Fitting the Pieces Together:

3 Year Olds
Special Thanks

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Additional copies of this document are available at:
www.fcpsteach.org - click on Family Involvement under the Curriculum heading

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Fitting the Pieces Together: 3-Year-Olds

What you will find on the following pages...

Developmental Stages

Each child grows and develops in a unique way. This section of the booklet is designed to give you general information concerning the development of children. Because child development is an ongoing process, this section includes a three-year look at how children in this age group change and grow. A typical 3-year-old will be in a variety of stages in this three-year look.

Information and Suggested Activities

This section of the booklet is written to introduce you to some information about 3-year-olds, their needs, and activities that will reinforce these goals. Within this section you will find much information, including ideas for reading, speaking, understanding math, as well as social and emotional development. Much of this section will assist you in getting your children ready for public school and its curriculum. If you want more information about the Frederick County Public Schools, go to www.fcps.org.
# Developmental Stages of 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds

Please remember: Each child grows and develops in a unique way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Physical: Small Muscles</th>
<th>Physical: Large Muscles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>*Is constantly in motion</td>
<td>*Feeds self with spoon</td>
<td>*Pulls toys behind while walking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Tires easily</td>
<td>*Experiments by touching, smelling, and tasting</td>
<td>*Carries large toy or several toys while walking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Likes to say, “No!”</td>
<td>*Scribbles vigorously on paper</td>
<td>* Begins to walk on tiptoe, run, and climb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Gets upset easily</td>
<td>*Can turn pages of a book</td>
<td>*Kicks, tosses, or rolls a large ball</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Cannot reason, but can be distracted</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Likes to push, pull, fill, and dump</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Needs consistency with routine</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Stoops or squats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs 9-13 hours of sleep per day</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Opens cabinets and drawers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs sense of security, which may include</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Can bend over to pick up object without falling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nightlights, security blankets, or stuffed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>animals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*May be interested in toilet training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Washes hands with help</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>*Wants to do things “right”</td>
<td>*Transitions from infantile grasp to holding a spoon, fork, or writing tool correctly</td>
<td>*Walks well and runs easily</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Acts in a determined and self-willed manner</td>
<td>(with three-finger grasp)</td>
<td>*Swings arms freely</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Tests limits</td>
<td>*Sometimes changes handedness (left and right)</td>
<td>*Climbs well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs consistency with routine</td>
<td>*Feeds self completely</td>
<td>*Fears falling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs 9-13 hours of sleep per day</td>
<td>*Scribbles and draws on paper</td>
<td>*Begin to throw and catch a large ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs sense of security, which may include</td>
<td>*Screws and unscrews jar lids</td>
<td>*Begin to pedal tricycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nightlights, security blankets, or stuffed</td>
<td>*Turns book pages one at a time</td>
<td>*Enjoys gross motor play (climbing, running, jumping, hopping, throwing)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>animals</td>
<td>*Starts to use scissors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*May relieve anxiety through thumb-sucking,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>chewing clothes, and having security items</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*May be involved in toilet training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Washes hands independently</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Brushes teeth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Begins to dress self</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>*Enjoys positive praise</td>
<td>*May show preference for left or right hand</td>
<td>*Hops on one foot</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Uses “vivid” imagination</td>
<td>*Draws simple stick figures</td>
<td>*Catches ball with two hands</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Experiments with feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Enjoys gross motor play (climbing, running, jumping, hopping, throwing)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Shows extreme emotions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Loves anything new</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Exhibits curiosity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Likes limits and structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Dresses self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Needs 9-13 hours of sleep per day</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Is able to reason</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>Listening and Language Development</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Imitates others</td>
<td>*Has increased interest in language</td>
<td>*Points to objects or pictures when they are named</td>
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<tr>
<td>*May have imaginary playmate</td>
<td>*Enjoys books and music</td>
<td>*Recognizes names of familiar people, objects, and body parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Enjoys solitary play</td>
<td>*Begins to sort by colors and shapes</td>
<td>*Is able to follow one-step directions</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Enjoys parallel play (playing near, but not with, others)</td>
<td>*Begins to point to one and many objects</td>
<td>*Uses two- to four-word phrases and sentences</td>
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<td>*Claims everything is “mine”</td>
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<td>*May show defiant behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Shows sensitivity to the reaction of others</td>
<td>*Uses language to relate stories, experiences, and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Likes having friends</td>
<td>*Uses language to express wants and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*May enjoy having imaginary friends</td>
<td>*Uses simple nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adjectives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Pretends to be someone or something other than self (dog, cat)</td>
<td>*Develops four- to five-word sentences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Enjoys being with familiar adults</td>
<td>*Listens with understanding in one-to-one situations better than in groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Changes activities often</td>
<td>*Experiments with sounds and expressions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Begins cooperative play (taking turns, playing together)</td>
<td>*Is able to follow two-step directions</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Plays best in pairs</td>
<td>*Is expanding vocabulary</td>
<td>*Uses language to gain information and to relate experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Calls attention to own accomplishments</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Is able to carry out sequence of two- to three-step directions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Matches and names colors</td>
<td>*Listens with understanding to directions and conversations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Names things from memory</td>
<td>*Explores humor in language (rhymes, nonsense words)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Names differences in size, weight, and length</td>
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<td>*Counts objects while pointing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Likes being read to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Likes to make things</td>
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<td>*Chooses own categories for sorting things</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Begins to recognize and copy name</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Building Literacy

