

## Education Plan

**1302.30:** The program provides a high-quality learning environment and experiences in which to help children, including children with disabilities, develop cognitive, social, and emotional growth through responsive and effective teacher-child interactions. The program utilizes the Creative Curriculum research-based curriculum, LAP screening and Devereux and My Teaching Strategies - GOLD assessment tools to support the areas of development within the Early Learning Outcomes Framework which supports family engagement in their child's learning and development acknowledging their cultural and linguistic uniqueness. A key goal of our program is to help our children gain the skills and confidence needed to make them ready for school and life.

**1302.31 Teaching and the learning environment:** Education Staff will support and respect each child's language, culture and home environment, recognizing and implementing research based teaching practices that enhance their development. We will deliver developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, mathematics, social and emotional functioning, approaches to learning, science, social studies, physical development and creative arts. The learning environment provides opportunities for choice, problem solving, self-control, responsibility, as well as literacy enhancement. Adequate time is allowed for adult and child directed activities as well as verbal communication among children and between children and adults throughout the day embedding responsive and effective teacher-child interactions. Educators shall give individual attention to each child throughout the day. 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). Regular and ongoing supervision and a system of individualized and ongoing professional development is supported through our teaching and learning environment.

Education staff will promote positive mental health by nurturing and encouraging children to be independent and respectful of other people's culture, belongings and feelings. The specific goal will be to encourage respect and enforce limits as to what is considered allowable behavior through supportive feedback for learning. Staff will not restrain a child by any means other than holding and then for only as long as it is necessary for the child to regain control.

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.

Children will be encouraged to solve problems by initiating activities, asking open-ended questions and problem solving using appropriate materials. As a child progresses through the developmental stages, then reasoning, problem solving and decision-making are introduced at the appropriate time aligned with and using the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

Schedules, lesson plans and activities aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework drives our individualization. We utilize individual and group settings for integrating the child assessment data. 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 using this time as opportunities for strengthening development, learning, and skill growth. Classroom schedule and routines are discussed in relation to time and sequencing (ie: what comes next, etc.)

Education Staff will include teaching practices which are individualized to meet the needs of dual language learners that focus on the development of the English language acquisition and the continued development of the home language which outlines procedures for ongoing observation, and recording and evaluation of each child's growth and development. Education materials/reports will be provided in other languages served by the program. When staff do not speak the home language, volunteers will be identified to support children's continued development.

All children enrolled will participate in daily periods of indoor and outdoor activities that are appropriate to their ages and stages of development, not using physical activity as a reward or punishment. Activities will be designed for these periods, which will encourage fine and gross motor development. Safety rules will be practiced and followed by children and adults that will reduce accidents and enable the group to learn and play in a safe and healthy learning environment. Staff has established safety rules which are reviewed and implemented daily.

Children explore the outdoor environment around the center, often observing trees, flowers, birds, and other plants and animals that live in the area. Materials and equipment which reflect the developmental levels of children enrolled in the program, including those with specific disabilities which facilitate exploration, experimentation, problem-solving and learning by doing, 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. 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. 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. Carrying out the concept in as many learning centers as possible during the day reinforces developmental concepts.

The daily schedule incorporates a rest period to accommodate children's need to nap or rest. Alternative quiet learning activities are provided for children who do not need or want to rest or nap. Children who are fatigued shall be offered an opportunity to rest in addition to scheduled rest periods. Areas where a child sleeps shall have adequate lighting which allows the educator to see each child with a quick glance and respond appropriately to each child's physical and emotional needs. If music is played, it is soothing and soft enough so children can be heard.

Our program provides the children with family style meals using this time as learning opportunities to support teaching staff/child interactions and foster communication and conversations that contribute to a child's learning, development and socialization. Educators shall engage children in developmentally appropriate conversation to include nutrition and healthy eating choices. Breakfast, lunch and snacks are provided with sufficient time for children to eat, not forcing children to finish their food or using food as a reward or punishment. Special consideration will be given to making sure nutrition education is integrated into the education service area by using healthy cooking activities incorporated in the studies on the lesson plans. The monthly menu will be posted for parents/guardians and staff. Children will wash their hands before meals using a recommended hand washing procedure. 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 remaining at the center and becomes more able to communicate his/her need to use the bathroom. 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.

**1302.32 Curricula:** The Van Buren County Head Start implements a developmentally appropriate researched based early childhood curricula that is aligned to the *Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework* and *TN-ELDS*. The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Fidelity Tool Teacher Checklist ensures validity of the curriculum used in our program. Our program supports staff implementation of curriculum through standardized training procedures and feedback for professional development. The center staff helps each child develop linguistically with age appropriate literacy knowledge; socially, creatively, emotionally, physically and cognitively by providing sufficient time, space and age appropriate materials and equipment. The program uses a comprehensive, developmentally sound curriculum, and a learning environment with a variety of experiences geared to the appropriate age and development of the individual child. Our early childhood education method is based on principles of theory and research in early childhood development driven by Creative Curriculum. Creative Curriculum provides a developmental scope and sequence that includes 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. Creative Curriculum is used for our lesson plans and individualization; the studies' thematic focus drives our teaching scheme. In addition to Creative Curriculum, the following resources are used:

Child Protection Unit, Tennessee state approved, research-based and required personal safety curriculum, focuses on teaching children basic skills designed to help keep them safe from dangerous or abusive situations. The Early Learning Scope and Sequence for this child protection unit is to develop children's ability to identify, report, and refuse unsafe touches and situations. The 6 week safety themes embedded in our curriculum use materials provided for parents, caregivers, child-care providers, and teachers to work together to provide the rules, information, encouragement, and practice that children need to help protect themselves. Before the Child Protection Unit Weekly Theme activities are taught to the children, staff must complete the online training which provides essential knowledge for staff to recognize, respond to and report child abuse and neglect.

