

1304.21 Education and Early Childhood Development

Education staff will work toward providing a learning environment, and experience in which to help children develop social and intellectual skills appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Staff will select materials and equipment, which reflect the developmental levels of children enrolled in the program, including those with specific disabilities (see section 45CFR1308), and which facilitate exploration, experimentation, problem solving and learning by doing. We will allow ample time for verbal communication among children and between children and adults throughout the day. Carrying out the concept in as many learning centers as possible during the day reinforces developmental concepts. Adequate time is allowed for adult directed activities and child directed activities.

The creative curriculum philosophy is used for the basis of our lesson plans and individualization; a thematic focus drives our teaching scheme and is developed on the basis of the community and children's interest. This curriculum provides a continuum for social, physical, intellectual and language development and offers opportunity for classroom staff to adapt skills and concepts to meet the needs of each individual child and the group. Field trips are used to introduce and reinforce concepts. Children explore the outdoor environment around the center often observing trees, flowers, birds, and other plants and animals that live in the area.

The community is explored as an extension of the child's learning environment. Community workers will be invited to visit classrooms and talk about their jobs in the community. Teachers will change the learning materials often and set up new centers to keep children interested and to make sure that the environment is challenging.

Teachers and children will put health routines in place early in the year. Good health habits will be stressed as a means of preventing the spread of disease and as good practice for keeping "bodies" strong and healthy. Children will be encouraged to use toilet facilities independently and toilet training routines will be set in place with parental consent. Toilet training will never begin immediately upon a child's entrance into the center. The child will be allowed an adjustment period until he/she can adjust to staying at the center and becomes more able to communicate his/her need to use the bathroom. Children will wash their hands before meals using a recommended hand washing procedure. Safety rules will be practiced and

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followed by children and adults that will reduce accidents and enable the group to learn and play in a safe and healthy learning environment.

We will screen/assess all children enrolled within forty-five (45) days of enrollment. The screenings will be used to target the developmental and/or instructional needs of each child. A valid screening process will be used to detect those children in need of immediate referrals. A behavior checklist as well as a health observation form will be completed on each child within thirty- (30) days of enrollment.

Our early childhood philosophy is based on principles of theory and research in early childhood development. The primary information source is the lap-D assessment and Lap-3 observational tool, DECA, Second Step Curriculum, Circle Step, BSK and the Van Buren County School System Teaching guide. Education staff created the Input/activities section on the outcomes plan sheet basing ideas on current developmentally appropriate practice. Measurement sources are assessment tool, teacher observation, and Lap-D, Lap-3 and individual children's portfolios. Computer generated reports and manual spreadsheets are used to track overall successes. The DECA (Devereux) is used for assessing needs in the social emotional area. The learning environment provides opportunities for choice, problem solving, self-control, responsibility, as well as literacy enhancement. An outcomes report is generated on Lap-3 children and spreadsheets are maintained on Lap-D children at the beginning, middle and end of the year based on the data collected from the following Head Start domains: Creative Arts, Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social & Emotional, Approaches to Learning, and Physical Health & Development. Part B section dictates the method and date for outcome engagement. This is a step-by-step routine to enable the Education Specialist to complete the outcome process in a systematic process, which will be reviewed and analyzed to help define program needs. An analysis report will be included as part of self-assessment and the strategic plan.

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The purpose of this process is to document accountability and information for program quality improvement. This program will measure beyond classroom and address program outcomes. Patterns of children's progress will be analyzed: Where was most progress made? Where did children perform less than expected? Data trends will address comparing outcomes from year to year with the intent of improving quality of services to young children and families. Consistency between the curriculum, assessment tools, and staff development will be reviewed and changes made as needed. The outcome process will be scrutinized in an ongoing process for any revisions or corrections needed.

Each disabled child enrolled in the program will have an Individual Education Plan developed specifically for him/her after diagnosis has been provided. The IEP conference will be conducted in conjunction with the child's teacher, parent/guardian, education service specialist, disability service specialist and diagnostician.

Education Staff will provide a program which is individualized to meet the needs of children from various populations and which outlines procedures for ongoing observation, and recording and evaluation of each child's growth and development.

Parents/guardians and other resource persons will be used as classroom volunteers and encouraged to share information, materials, foods, and activities indicative of their backgrounds, culture and ethnicity. This will allow for parent involvement in the curriculum.

Education Staff will promote the strengthening of partnerships between staff and parents and enhance parents'/guardians' knowledge of the educational needs of the children. As often as possible, staff and parents/guardians will participate in child development workshops together. Through child development education, parents' ideas will be more appropriate to meet the needs of the children in the program. Communication between parents and staff will be encouraged as it relates to meaningful learning experiences, to individual problems of children's concern, and enhancing parents' observational skills. Parents will establish educational goals early in the school year that will be reviewed and modified during parent/teacher conferences for modifications or establishment of new goals. These goals will be documented on the "Parent Educational Goal Partnership" form and then documented into Galileo system. Parents and staff will be encouraged

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to capitalize on formal and informal meetings, conferences (3 per year), home visits (minimum of 2 per year), and various other means of communication as an opportunity for exchange of information in the interest of children.

