



## The Pre-K to Grade 3 Essential Skill Inventories

*The Essential Skills Inventories (PreK-3)* help teachers systematically monitor progress towards the crucial skills which kids need to learn well. At each grade level there are 30 to 33 skills which are the *Core of the Core*. These skills need more than “coverage.” These skills must be developed to deep understanding and application for kids to become successful learners who love to learn for life. They include the language and literacy, numeracy and motor skill, behavior and social skills that correlate to long term success.

In recent years the Common Core State Standards and other initiatives have called on us to narrow the instructional framework and help children develop deep understanding and application of important skills and content. But in most schools the discussion still centers on what to “cover”. The Essential Skills Inventories help educators find the balance between delivering a rich and interesting curriculum, and also ensuring that crucial core skills and behaviors get the extra teaching time and practice time needed until they are completely proficient.

Teachers are trained to gather baseline data as they get to know their students during the first 6 to 7 weeks of school, and then to update data weekly within two of the skill domains. They are expected to use this information to know precisely which kids need more time or instruction to develop each skill. Learning to use formative assessment and then teach responsively during these early grades is crucial if we ever want to help more our children become successful learners.

*The Essential Skills Inventories (PreK-3)* give you a systematic measurement system to help each child develop competency in the skills and behaviors which are correlated to long-term success in learning and in life. It helps train teachers to give priority to formative assessment and differentiated instruction. The ESI will improve the quality of instruction and student outcomes in your school.

The impact of quality systematic measurement and formative assessment is remarkable. Any school district or education agency is invited to obtain a license to use the *PreK-3 Essential Skills Inventories*. Districts which commit to a staff training plan for proper use of the inventories for formative assessment and responsive instruction, and also agree to collect simple data to demonstrate fidelity to the protocol for use, are eligible for an on-going license with no additional fees.

For more information contact Bob Sornson, President of the Early Learning Foundation,  
[Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com](mailto:Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com)

## Use of the *PreK-3 Essential Skill Inventories*

*The PreK-3 Essential Skill Inventories* are a tool for systematically measuring progress toward the most crucial skills in the development of language, literacy, number sense, visual motor skill, gross motor skills, behavior and self-care skills. The inventories serve as an on-going formative assessment tool, regularly updated by the teacher, so you can identify specifically what students know and what they are ready to learn. These skills are the core skills which cannot be merely “covered”. These are the skills we must ensure students learn to a level of deep understanding and application. These are the foundation skills upon which a lifetime of learning will be built.

### **Protocol for Use of the *Essential Skill Inventories* in Pre-K, K, 1, 2, 3**

- Collect baseline data during the first four to six weeks of school
- Note proficiency by writing the date, after observing proficiency on several occasions
- Allow for exceptions during baseline data collection, letting teachers to use careful observational assessment to more quickly recognize proficiency
- Use data regarding student skills and needs to plan instruction
- Update two domains of the ESI each week
- Review data with principal monthly
- Data will be considered when making referrals to the Support Team
- Individual student data can be used for communication with parents. Classroom data should not be used for individual discussions
- Our goal is to help at least 90% of our students reach proficiency in every skill by the end of the school year

# Preschool Essential Skills Inventory

## Oral Language

Listens with interest to stories  
Retells stories using main ideas  
Expresses needs and wants verbally  
Uses words to solve problems  
Uses age-appropriate vocabulary  
Follows two-part oral directions

## Literacy

Shows an interest in books and print  
Understands basic concepts of print  
Identifies if sounds are the same or different  
Recognizes basic rhyming words  
Identifies basic shapes  
Recognizes and prints first name  
Identifies uppercase letters in first name  
Identifies some letters and the sounds they make

## Number Sense

Counts by rote to 20  
Recognizes numerals 0 to 10  
Counts using 1 to 1 correspondence for numbers (to 10)  
Models gross motor and fine motor patterns  
Understands concepts of add-on and take-away (to 10)