A typical 3-year-old:
- Repeats words and sounds
- Enjoys listening to stories
- Repeats a story and discusses the ideas and events
- Repeats simple rhymes
- Is able to tell simple stories from pictures
- Is able to sing a simple tune
- Understands now, soon, and later
- Follows two-step directions
- Responds correctly to yes and no questions
- Enjoys talking on the phone

Reading
The most important thing that you can do is read to your child!

Before reading with your child:
- Turn off T.V. and radio
- Focus all your attention on reading
- Sit close
- Show how to hold the book
- Point to the front and back of the book
- Look at the pictures. Ask, “What do you think the story may be about?”

While reading with your child:
- Change your voice as you read about different characters
- Point to the words as you read
- Talk about the illustrations
  (If your child gets fidgety, you may decide not to finish the book)
- Stop reading part way through the book. Ask, “What do you think will happen next?”

After reading with your child:
- Talk about what you like best about the story
- Talk about what the story was about
• Dramatize the story by dressing up as characters or using puppets or dolls

**Rhyming**

• Model rhyming familiar words and names (i.e. *cup*-pup, *Mommy*-Tommy)
• Recite familiar nursery rhymes, and stop so that your child can fill in the missing rhyming words (i.e. “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great ____ [child says *fall*].”)
• Ask your child if two words rhyme (i.e. “Do *hat* and *truck* rhyme? Do *hat* and *cat* rhyme?”)
• Make up nonsense rhymes (i.e. *fish*, *delish*, *quish*, *balish*)

**Read nursery rhymes and do finger plays with your child**

**Jack and Jill**
Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down, and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after

**Five Little Freckled Frogs**

Five little freckled frogs
Sitting on a hollow log
Eating some delicious bugs
Yum Yum Yum
One jumped into the pool
Where it was nice and cool
Now there are four little freckled frogs

**Five Little Monkeys**
Five little monkeys
Jumping on the bed
One fell down and broke his head
Mamma called the doctor
The doctor said, No more monkeys jumping on the bed
Row, Row, Row Your Boat
Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, Merrily, Merrily, Merrily
Life is such a dream

Suggested books on rhyming
Silly Sally by Audrey Wood
Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
Is your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino
In the Tall, Tall, Grass by Denise Fleming
Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw
Cat and the Hat by Dr. Seuss
One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish by Dr. Seuss

