Play simple matching and sorting games. Include silly sorting games – small shapes in a big bucket, as the change is challenging. This also helps with selective attention and working memory
- ◆ Count out loud as you do every day activities and read fun counting books; this helps with learning cardinality
- ◆ When reading books with pictures of people, have your child point out smaller body parts such as wrist, eyebrow, or chin
- ◆ When reading books, ask your child questions about what he/she would do if your child was the character. This helps with comprehension

# WAYS TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC/ COGNITIVE/ AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Spot books are great to help with noun + verb + location parts of speech
- ◆ Book play dates
- ◆ Use brochures from stores or parks to talk about where places are located, how to get there, when to go, and what to do there, etc. This also helps with planning and organizational skills
- ◆ Working with your child to clean up after themselves and their room. This should be a fun activity you can do together and you can name objects as you put them away. This also benefits organizational skill development
- ◆ Assigning chores, small things like helping unload the dishwasher, are great ways to help teach sorting and categorizing
- ◆ Play simple imitation games, like Follow the Leader to help with working memory, attention and inhibition

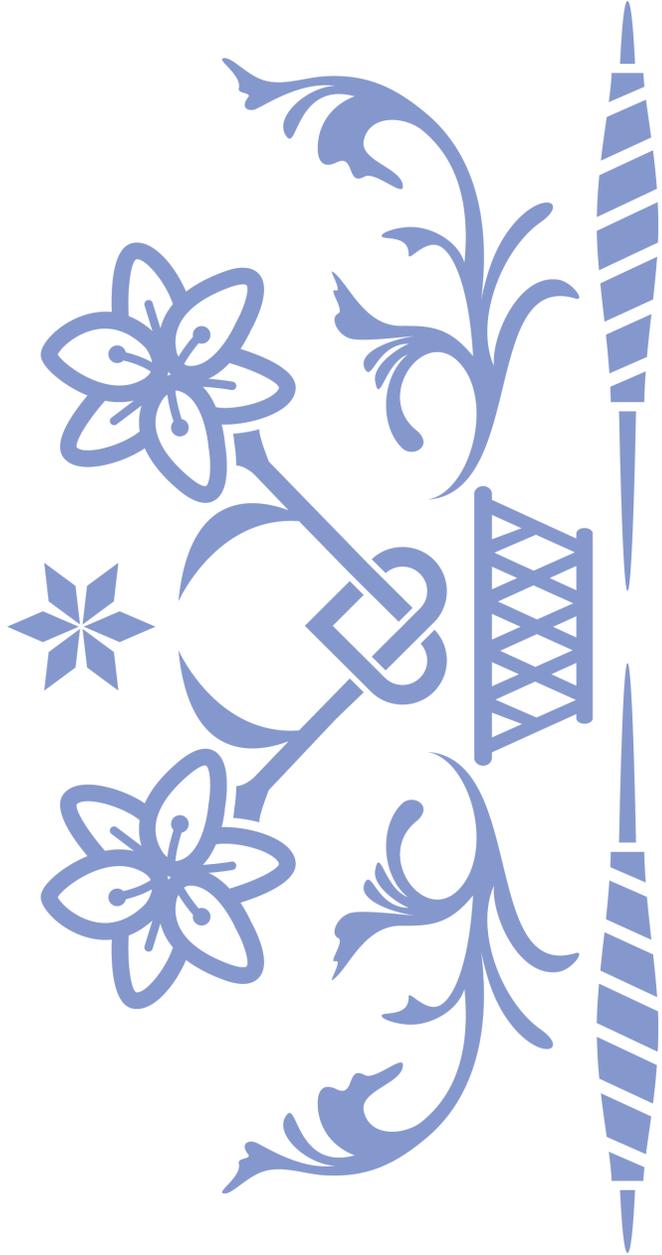
## WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

As a reminder, children reach these milestones as early as two years old and as late as five years old and may temporarily regress on certain previously learned skills while acquiring a new skill or during times of big change.