## Visual Motor Skills

Uses coloring and writing tools with skill  
Can draw a picture to express an idea  
Demonstrates appropriate cutting skills  
Uses proper pencil grip  
Prints name in own style  
Gives sustained effort to visual-motor tasks

## Gross Motor Skills

Throws and catches a large ball  
Throws and catches a small ball  
Stands on one foot with eyes open  
Hops on two feet  
Hops on one foot  
Demonstrates ability to cross midline

## Behavior

Separates from parents/caregivers without excessive upset  
Plays/shares with others  
Waits his/her turn  
Perseveres to complete a task  
Respects classroom rules and procedures  
Demonstrates good listening skills

## Self-Care

Can use the bathroom independently and complete hygiene tasks  
Able to dress self (puts on coat and shoes; fastens snaps, buttons and zippers)  
States full name and age

# Kindergarten Essential Skills Inventory

## Shapes

- Identifies basic shapes
- Draws basic shapes

## Visual

- Uses hands and eyes at nearpoint
- Maintains visual focus at nearpoint

## Letters

- Identifies uppercase letters
- Identifies lowercase letters

## Phonologic Skills

- Identifies if sounds are the same or different
- Identifies rhyming words
- Produces rhymes for a given word
- Identifies beginning or ending sounds of words
- Blends given sounds into words
- Segments words into sounds
- Listens with interest to stories
- Identifies a letter sound associated with each letter

## Language

- Asks questions when appropriate
- Follows 2-part oral directions
- Uses age-appropriate vocabulary
- Uses language to solve problems

## Motor Skills

- Demonstrates throwing and catching skills with a small ball
- Can balance on one foot with eyes closed for 6 seconds
- Skips well for at least 10 yards

## Literacy

- Understands concepts of print
- Recognizes personally meaningful sight words
- Prints 10-20 personally meaningful words
- Uses letter-sound knowledge to write words
- Prints full name

## Numeracy

- Demonstrates counting to 100
- Has one-to-one correspondence for numbers 1-30
- Understands combinations (to 10)
- Recognizes number groups without counting (2-10)

## Behavior

- Perseveres to achieve a task
- Respects basic rules/procedures in the classroom

# First Grade Essential Skills Inventory

## Letters

- Identifies uppercase letters
- Identifies lowercase letters

## Phonologic Skills

- Identifies a letter sound associated with each letter
- Produces rhymes for a given word
- Identifies beginning, middle and ending sounds of words
- Combines phonemes to make words

## Language

- Uses age appropriate vocabulary in speech
- Uses language to solve problems
- Demonstrates effective listening skills

## Motor Skills

- Demonstrates appropriate balance
- Demonstrates appropriate skipping
- Uses comfortable nearpoint vision

## Visualization

- Draws pictures with detail
- Can tell/retell a story

## Literacy

- Recognizes basic sight words
- Follows print when reading (visual tracking)
- Decodes grade-appropriate print
- Reads short sentences
- Reads for meaning
- Prints 30-50 personally meaningful words
- Expresses ideas in writing (simple sentences)
- Spells using common word patterns
- **Spells words using visual memory**

## Numeracy

- Counts objects with accuracy to 100
- Replicates visual patterns or movement patterns
- Recognizes number groups without counting (2-10)
- Understands concepts of add on or take away (to 30) with manipulatives
- Can add or subtract single digit problems on paper
- Shows a group of objects by number (to 100)

## Behavior

- Delays gratification when necessary
- Plays well with others
- Shows interest in learning

# Second Grade Essential Skills Inventory

## Reading

- Uses phonics knowledge to decode words in context
- Recognizes basic sight words
- Reads with fluency
- Reads for pleasure
- Identifies story elements
- Identifies main ideas
- Makes text-to-text connections
- Makes text-to-self connections
- Makes inferences when reading

## Visual Memory

- Spells using visual memory
- Can remember 3-block visual patterns

## Language

- Uses age-appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates effective listening skills
- Uses language to recognize feelings in self and others

## Writing

- Prints neatly
- Writes in full sentences
- Spells using phonics skills
- Makes simple revisions to a draft
- Writes using rich detail