Playing with Sounds (Phonological Awareness)
• Shake different objects, such as a box of macaroni and a box of Cheerios, and ask, “Do they sound the same?”
• Hide a timer, and, when it goes off, ask your child from where the sound is coming
• Sing in soft voices and loud voices
• Have you or your child talk in a mouse (high) voice, a lion (low) voice, or a robot (monotone) voice
• When driving in vehicles, play word games (Ex. “Do sit and run sound the same?”)
• Emphasizing the first sounds in pairs of familiar words or names, ask if the words start with the same sound (i.e. “Do mmmommy and mmmoon start the same?”)
• When outside with your child, have him put his hands over his eyes and tell you what sounds he hears

Suggested items to include in your home:
• Books
• Magazines
• Newspapers
• Children’s CDs
• CD player
• Puppets
• Stuffed animals
• Dolls
• Pillows
• Bean bag chairs
A typical 3-year-old:

- Is able to understand more language than he can express
- Enjoys repeating words and sounds
- Speaks clearly enough to be understood by most listeners
- Has a speaking vocabulary of about 500 words
- Can string words together in short sentences of four to five words
- Asks who, what, where, and why questions
- Has the ability to use language to solve problems

Expanding Vocabulary

- Talk with your child about EVERYTHING, from what he is eating to where you will go on vacation
- Use a wide variety of words in everyday conversations (i.e. Instead of saying, “Look at the truck,” say, “Look at that beautiful, red, speeding truck!”)
- Use real names when talking about things, and share various words for different objects (i.e. If your child says, “Potty,” you might say, “Oh, do you mean that you need to go to the bathroom?” If your child says, “Me cup,” you might say, “I see, you would like to have your green cup.”)
- Describe what someone is wearing or how something tastes/smells/looks
- Use new words or concepts several times a day in different situations
- Be patient when explaining, discussing, and answering questions
- Pronounce words correctly—do not use baby talk
- Make a “picture book” using family photos, pictures from magazines, and catalogs, and together practice naming what you see
- Read stories aloud
- Talk about the stories read together
- Re-read books multiple times, always with expression
- Encourage your child to “pretend read” (let your child pretend that he is reading a book to you)
- Allow him to record his own voice and play it back

“At this age, it’s more important to focus on how your preschooler uses words rather than the number of words that they say.”
McAleer-Hamaguchi
Suggested items to include in your home:

- Old cell phones
- Library books
- Homemade books
- Family photo albums
- Writing tools, such as, pencils, crayons, paper, envelopes
- Picture cards
Building Numeracy

Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered for himself, that child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.”
Jean Piaget

A typical 3-year-old:
• Counts aloud 1-10
• Matches like objects
• Sorts by one attribute (color, size, shape)
• Identifies common colors
• Counts two to three objects
• Stacks five to seven building blocks
• Is able to put together a five- to six-piece puzzle
• Is able to draw a circle and a square
• Is able to sing number songs and rhymes

Problem Solving (Looking at things and figuring them out)
• Read books that ask questions or present puzzles, and talk with your child to help him figure out the answer
• Give your child a paper bag and have a scavenger hunt (i.e. “Let’s find something green. Let’s find something soft.”)
• When outside pick up natural objects, such as leaves, and talk about how they are the same/different
• Use a magnifying glass to look at leaves, and talk about their sizes, shapes, colors, etc.
• Play a listening game by having your child cover his eyes and identify the sounds he hears (i.e. cars, wind, footsteps, machinery, birds, and insects)
• After your child identifies a sound, ask, “How did you know that was a bird?” etc.

Shapes
• At lunch or snack, ask your child if he wants his sandwich cut into triangles or rectangles
• Talk about the colors, textures and shapes around you: an orange square of cheese; a white, oval egg; or a soft, blue, square blanket
• Talk about the blocks you have and describe the shapes in a sentence
**Patterning**
- Use everyday objects, such as food and clothing, to make patterns:
  - Shoe, sock, shoe, sock
  - Apple slice, banana slice, apple slice, banana slice
  - Lucky Charm, marshmallow, Lucky Charm, marshmallow
  - Pretzel goldfish, cracker goldfish, pretzel goldfish, cracker goldfish

**Measuring**
- At bath time, play with spoons, cups, and containers
- Let your child use teaspoons and measuring spoons to measure out and serve snacks
- Measure familiar objects with same size blocks (i.e. “How many blocks long is your shoe?”)

