



SHERMAN ISD

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

How to use this guide: The table below shows the milestones and skills your child is working toward at each stage of school. Each row represents one area of growth. The columns show what to expect at each grade level. Use this alongside your child's IEP to understand their progress and set goals together with the school team.

FOCUS Student Learning Continuum <i>A Family Guide to Your Child's Growth & Milestones</i>						
Area of Growth	Pre-K (Ages 3–5)	Kindergarten–Grade 2	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12	After High School Goals
MOVING & MOTOR SKILLS						
Gross Motor (Large Body Movement)	Walks on different surfaces; climbs stairs with help; kicks and throws a ball; joins simple movement activities	Runs, jumps, and hops; moves safely around school; joins PE class with some changes to activities	Participates in team games with support; uses any needed mobility equipment safely; builds strength and coordination	Accesses all areas of school independently or with supports; builds lifelong fitness habits; joins adapted PE	Participates in community fitness and recreation; navigates public spaces and workplace environments safely	Moves independently in community; enjoys regular physical activity; navigates work settings safely
Fine Motor (Hand & Finger Skills)	Holds crayons and utensils; manipulates toys and objects; explores with hands; works on self-care hand skills	Cuts with scissors; copies shapes; uses classroom tools; begins using tablet or keyboard as needed	Writes name and simple words; uses keyboard or tablet for longer tasks; manages personal belongings	Types documents; uses digital tools comfortably; manages everyday items like lockers and combination locks	Uses technology for communication and work; completes job-related hand tasks; manages personal documents	Uses technology and tools needed for daily life and employment; manages finances and personal paperwork independently
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL GROWTH						
Making Friends & Social Skills	Plays near other children; takes turns in simple games; responds to familiar adults; initiates favorite activities	Joins in cooperative play; recognizes emotions in self and others; follows classroom social rules; begins friendships	Has conversations back and forth; works through disagreements with adult help; shows empathy; works in groups	Maintains friendships; uses social media safely with guidance; joins clubs or activities; identifies trusted adults	Maintains respectful relationships at work and in the community; speaks up for own needs; builds a support network	Sustains meaningful relationships; participates in community groups; meets social expectations at work and home
Managing Feelings & Self-Regulation	Uses 1–2 calming strategies with adult help; identifies happy/sad/mad; handles transitions with picture schedules	Names personal triggers; uses a calming space or tools on own; transitions with little support; asks for help when upset	Uses 3+ coping strategies independently; recovers from frustration within 10 minutes; requests breaks appropriately	Manages school stress on own; uses mindfulness or self-monitoring tools; shows emotional awareness with peers and adults	Monitors own emotional state at work and in community; seeks support before reaching a crisis; manages adult-life stress	Uses coping strategies in all settings; advocates for own mental health; accesses community support resources



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SELF-HELP & DAILY INDEPENDENCE

Personal Care & Hygiene	Assists with dressing with prompting; toilet training in progress; washes hands with help; participates in mealtime	Uses the restroom independently; washes hands and face on own; manages lunch with little help; dresses independently	Handles all personal hygiene on own; packs school bag; completes morning routine using a picture checklist	Manages hygiene at middle school level; organizes locker and backpack; handles all age-appropriate personal care	Manages personal hygiene at work and in the community; prepares simple meals; handles medications if applicable	Fully independent in personal care; manages own health needs; prepares meals; maintains home and personal health
Home & Community Skills	Follows 1–2 step directions; manages personal belongings; identifies community helpers; joins classroom clean-up	Follows classroom routines on own; manages materials; knows school helpers; visits library with support	Navigates school building independently; uses library and computer lab; takes on classroom jobs and responsibilities	Uses community places (library, store, transit) with support; manages lunch account; understands community rules	Independently uses community resources; handles basic money; cooks simple meals; accesses healthcare appointments	Fully integrated in community; manages finances; lives with independence or appropriate supports; participates in civic life