Special emphasis will be given to the significance of materials, equipment, and experiences provided in a Head Start Child Development Program during pre-service/in-service training.

In order to accomplish the above objective, our program will integrate various aspects of the social, health, parent involvement and other services into the educational program. Service area staff will conduct workshops for parents/guardians, make agency contacts and referrals for children and families, make home visits when needed and help staff and parents/guardians plan special field trips and center activities.

We will implement a comprehensive home activity program as soon as developmental screening has been completed. Parents/guardians will be asked to complete a home activity questionnaire that will pinpoint specific areas where they can become involved in the child's learning process. Each child will receive a home activity periodically to take home and complete with his/her parents or guardian.

Education news that focuses on positive child development practices and principles will be furnished to the parents on a regular basis. Also, a list of "do at home" activities will be sent home to the parents or guardian. All parents and guardians will be given information to help them select good television programs for children and will help them to determine what is considered to be "too much television." Parents/guardians will be given a special orientation during Parent/Teacher conferences and home visits to help them interpret screening data, which defines ages and stages of development and their children's current functioning levels. Teachers will discuss with parents during the conferences how children develop at different rates and how parents and teachers must work together as a team to ensure that the children do not feel rushed and stressed into learning developmentally inappropriate skills and concepts.

Education Staff will promote positive mental health by encouraging children to be independent and respectful of other people's belongings and feelings. The specific goal will be to encourage respect and enforce limits as to what

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is considered allowable behavior.

Education Staff will aid children in learning to accept failure without defeat; encouraging them to try again. They will provide opportunities for each child to experience success, to earn praise and respect, to develop an “I can, let me try” attitude.

Education Staff will accept and respect each child’s language, culture and home environment, therefore, building and promoting trust in the teacher/child relationship.

Staff will provide children with ample time during the day to express their feelings and share responsibilities and humor with each other and with classroom adults (staff and volunteers). Through hands on experiences they will learn by doing, and express themselves through art and music/movement activities. Staff will encourage, recognize and display children’s work and accomplishments providing opportunities for response from adults and children.

Transitions from one activity to another will be conducted in such a manner as to allow sufficient time for each child to adjust and participate in the next activity. Classroom schedule and routines are discussed in relation to time and sequencing (ie: what comes next, etc.) Classroom activities will be conducted in a clear, concise manner allowing children to learn and adjust to daily routines, thus building self-assurance in each child’s routine. Children will be encouraged to solve problems by initiating activities, ask open-ended questions and problem solve using appropriate materials, such as shapes, sizes, textures, weight, color, counting, sequencing, non-standard measurement items, two-three dimensional shapes, etc. appropriate to child’s age and level of development.

An Individual Plan will be established for each child within (30) days of the completion of all developmental screenings. During this process, along with parents/guardians and appropriate staff input, the needs of the child can be met. The Individual Plan will be updated as the child accomplishes their goals. As a child progresses through the developmental stages of literacy and numeration, then reasoning, problem solving and decision-making are introduced at the appropriate time. Thus, allowing time for the child to accomplish basic school readiness skills to ensure success when they transition into public school.

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All children enrolled will participate in daily periods of indoor and outdoor activities that are appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Activities will be designed for these periods, which will encourage fine and gross motor development. Small and large group activities are integrated into the curriculum daily, which enhances a child's concept of self and as a member of a group.

Materials and equipment will be selected to provide children with opportunities to run, jump, climb, skip, crawl, tumble, pump, pedal, pound, etc. The indoor environment is equipped with a special center for fine motor development, housing such materials as puzzles, lace-up cards, modeling clay, stringing beads, scissors, etc. Exercises in rhythm and movement are used as transitional activities increasing the opportunity for physical development and refining motor skills.

Each classroom is furnished with well-defined learning centers. Care will be taken to locate quiet centers away from noisy centers. Clear traffic paths will be established in each classroom to reduce accidents. Staff has established safety rules, which are reviewed and implemented daily.

Education staff will integrate the educational aspects of other Head Start components into the daily programs such as health services (medical, dental, mental health and nutrition), social services and parent/guardian involvement.

Special consideration will be given to making sure that nutrition education is integrated into the education service area by using a nutrition curriculum and a lesson plan for health and nutrition education. The monthly menu will be posted for parents/guardians and staff. Staff will jointly sponsor trainings that will demonstrate the inter-relatedness of component goals and objectives. Children will prepare nutritious food in the classroom, and will take field trips to places where it is raised, sold and prepared.

The classroom staff will integrate activities into the curriculum at the center level, which will foster children's development, as it relates to developing social competence. Staff will take into account the inter-relatedness of cognitive and intellectual development; physical and mental health, nutritional needs and the factors that contribute to helping children achieve social competency.