The Basics Whole-Community Strategy for Early Learning and Brain Development

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Collective Intentionality

What None of Us Can Do Alone, All of Us Can Do Together.
This work began at the **Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI) at Harvard University** because cognitive disparities between children from different racial/ethnic and parental-education backgrounds are in place, on average, by the age of two.

**The Basics Strategy** enriches childhood experiences to enhance wellbeing and reduce developmental disparities. It entails a **carefully cultivated system** of partnerships, information, and technologies, to help whole communities integrate five science-based tenets—**The Basics 5 Principles**—into the daily routines of families and other institutions where young children, aged birth-to-five, learn and grow.

The lead organization, **The Basics, Inc.**, is a nonprofit spinoff of the **AGI**, co-founded by the **Black Philanthropy Fund**, and operating under the fiscal sponsorship of Third Sector New England (TSNE).

Joining Boston where the work began, the **Basics Learning Network** (BLN) of participating localities is a community of practice that applies The Basics Strategy, learns from evaluation, and innovates. An external evaluation indicates positive impacts. Millions of families stand to benefit from BLN coalitions in the US, Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, and Canada.

This slide deck is from a presentation to the New York State P-3 Summer Institute, August 2023.
Basics Learning Network Locations

Locations in Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, and Canada not shown.
The Basics:

- Problem & Science
- Framework:
  - 5 Principles
  - 3 Gears
  - Multi-Sector Dissemination
- Tools
- Evidence
- Art
The Problem & The Science

Click to view 4-minute video.
There is an equity crisis years before kindergarten!

Tens of millions in the US and abroad lack regular access to science-based information, supports, and reminders needed to help the youngest children keep pace and flourish.

*Calculations by Ron Ferguson using the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort.
The Basics Principles
Click to view 4-minute video.
The Basics Principles

Maximize Love, Manage Stress
  Emotional security & self-regulation skills

Talk, Sing, and Point
  Effective communication skills

Count, Group, and Compare
  Quantitative skills for math & science

Explore through Movement and Play
  Curiosity & creativity

Read and Discuss Stories
  Thinking skills and knowledge
The Gears
The 3 Gears

Informed by Behavioral Science, to make The Basics Principles an Everyday Lifestyle
Multisector Dissemination

All Three Gears, Regarding All Five Principles, Reinforced Across Multiple Sectors

Click to view 4-minute video.
Healthcare professionals talk about The Basics during pediatric & obgyn visits

Educators integrate The Basics into K-12 lessons

Counselors weave The Basics into group sessions

Curators feature The Basics in exhibits, activities, events

Stylists promote The Basics to their clients

The Basics Principles help staff and parents collaborate

Family plans include embracing The Basics as a lifestyle

Housing developments

HR departments disseminate The Basics to all employees

Family support programs

Places of worship

Sermons promote The Basics as a shared, community responsibility

Residents organize activities that focus on The Basics

Employers

Family Shelters

Childcare centers

Barbers and stylists

Libraries and museums

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Staff from Local Backbone Organizations Reach Parents Through Partnerships with Organizations in Multiple Sectors
Integration Into Local Programming Ecologies

The list below is from The Basics Annual Census of local backbone organizations.

Census Prompt: “If applicable, please list any important programs/brands that are being used by your organization or others in your community in combination with The Basics concepts or resources.

1. 1000 books before kindergarten
2. Babies Can’t Wait
3. Bright by Text
4. Developmental Milestones
5. Dolly Parton Imagination Library K
6. Pre-K
7. Family Connection
8. Get Georgia Reading
9. HALO(Healthy Alternatives For Little Ones)
10. Head Start
11. Help Me Grow VT.
12. Nurse Family Partnership
13. Parents As Teachers
14. Raising a Reader
15. Reach Out and Read
16. Read to Grow
17. Ready 4 K
18. Ready Rosie
19. ReadyKids
20. Sparkler App
21. Stories with Ms. Sheena
22. Talk with Me Baby
23. Talking is Teaching
24. Videos from The Center for the Developing Child
25. Vroom
26. WIC
The Tools

Click to view 4-minute video.
Posters & Print Collateral

**The Basics**

**WHY?**
Because 80% of brain growth happens in the first three years!

**Maximize Love, Manage Stress**

**Count, Group, and Compare**

**Talk, Sing, and Point**

**Explore Through Movement and Play**

**Read and Discuss Stories**

**The Basics 5 Principles**

**The Basics Insights 4 Months**

Science-based facts and suggested activities to boost your 4-month-old’s brain development and learning.