## Motor Skills

- Demonstrates excellent balance and skipping

## Mathematics

- Quickly recognizes number groups (to 100)
- Can show a group of objects by number (to 100)
- Can add-on or take-away from a group of objects (to 100)
- Can add or subtract double digit problems on paper
- Counts by 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10 using manipulatives
- Solves written and oral story problems using the correct operations
- Understands/identifies place value to 1,000

## Behavior

- Demonstrates empathy for fellow students
- Shows interest in learning

# Third Grade Essential Skills Inventory

## Reading

- Uses phonics knowledge to decode words in context
- Recognizes basic sight words
- Reads with fluency
- Reads for pleasure
- Identifies story elements using reading strategies
- Identifies main ideas
- Monitors comprehension while reading
- Makes inferences when reading
- Makes text-to-text, self, world connections

## Language

- Uses age-appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates effective listening skills
- Uses language to recognize feelings in self and others

## Writing

- Prints neatly and writes neatly in cursive
- Spells using visual memory
- Spells using phonics skills and word patterns
- Uses capitalization and punctuation
- Writes a paragraph using full sentences
- Expresses a clear opinion in oral and written form
- Edits and revises drafts

## Mathematics

- Reads and writes numbers to 10,000 in words and numerals
- Uses common units of measurement: Length, weight, time, money, temperature
- Can add or subtract three digit problems on paper with regrouping
- Can round numbers to the 10s
- Can round numbers to the 100s
- Add and subtract 2 digit numbers mentally
- Counts by 5,6,7,8,9,10 using manipulatives
- Uses arrays to visually depict multiplication
- Recognizes basic fractions
- Solves written and oral story problems using the correct operation

## Behavior

- Shows interest in learning
- Demonstrates empathy for fellow students

## Organization

- Organizes to complete a task in school
- Organizes to complete a task at home

## **Use of the Rubric for the PreK-3 *Essential Skill Inventories***

**Intervention:** If a skill is considered *Intervention*, the teaching staff should be giving special attention to designing instructional opportunities for the child so that this skill will quickly grow and develop.

**Developing:** Skills which are in the range of progress expected for this school year, but not yet proficient are considered *Developing*.

**Proficient:** If a skill has met the description of *Proficient* in the rubric, on several occasions, using different learning materials, over a period of at least two weeks, they can be considered *Proficient*.

**Learning is not a race. By carefully monitoring student growth teachers can plan instruction that is challenging and interesting to students, without pushing children into frustration and disengagement. By updating the assessment weekly, teachers can understand their students and plan to meet each student's instructional needs. This is how students learn best, and how teachers develop happy and successful classrooms.**

## **License Agreement for Use of the PreK-3 *Essential Skill Inventories***

Any school district or education agency is invited to obtain a license to use the *K-3 Essential Skills Inventories*. Programs which commit to a staff training plan for proper use of the inventories are eligible for an on-going license with no additional fees.

**Use of the *Essential Skill Inventories* includes:**

- a training plan designed to the needs of your district, usually to include staff training, director/principal coaching, and data monitoring
- the *Essential Skill Inventory* in paper and electronic formats
- the ESI rubrics
- the ESI protocol for use, along with other supportive documents to help ensure fidelity and quality
- the expectation that the district will collect data to show that the ESI is used with fidelity, and data showing the quality of student outcomes

For more information on training and a license agreement for use of the *K-3 Essential Skill Inventories*, contact Bob Sornson at the Early Learning Foundation,

[Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com](mailto:Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com)





## **Essential Skill Inventories: Systematic Measurement of Student Learning**

The *Essential Skill Inventories* provide a tool for systematic measurement of progress toward essential learning outcomes. The ESI gives feedback to teachers regarding the skill levels of each student, and drives the instructional planning process so that students who need more time or a different approach to learning crucial outcomes are given exactly what they need.

In most schools across America, children are being offered non-responsive curriculum-driven instruction which does not serve their learning needs. Teachers are asked to “cover” content without carefully monitoring what children are learning to a level of deep understanding and application. The *Essential Skill Inventories* help focus instruction by giving teachers accurate data about what each student knows and is ready to learn. The ESI shapes teacher behavior, and it also provides an opportunity to have rich conversations with parents about the crucial learning needs of each child.