**Sort and Classify**
- Play matching games while sorting the laundry
- Talk about the different textures of the laundry
- Play “Memory” or “Concentration” with 10 picture cards (5 matches)
- Sort toys, every day objects, your child’s clothing
- Play a clean up game, and sort objects into one box for toys and one box for books
- Sort snack foods, such as trail mix, Lucky Charms, Fruit Loops

**Same and Different**
- Help your child compare things (i.e. Find leaves, and arrange them in groups, such as small/large, green/not green.)
- Go on a “Texture Hunt,” and ask your child, “Is this hard? Is this soft? Is this rough? Is this smooth?”

**Sequencing**
- Prepare food, and say, “First we get the bowl, next we get the cereal, and then we pour the milk.”
- Help your child line up his books from smallest to largest on the shelf.
- When your child is getting dressed, say, “First get your shirt, and then get your pants, and last get your shoes and socks.”
Suggested Songs and Rhymes:

*Five Little Ducks*
Five little ducks  
Went out one day  
Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said  
"Quack, quack, quack, quack."  
But only four little ducks came back

*One Two Buckle My Shoe*
One, two  
Buckle my shoe  
Three, four  
Knock at the door  
Five, six  
Pick up sticks  
Seven, eight  
Lay them straight  
Nine, ten  
A good, fat hen

*The Itsy Bitsy Spider*
The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout  
Down came the rain and washed the spider out  
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain  
And the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again

Suggested items to include in your home:
- Stuffed animals
- Blocks
- Wooden stringing beads
- Shoes
- Plastic lids
- Cotton balls
- Refrigerator magnets
- Magnetic numbers and shapes
- Old measuring cups and spoons
- Keys
- Spoons
- Animal crackers
- Goldfish
- Grapes
- Raisins
Imaginative Play

“Play is the work of the child.”
Maria Montessori

A Typical 3-Year-Old:
- Plays alone for short periods of time (15-20 minutes)
- Stacks five to seven building blocks
- Enjoys playing alone, but near other children
- Imitates the language, manners, and habits of adults, family members, and pets when playing “house”
- May have imaginary friends
- Uses everyday objects (paper towel rolls, sticks, blankets) in imaginative ways, for example, as magic wands, telescopes, swords, capes, etc.

Benefits of Imaginative Play:
- Builds imagination and curiosity
- Promotes social skills
- Helps children practice solving everyday problems
- Advances physical development
- Helps express and work through emotions
- Allows for practice of different behaviors
- Helps children understand themselves and others
- Positively effects early brain development
- Develops sustained concentration
- Gives children control over their play
When your child: | Your child is learning:
--- | ---
Puts blocks in trucks and dumps them out | About size, weight, and number concepts
Uses blocks to build a zoo, a school, etc. | How to recreate the world around them
Puts on dress up clothes | To use small muscle skills and how to take part in “make believe” which develops abstract thinking
Pretends to be a grown-up | How to better understand life experiences
Plays beside other children | How to get along with others
Builds a castle out of paper towel tubes and tissue boxes | How to solve problems, make choices, and attend to a task

**Encouraging Imaginative Play:**
- Find a place, such as a corner of a room, under a table, in a large box, in a tree or play house
- Find the time for unstructured time everyday

**Suggested items to include in your home:**
- Pots, pans, plastic containers, wooden spoons
- Laundry baskets, appliance boxes
- Pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, dolls
- Bath towels
- Socks
- Cardboard tubes from paper towels
- Kid-versions of everyday objects – play telephones, plastic dishes, play watches/clocks, etc.
- Stuffed animals
- Musical instruments

**A note about children watching television...**
Current research reports that too much television can negatively affect brain development. Therefore, until more research is done about the effects of TV on very young children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend television for children age two or younger. For older children, the Academy recommends no more than one to two hours per day of educational, nonviolent programs.