**Facts**

A breakthrough in research is proving that design-and-play ideas are good for kids.

**Try This**

- **Talk, Sing, and Point**
  - Make a rattle or toy and show it to your baby.
  - Sing songs to your baby.
  - Point to objects and name them.

**Facts**

Babies naturally imitate other person’s facial expressions and sounds.

**Try This**

- **Explore Through Movement and Play**
  - Tickle your baby’s feet and hands.
  - Sing a song.
  - Move around together.

**Facts**

Every day, your baby is working hard to learn new things and master new skills. Celebrate these accomplishments!

**Try This**

- **Maximize Love, Manage Stress**
  - When your baby is calm, give them a hug and a kiss.
  - Say, “Thank you. What a special baby. You’re learning so much.”
Parent Toolkit with Videos and Tips

**English**

Activities and ideas for right now, to learn and grow together with your baby.

View Tips by Age Group

- Infants (0-12 Months)
- Toddlers (12-36 Months)
- Preschoolers (36-60 months)

Explore The Basics

- Maximize Love, Manage Stress
- Talk, Sing, and Point
- Count, Group, and Compare
- Explore through Movement and Play
- Read and Discuss Stories

**Spanish**

Actividades e ideas inmediatas, para aprender y crecer con tu bebé.

Consejos por Edad

- Bebes (0-12 Meses)
- Niñositos (12-36 Meses)
- Niños en edad preescolar (36-60 Meses)

Explore The Basics

- Dele todo el amor, controle el estrés
- Hablele, cántele y señalele las cosas
- Cuente, agrupe y compare las cosas
- Explore mediante el movimiento y el juego
- Lea y comente cuentos

[Click here](#) to visit.
Pages from the Parent Toolkit

Click here for this page and video.

Maximize Love, Manage Stress

*Staying emotionally present for your children means they’ll be happier, strengthen their emotional health, and build self-control skills.*

**Plan to Avoid Stress**

What situations tend to be stressful? Think about those situations ahead of time and plan how you can improve or avoid them. For example, avoid going to the store right before your child’s naptime.

**Moment of Gratitude**

Take a moment to think about all the things that make you grateful right now. Look for, list, reflect, and enjoy that feeling for a few minutes.

**Go Easy on Yourself**

Life can be overwhelming, and we all make mistakes. Focus on the big picture and be gentle with yourself when things don’t go as planned. And try to help. All parents need help.

See all tips

**Why This Matters**

Infants and toddlers are the scientists—curious and excited to learn about their surroundings. Infants explore and learn about the world through movement and play. They use every kind of play to enjoy and understand their environment. Infants, using the senses, enjoy games with loved ones and participate in play, creative activities such as drawing, and play as a way of coming to terms with a world they find challenging. Movement and play keep children healthy and build their coordination and strength.

Young children are affected by your responses, whether you are happy or upset. So, it is important to find strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself helps you stay calm and patient with your child.

Click here for this page and video.

Explore Through Movement and Play

*Encourage curiosity, discovery, and a healthy body.*

**Let Them Move Around**

Give your baby time and space to explore their surrounding by reading, looking at objects, and climbing. Just make sure they are safe.

**Sink or Float**

During bath time, go over whether an item will sink or float. Then place it in the water to find out. Try it with different objects. See what happens and talk about it.

**On and Off**

Help your older baby push buttons or turn things on/off to make your baby a scientist. Think creatively, light switches, or faucets. Talk about what they did and what happened.

See all tips

**Why This Matters**

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Your child benefits from spending some quality time with a friend, and some time playing alone. Figuring things out independently is your child's goal. Help them build on their independence and where their interests lie.