Use of the Inventories is a crucial part of transforming the early learning experiences of our students. The early childhood years are the most important learning period in the life of a child. We can help far more students build essential skills in every domain of early childhood development, experience success during the crucial early years, and discover the joy of learning for life.

Training for use of the Essential Skill Inventories includes how to:

1. Narrow the instructional focus while offering a rich and interesting curriculum, allowing plenty of time for projects, activities, laughter and a love of learning.
2. Identify essential early learning outcomes in every domain of early childhood development (language, sensory-motor skills, behavior and social skills, phonologic skills, literacy and numeracy).
3. Systematically measure the progress of each student toward proficiency in the essential skills.
4. Adjust instruction to meet the needs of each student.
5. Help far more students experience early learning success and fall in love with learning for life.

**For more information on training and a license agreement for use of the *Essential Skill Inventories*, contact Bob Sornson at the Early Learning Foundation, [Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com](mailto:Bob@earlylearningfoundation.com)**



## Why Choose to Use the Essential Skill Inventories?

1. **Simplicity.** The ESI concisely describes the essential learning and behavior outcomes needed to predict high-quality early learning success at each level.
2. **Clear and concrete standards.** The essential skills and standards for proficiency provide a clear framework for what should be learned, which is a much different focus than what objectives were “covered”. Teachers have a clear focus for what students must learn and be able to do.
3. **Teacher-driven assessment.** Using the Essential Skill Inventories, teachers are expected to find multiple ways to embed assessment into the design of instruction. This can be done with any high quality curriculum and materials, and creates a teacher-driven assessment process.
4. **Analytics.** By updating data weekly in at least two domains of the ESI, teachers have up-to-date information about the learning needs and readiness of each student. Districts can accurately track student success on a weekly basis.
5. **Data that matters.** The at-a-glance classroom inventory provides teachers with all the information they need for planning instruction, and encourages differentiated instruction.
6. **Improved teacher skills.** Use of the Essential Skill Inventories helps teachers significantly improve their skills for formative assessment, differentiate instruction, understand the whole child, and build connections with students.
7. **Improved outcomes.** Knowing the crucial learning needs of each student encourages teachers to design instruction at the instructional level of each student. This keeps students more engaged and motivated, improves time on task, behavior, and learning outcomes.
8. **Cost.** There is no on-going cost for the license to use the Inventories. Organizations with staff trained to use the inventories, and with a simple but powerful data collection plan, will be able to sustain use without incurring annual costs.

# Essential Skills Inventory: Kindergarten

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Assessment	Shapes		Visual		Letters		Phonological Skills						Language				Motor Skills			Literacy				Numeracy			Behavior																								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32																			
Essential Skills	Identifies basic shapes	Draws basic shapes	Uses hands and eyes at near point	Maintains visual focus at near point	Identifies uppercase letters	Identifies lowercase letters	Identifies if sounds are the same or different	Identifies rhyming words	Produces rhymes for a given word	Identifies beginning or ending sounds of words	Blends given sounds into words	Segments words into sounds	Listens with interest to stories	Identifies a letter sound associated with each letter	Asks questions when appropriate	Follows two-part oral directions	Uses age-appropriate vocabulary	Uses language to solve problems	Demonstrates throwing and catching skills with a small ball	Balances on one foot with eyes closed for six seconds	Skips well for at least 10 yards	Understands concepts of print	Recognizes personally meaningful sight words	Prints 10 to 20 personally meaningful words	Uses letter-sound knowledge to write words	Prints full name	Demonstrates counting to 100	Has one-to-one correspondence for numbers 1 to 30	Understands combinations to 10	Recognizes number groups without counting (2 to 10)	Perseveres to achieve a task	Respects basic rules/procedures in the classroom																			
Student Name	Indicate mastery by writing date to the right of the student's name and under feature mastered																																																		