

## **Head Start / Early Head Start Birth to Five School Readiness Plan**

### **Our Philosophy of School Readiness:**

We are committed that every child receives a positive and quality experience in our program. The relationships a child establishes during the first years of life provide the basis for all learning. Through trusting relationships and nurturing experiences during the earliest years of a child's life, the child develops the skills and confidence to succeed throughout their school years and into the future. Providing quality care and education for each child is our mission. A secure attachment to primary caregivers provides a base for the child's social-emotional development, which establishes the foundation for all other learning. We are committed to implementing challenging, fun and exciting activities for each child which encourage communication, self-regulation, and problem-solving. Developmentally appropriate activities are implemented throughout the daily routine helping children to be successful. The program respects and is sensitive to each child's language and culture and provides individual assistance so that he/she will succeed. Each dual language learner is given additional support in keeping their first language as their primary language and also learning English to help them become successful lifelong learners.

### **Implementation of the School Readiness Plan:**

The framework for effective everyday practice is based on a strong foundation of trusting, respectful relationships with families, inviting environments and engaging interactions. The environments are clean, safe, well-equipped, child-friendly, and nurturing. Positive, supportive child-adult interactions are integral to the classroom environment. Positive adult-adult interactions and role modeling help children feel comfortable and provide a supportive learning atmosphere for each child. Staff training is implemented throughout the year. Observations are done and feedback is given to each classroom team to promote continuous improvement.

### **Building on Effective Practice includes Curricula, Ongoing Assessment and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework:**

The program uses research-based curricula: Parents As Teachers for Home Base and Creative Curriculum for Center Base. Teaching Strategies GOLD is the ongoing assessment. These curricula and assessment are aligned to the Early Learning Outcomes Framework which supports each child's growth.

The five essential domains for all children are:

Language and Literacy

- Language Development
- Literacy Knowledge and Skills

Approaches to Learning

- Approaches to Learning
- Creative Arts Expression

Social and Emotional Development

Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

Cognition

- Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

- Science Knowledge and Skills
- Mathematics Knowledge and Skills
- Logic and Reasoning

An additional domain for children who are dual language learners is:

English Language Development

### **English Language Development**

The five essential domains apply to all children. The domain of English Language Development applies only to children who are dual language learners. These children speak a language other than English at home. The program provides a translator, when needed, to help the children. Materials are translated to help each family feel supported and comfortable with their child's education. Labeling in home languages, having familiar materials in the classrooms, and speaking a child's home language helps each child and family feel more accepted, at ease and successful in the environment. Continual training on cultural sensitivity helps staff to understand the importance of focusing on the individual child and family.

### **Developing School Readiness Goals:**

Our School Readiness goals are aligned with the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Creative Curriculum, GOLD Assessment, the Nebraska Early Learning Standards, and the Nebraska Kindergarten Standards. The School Readiness philosophy and goals are reviewed annually by the school readiness committee and the management team. Measurable indicators within the assessment tool determine a child's growth for each area of development. The assessment data is aggregated and used for on-going self-assessment providing documentation for the individual developmental needs of children, classroom/group needs and program needs.

### **Family Engagement:**

Parents, teaching staff, and management team members participate in the school readiness and assessment process. The policy council representatives are active participants in the School Readiness plan. The program believes parents are vital in all aspects of their children's lives. They are encouraged to give their input into the process to help their child be successful in school. During each home visit or parent-teacher conference, parents set school readiness goals for their children. These goals are addressed each week in lesson plans and reviewed regularly with parents. Infant/toddler parents are also given the opportunity to provide weekly input into their child's individual lesson plans.