COMMUNICATION

Expressing Thoughts & Needs	Uses short phrases or a communication device; requests favorite items; answers simple yes/no questions; labels familiar things	Communicates in 4–6+ word sentences or device equivalent; shares wants and needs in all settings; describes experiences	Holds multi-turn conversations; tells stories; shares opinions with reasons; communicates across school subjects	Communicates in class, social settings, and community; writes paragraphs; uses technology to express ideas	Communicates in workplace and community; writes job applications and emails; delivers presentations; advocates for self	Communicates independently in all settings; self-advocates with agencies and employers; uses digital tools for adult life
Understanding Language	Follows 1–2 step directions; responds to name; understands basic concepts; listens to simple stories with pictures	Follows 3-step directions; understands classroom vocabulary; processes grade-level stories with visual supports	Understands grade-level language with help; follows multi-step directions; understands figurative language in context	Understands complex school language with scaffolding; follows directions across settings; understands community instructions	Understands complex spoken and written instructions at work and in community; accesses health and legal information with support	Understands all communications needed for adult life; follows workplace instructions; accesses community information

ACADEMIC LEARNING

Reading & Literacy	Identifies letters in own name; understands that print has meaning; listens to stories; recognizes 3–5 sight words	Reads simple words; knows 25–100 sight words; understands simple books with pictures; retells	Reads modified grade-level books; identifies main idea; uses reading strategies; reads	Reads modified grade-level texts; thinks critically about what is read; reads for real-life purposes;	Reads real-world materials (job applications, leases, health info); accesses print and digital content for daily living	Reads all materials needed for adult life: leases, health documents, workplace materials; continues to grow as a reader
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		stories; writes simple sentences	across all subjects; builds vocabulary	uses digital literacy skills		
Math	Counts to 20; recognizes numbers 0–10; sorts objects; understands more/less; matches quantities to numbers	Adds and subtracts to 20; understands place value to 100; tells time to the hour; counts coins	Uses grade-level math concepts with hands-on tools; understands fractions; solves real-world word problems	Uses a calculator; applies math in everyday life; understands basic budgeting; reads graphs and data	Manages personal finances; calculates taxes, tips, and bills; uses math tools in vocational tasks; understands measurement	Manages budget, banking, and everyday math for independent adult life; uses math at work
Science & Social Studies	Explores the natural world; identifies animals and plants; understands seasons; learns about community helpers	Participates in experiments with modifications; understands basic science; learns about communities and neighborhoods	Accesses grade-level content through modified materials; uses science tools with support; understands geography and history	Participates in modified grade-level content; understands citizenship and government; connects science to everyday life	Applies science and social studies to real life: health, environment, civic participation, and career connections	Understands civic rights; has functional health and environmental literacy; participates in community and democracy

All benchmarks are individualized through your child's IEP. This continuum provides general guidance, not a fixed standard for every student.



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Navigating transitions: Moving from one school level to the next is an important milestone. The table below explains what to expect at each transition, what supports the school will put in place, and specific ways families can stay involved and prepared.

School Transition Supports for Families <i>What to expect — and how to stay involved — at each transition stage</i>			
Transition Stage	What to Expect	Supports at School	How Families Can Help
Pre-K → Kindergarten	Your child moves from early childhood services to a new elementary school team. An IEP transition meeting is held before the school year ends.	IEP transferred to new campus; kindergarten readiness assessed; communication device or supports set up before the first day; family orientation meeting held	Attend the transition IEP meeting; share what works well at home; visit the new school with your child if possible; practice new routines over the summer
Elementary → Middle School (Grade 5 → 6)	School becomes more complex — different teachers, a locker, a new schedule. This is also a time when your child begins to learn more self-advocacy.	Student visits the middle school before the year begins; locker and schedule practice scheduled; new case manager introduced; IEP updated for middle school demands	Encourage your child to talk about their own needs; practice locker combinations at home; connect with the new campus counselor early; attend the updated IEP meeting
Middle School → High School (Grade 8 → 9)	A formal Transition IEP is developed, including goals for life after high school. Vocational and community skills become a bigger focus.	Transition assessment completed; career interests explored; course of study discussed at ARD; community-based learning opportunities identified; agency referrals may begin	Ask your child about career interests and dreams; attend the Transition IEP meeting; begin exploring adult service agencies (TWC, Medicaid waivers); visit vocational programs
High School → Adult Life	Your child transitions out of special education services. A Summary of Performance is created. Adult agency supports should be in place before graduation or exit.	Summary of Performance completed; post-secondary placement confirmed; agency connections active (TWC/VR, HCS waivers, SSI); supported employment or day program secured if needed	Begin Medicaid waiver applications early (waitlists can be long); connect with transition specialists; ensure all agency referrals are submitted; celebrate your child's accomplishments

For questions about your child's IEP, transition planning, or available support, contact your child's special education case manager or campus ARD facilitator.