**1302.33 Child Screenings and assessments:** UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start implements a research-based developmental standardized screening and assessment tool that supports individualization and growth in the areas of development described in the *Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework*. Parents complete a developmental checklist on their child, upon entry into the program. After parental consent and in collaboration with each child's parent, qualified and trained personnel screen all children enrolled within forty-five (45) days of enrollment. Consultants are available for bilingual children who do not speak English. A valid screening process will be used to detect those children in need of immediate referrals. Our primary assessment information sources are the DECA assessment tool, My Teaching Strategies - GOLD, and the Van Buren School Kindergarten Readiness Skills Checklist. Additional measurement sources used are teacher observation and individual children's portfolios. These sources will be used to target the developmental and/or instructional needs of each child. The DECA (Devereux) is used for assessing needs in the social emotional area as well as a health observation form which will be completed on every child within thirty (30) days of enrollment. The program will not use any development data to rank or compare.

An Individualization developmental 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 Individualization Plan will be updated as the child accomplishes their goals.

Any child referred to the local LEA who is determined to be eligible for services under IDEA will have an Individualized Education Plan developed specifically for him/her. The IEP conference will be conducted in conjunction with the child's teacher, parent/guardian, education service specialist, disability service specialist, diagnostician and local agency responsible.

Any child who enters the program who currently is being served by TEIS will either transition to an IEP thru the local school system or if parent preference is to remain with TEIS they will determine if they prefer services to remain in the home or at Head Start. If parent preference is for services to be conducted at Head Start, TEIS will partner with us for services to be provided at our location. If parent preference is to remain in the home the goals set that can be supported at Head Start will be included in the child's individualized plan as well at our facility.

Computer generated reports are used to track overall successes. An outcomes/school readiness report is generated on children at the beginning, middle and end of the year based on the data collected from the following Head Start domains: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition, Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development. An analysis report will be included as part of self-assessment and the strategic plan.

The purpose of this process is to document accountability and information for program quality improvement. This program will measure beyond the classroom and address program outcomes/school readiness. Patterns of children's progress will be analyzed. Where was the most progress made? Where did children perform less than expected? How does children's progress align with school readiness goals? Data trends will address comparing outcomes from year to year with the intent of improving quality of services to young children and families. Informal teacher observations and additional information from family and staff are used to inform and adjust strategies to better support individualized learning. 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.

**1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services:** Before school begins, recognizing the parent's role as their child's lifelong educator, the teachers visit the home of each child/family to ensure a smooth transition from the home environment into the school environment. This allows teachers to obtain a good sense of the family environment, an opportunity to promote family literacy through the book swap and instill the beginning foundations of the importance of the family role in their child's education prior to phase in/orientation. At this time parents will provide input of the developmental status of their child. Parents/guardians and other resource persons will be used as classroom volunteers and encouraged to share information, materials, food, and activities indicative of their backgrounds, culture and ethnicity. They are also provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on curriculum and materials used by the program. This will allow for parent involvement in the curriculum.

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 center activities. Education staff will promote the strengthening of partnerships between staff and parents and enhance parent's/guardian's knowledge of the educational needs of the children. The program setting is open to parents during all program hours. Communication between staff and parents will be encouraged as it relates to meaningful learning experiences, to individual problems of children's concerns and enhancing parent observational skills. 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 which will pinpoint specific areas where they can become involved in the child's learning process. Each child will receive a weekly school readiness scholastic home activity to take home and complete with his/her parents/guardians. Education news that focuses on positive child development practices and principles will be furnished to parents on a regular basis. All parents and guardians will be given information to help them select good television programs for children and will help them determine what is considered to be "too much television". Parents are provided with notes daily informing them of their child's classroom activities.

All parents/children will be provided the opportunity to sign up for a library card to access books at the Burritt Memorial Library for home use. Burritt Memorial Library keeps the Transition/Literacy staff at Head Start updated on all community literacy events that take place. Head Start also provides families with the opportunity to check out books at our center with our onsite Lending Library. Information is sent out periodically on the process of how to check out books. The Van Buren Health Department sponsors the Head Start Book Smart Express which is a section set aside for books, materials and brochures to help promote literacy for parents/ guardians to review at their convenience while visiting the health department. These and other community resources serve as classroom extension partners for our program.

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, using a developmental checklist. Teachers will discuss with parents during 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. Parents and staff will be encouraged to capitalize on formal and informal meetings, conferences offered (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. 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/ School Readiness Goal Partnership" form and presented to parents through a progress report.