Click here for this page and video.

Talk, Sing, and Point

*Boost your child's language development and knowledge of the world.*

**Talk to Them**

Include your baby in everyday routines by talking to them during activities like changing, feeding, bathing, and working. Describe what you are doing.

**Rhyme Time**

Make up rhyming charts for daily routines during your baby's bath, rhyme might go like this: "Spicy, spicey, spicy, spicy spicy..." to the tune of "Hot Cross Buns." 1-866-939-0226.

**Name Body Parts**

When changing or dressing your baby, make a game of naming and pointing to body parts. "Where's Olivia's nose? There it is. Hey, my nose!" Try playing a round of "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes."

See all tips

**Why This Matters**

Babies learn language from the very beginning. They pay attention to your sounds and expressions as you interact with them, connecting their world with the real world and links to communication. So, when you go about your day together, take turns going back and forth, responding to their sounds with your words and facial expressions. Every baby is unique, so it’s important to pay attention to your child’s signals and respond accordingly.
Basics Insights: Twice Weekly Text Messages, Birth to 5 (Free to Parents)

• Content based on child’s age, from birth to the 5th birthday
• One of The Basics principles is covered each week with two messages, a FACT and a TRY THIS
• Aligned with key frameworks including Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework
• Intended to support ongoing conversations
• Can gather info directly from parents/caregivers
Videos about *Basics Insights* Text Messaging

One Minute Video Introduction.  
(Click here.)

Video Testimonial from a father.  
(Click here.)
Evaluation
(Examples)
**After 3.5 Months of Receiving Basics Insights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Totally Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Agree a Little</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend the messages to other parents and caregivers.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The messages keep me thinking about how to help my child learn.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn new things to do with my child.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The messages help me understand my child.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on 1256 responses after 3.5 months of receiving twice-weekly messages. (12% response rate)*
3.5-Month Impacts of Receiving Basics Insights Texts

Mean differences in standardized reported use of practices associated with The Basics Principles at the 3.5-month Basics Insights follow-up survey, relative to expected normal usage of the same practices.

Definition: “Expected normal usage of the same practices” equals the baseline response plus normal growth over 3.5 months, where normal growth is estimated from the age pattern in the baseline responses. Sample is 483 respondents with complete data on baseline and 3.5-month follow-up surveys.
How Self-Reported Parenting Correlates With Parental Assessments of Child Development
Using The Basics Parental Assessment of Child Development Status

Lines represent parental assessments of child developmental status. **Orange lines** = parents were above average in the sample on a self-reported index of five parenting practices related to The Basics Principles. **Green lines** = parents were below average in the sample on the same parenting practices. Lines are smoothed plots of raw data for standardized indices.

4900 parents who had received Basics Insights text messages for at least 6 months and whose children were at least 18 months of age were sent text messages inviting them to respond to the assessment of child development. The survey also included the items on the five parenting practices. (N=540 responses)
The Art!
Examples from New Bedford, Massachusetts
Maximize Love, Manage Stress
Artist: Eden Soares
Maximize Love, Manage Stress
Artist: Eden Soares
Count,
Group &
Compare
Artist: Jacob Ginga
Count, Group & Compare
Artist: Jacob Ginga
With my heart I will love you
And shield you from stress.
With my mouth I will speak what I feel.
With soft words and sweet songs every time I behold you
I’ll show you that my love is real.

With my fingers I’ll point at the objects I name
And I’ll count them in groups to compare.
With my feet I will take you outdoors to explore
While we play and enjoy the fresh air.

With my eyes I will read as I show you the world
Through bright pictures and stories in books.
These are ways to make sure that your brain is prepared
For successes wherever you look.

This my promise I make from the day of your birth
That these basics I’ll faithfully do.
For my job is to help you grow happy and smart
Starting now when your life is brand new.

You will learn that your life is an artwork.
And that you are the artist in charge.
But before you decide what to do with your life
Listen now
To the beat
Of my heart.
Collective Intentionality

What None of Us Can Do Alone, All of Us Can Do Together.
Join Us!

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