### **Measurement Tools for Child Outcomes:**

The program uses the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool which the Nebraska Department of Education requires. The teaching staff receive training on gathering information through observations, discussions and activities. Outcome checks are done three times per year in 9-month Head Start classrooms, and four times per year in Early Head Start and full-year Head Start classrooms. Work samples are utilized to share children's abilities and show their growth throughout the year. These samples include self-portraits and writing samples, as well as a letter/shape/number/counting/color checklist for preschool children. Parent input is considered when documenting children's progress. Teaching Strategies GOLD data is aggregated and charts are developed for each classroom's progress following each outcomes check. The first

check provides a baseline of the information gathered. The education supervisors/manager review the data and share the information with the center teams. The GOLD Checkpoint Review Form is completed and includes the team's strengths and areas for improvement based on the collected outcome information. Early Head Start and Head Start Teachers conduct two Home Visits and two Parent Teacher Conferences each school year. Information is provided directly to the parents/guardians about the progress their child is making. School readiness goals are set by the child's family during these interactions and are reviewed regularly. If the child accomplishes a goal, a new goal is set.

### **Individualization Documentation:**

Education staff plan developmentally appropriate experiences within each child's day that are geared toward supporting the child's individualized learning goals and/or IEP/IFSP goals. Written individualization documentation is completed to show the educator's plan for individualizing for each child throughout the week.

The infant toddler classrooms provide each child with an individualized lesson plan in which staff plan weekly experiences based on each child's development. Parents have daily input into the lesson plan and their goals are listed. Teaching staff plan experiences according to their observations and the parent's input. Lesson plans are turned in to education supervisors on a weekly basis, reviewed and feedback is provided. Having highly individualized teaching and learning builds trusting, respectful relationships with families.

In preschool, the Individualization Record Sheet documents the school readiness goals set by parents and/or IEP/IFSP goals and the specific times the goals will be addressed throughout the week. Staff individualize for at least one parent school readiness goal for each child each week. These activities are pre-planned and in addition to individualization which occurs throughout the daily routine as opportunities arise. The forms are turned into the education supervisor weekly along with lesson plans.

After each home visit/parent teacher conference cycle, and the Parent-Teacher Interaction forms are submitted to the education supervisors. These forms track the progress of each child in reaching the school readiness goals set by their family.

Having highly individualized teaching and learning is the top level of the framework for effective practice. The education supervisors/manager, which are reliable, use the CLASS observation tool twice a year. This provides support and growth for quality care and learning for the children. The observation is reviewed with the classroom team. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified.

### **Home to School:**

Home and school collaboration is critical for children's success. Our program involves parents/guardians in their children's growth and learning by sending home activity calendars for them to complete together while at home. Each infant and toddler parent is provided with approximately 30 activities to choose from each week. Each preschool family receives a monthly calendar with activities they can do with their child which are aligned with the framework. Activities are linked to the classroom curriculum and/or the goals the parents set at home visits

and parent teacher conferences. Continued support and education helps parents feel successful as their child's first and most important teacher. After completing the individualized activities, parents document what has been done and return the forms to the education staff for in-kind. A lending library is also available to each child. The children may check out books to take home to share with their family. Research shows that daily reading helps children become successful and productive adults. Family engagement helps each child and the program. Working together provides a positive experience for every child and family.

### **Head Start to Public School:**

The program believes that collaboration with the area school districts is important so that the families and staff know what the expectations are when the child enters school. This will help each child have a smooth and successful transition into kindergarten. Our school readiness alignment includes the Nebraska Department of Education Kindergarten standards and Early Learning Guidelines. Input is regularly sought from area public school administrators and teachers through the ESU stakeholder survey and other means.

### **Program Planning:**

The management team is responsible for program planning. The child assessments results are taken to management meetings, yearly program planning, policy council and governing board meetings. The information is reviewed and improvement plans are created annually. Self-assessment information, including parent and staff surveys, inform decision-making. The program strives for continuous improvement in preparing each child for future school success.

### **Conclusion:**

Our School Readiness goals are aligned with the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Creative Curriculum, the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment, the Nebraska Early Learning Standards, and the Nebraska Kindergarten Standards. We believe that communication, self-regulation, and problem solving, developed in the context of trusting relationships and nurturing experiences during the earliest years of a child's life, support the developmental and emotional competence of children to be successful lifelong learners. We are dedicated to implementing positive family engagement to strengthen families as primary nurturers of their children, and enhance parent-child relationships. We prepare the children for success in school by nurturing the skills and attitudes to be life-long learners. We are dedicated to implementing meaningful family engagement and encouraging positive growth and development in each child in our program.