- ◆ Poor eye contact and/or avoids making eye contact when speaking
- ◆ Does not use words to make requests, instead relies on gesture or pointing
- ◆ Not forming new sentence structures, i.e., verb + noun, noun + verb, or adjective + noun
- ◆ Cannot identify simply body parts, clothes or parts of an object when they are named
- ◆ Not gaining new word(s) each week

# WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

- ◆ Cannot participate in fingerplay songs and/or recite small portions of songs
- ◆ Does not use “I,” “you,” or “me”
- ◆ Does not listen to stories or books for more than one minute
- ◆ Does not use words to get their daily needs met (i.e., eat, drink, potty)
- ◆ Speaks in single words or in sentences and often needs ideas simplified
- ◆ Strangers cannot understand child’s speaking attempts
- ◆ Does not show interest in others or is not having conversations
- ◆ Does not respond to phrases about familiar routines
- ◆ Vocabulary is less than 200 words



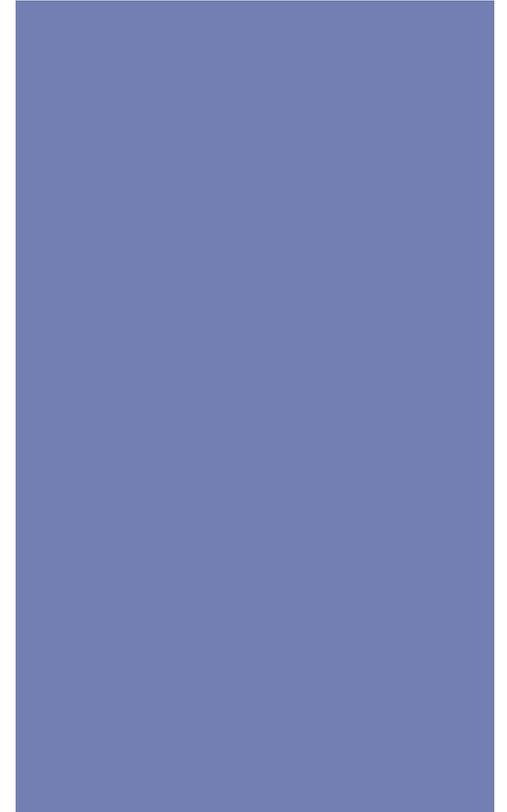
- ◆ What to Expect
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# MOTOR MILESTONES

# GROSS MOTOR MILESTONES

- ◆ Walks forward and backwards easily
- ◆ Bends over without falling
- ◆ Builds towers of more than 6 blocks
- ◆ Climbs walls
- ◆ Runs easily
- ◆ Pedals a tricycle
- ◆ Walks up and down stairs, one foot on each step
- ◆ Kick, throws and catches a ball
- ◆ Catches bounced ball, most of the time
- ◆ Hops and stands on one foot for up to 5 seconds



# FINE MOTOR SKILLS

These are also called hand and finger skills

- ◆ Copies a circle or square with a pencil or crayon
- ◆ Turns book pages one at a time
- ◆ Screws and unscrews jar lids
- ◆ Turns door handles
- ◆ Dresses and undresses self
- ◆ Uses age-appropriate scissors
- ◆ Draws a person with 2-4 body parts
- ◆ Writes some capital letters

# WAYS TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT: GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- ◆ Dancing/songs with movements (Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes)
- ◆ Ballet or gymnastics classes
- ◆ Pretend play (waddle like a duck, gallop like a horse, or soar like a plane)
- ◆ Pulling or pushing wagons, trucks, shopping cards, or doll strollers
- ◆ Obstacle courses: indoors use pillows, blankets, boxes and furniture, outdoors use rocks, logs or playground equipment
- ◆ Swimming
- ◆ Riding tricycles or scooters
- ◆ Throwing, catching, kicking, and rolling balls
- ◆ Swinging, sliding, or climbing at a playground
- ◆ Tag
- ◆ Soccer

# WAYS TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT: FINE MOTOR SKILLS

- ◆ Sand play
- ◆ Puppet shows
- ◆ Sidewalk chalk
- ◆ Play dough
- ◆ Threading with beads, pasta necklaces
- ◆ Pipe cleaner art
- ◆ Coloring and tracing
- ◆ Cutting
- ◆ Puzzles
- ◆ Finger-painting

# WHEN TO BE CONCERNED: GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

As a reminder, you will often see different rates and order of growth between children and even between genders. There is not set course to development, just an expected timeline.

- ◆ If your child is struggling with simple toys
- ◆ Loses skills they once had for longer than a couple of weeks
- ◆ Falls down a lot or has trouble with stairs
- ◆ Cannot throw a ball overhand, jump in place, or ride a tricycle

# WHEN TO BE CONCERNED: FINE MOTOR SKILLS

- ◆ If your child cannot stack four blocks
- ◆ Cannot hold a crayon between thumb and fingers
- ◆ Has trouble scribbling
- ◆ Cannot copy a circle
- ◆ Has trouble handling small objects



For any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to



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And visit the resources on the Charging Toward  
Success page on Duchesne Connect

# WHO TO CONTACT

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