

Parent Handbook



**HCESC Early Childhood
Program
924 Waycross Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45240**

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PHILOSOPHY

The educational philosophy of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center's Early Childhood Program is based on a developmental approach to education. Programming is planned to meet each child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs as the child passes through predictable and sequential stages of development.

Child-directed, teacher supported exploration and learning experiences are designed so that each child can construct knowledge at their own developmental level and pace. This constructivist model allows children to become active participants in the learning process. Trust, social interaction and play are seen as the foundations on which children develop problem-solving skills, language and self-esteem.

Integrated programming allows all children, typically developing and children with disabilities, to gain a broader perspective of the real world. Children engage in a variety of opportunities and experiences as they interact with peers in the environment.

For children who need a smaller structured environment, a classroom with a low child to teacher ratio is offered. This classroom allows each child the opportunity to further develop their communication, play, social, and motor skills on a more individualized basis.

Families are considered an integral part of the learning experience. They are encouraged to be active participants in their child's educational program.

Early Childhood Program Goals

Primary goals of the Early Childhood Program are to:

- Provide an environment that respects children of diverse cultural and developmental backgrounds
- Foster the development of positive self-esteem
- Support and promote positive relationships with peers and adults
- Facilitate and encourage the construction of knowledge within an integrated curriculum
- Plan and implement a wide variety of multi-age, multi-level materials and activities
- Offer opportunities for children's active exploration of their environment through play
- Model and promote opportunities for large motor activities
- Maintain confidentiality surrounding children and their families
- Create, build and strengthen a relationship between families and school

CURRICULUM

The Early Childhood Programs of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center implement curriculum based on a philosophical framework of developmentally appropriate practice. The early childhood curriculum is aligned to the early learning content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. These programs address all areas of development--cognitive, physical, social, and emotional--by planning and providing curriculum that is both age appropriate and individually appropriate for each learner. Curriculum within the classrooms is "child-centered", emphasizing the development of the whole child. Curriculum decisions are based on the needs of children and the ways in which they learn. In addition, the individual and cultural diversity that is expected, appreciated and respected directly influences what is to be developmentally appropriate, responsive curriculum in the Early Childhood Programs of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center.

The preschool curriculum emphasizes the value of social interaction and provides opportunities for children to interact with peers and adults throughout the day. Multi-age class groupings, found in the Early Childhood Programs of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center, promote social interaction among individual children and peers while assisting children's progress to the next level of development. Through these social experiences with peers of varying age levels, children are provided with opportunities to develop understanding, learn cooperation and enhance language skills.

The classroom environment and curriculum is planned and prepared to involve children both mentally and physically in their own learning. Each child becomes actively involved with the curriculum during "Choice Time", an uninterrupted block of time of at least 60 minutes. These periods provide young children with the time they need to move, touch and explore their classroom. As children play within activity areas they are encouraged to make meaningful choices and decisions. While engaged in interactions with materials and peers, opportunities arise for social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth and learning to occur. During Choice Time teachers interact with individuals and small groups of children, helping to facilitate discovery, learning, problem-solving and the acquisition of concepts.

Activity areas typically found within each classroom include: a writing center, interactive charts, dramatic play, art, painting, computer, sand/water table, blocks, books, shelf games, listening center, math table and snack.

Opportunities are also provided for children to participate in music, science, sensory experiences and movement activities. These activity areas are carefully planned to provide a variety of interesting and challenging “multi-level”, “open-ended” materials and activities that support and encourage experimentation, exploration and inquiry. “Multi-level” materials may be used with children of varying ages, developmental levels and physical abilities. For example, colored wooden beads may be used for sorting, stringing, patterning, adding and/or subtracting depending on the needs of the learner. “Open-ended” activities are those that promote the development of thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making while de-emphasizing the notion of “right” and “wrong”. For example, encouraging a child to make an airplane using paper, markers, crayons and scissors promotes higher level thinking and problem solving than providing him with a pre-drawn shape to “cut and color the right way”.

Classroom teachers in the Early Childhood Program frequently utilize a strategy known as “thematic teaching” to present and integrate content across curriculum areas. Classroom themes, typically 2 to 3 weeks duration, are determined by the needs and interests of the group and are supported by quality children’s literature. For example, if children were curious about caterpillars they found on the playground, their discovery may lead to a caterpillar theme based on the reading of The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. The theme would also be incorporated into a variety of classroom activity areas. For example, the children may play math games involving caterpillars, observe caterpillars in the science center, create their own caterpillars and butterflies in the art area and write stories about caterpillars in the writing center. Such connections between personal experience and classroom curriculum make learning meaningful for young children by providing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills within a relevant context.

As described, the Early Childhood Programs of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center strive to provide child-centered curriculum that accepts and respects each learner within the classroom. The curriculum in these programs is developed with careful consideration given to the needs, interests and learning style of each individual. This developmentally appropriate, responsive curriculum promotes feelings of success and competence while nurturing the enjoyment of learning in all young children.

Program schedule varies

MANAGEMENT POLICY

The goal of discipline is to help children build their own self-control and ultimately direct their own behavior. We recognize the important role self-esteem plays in this process and strive to enhance each child's positive feelings of self. Each child's emotional needs and feelings are respected within the classroom setting.

Clear and reasonable ground rules are established for each child's safety and to protect the rights of all children. The rules are few in number and are frequently discussed in the classroom. When ground rules are broken they are clearly and firmly restated. When a child is in a conflict situation, he is encouraged to verbalize his anger or concerns. When a child infringes on the rights of another, the other child is encouraged to talk about how he feels. Problem-solving techniques are encouraged in the classroom during which time the teacher often acts as a facilitator, helping young children express feelings and generate solutions.

Classroom environments are structured to encourage positive behavior; redirection of children occurs in a positive manner, keeping in mind the child's interests and motives. Teacher intervention in potential problem situations is well-timed and logical consequences of behaviors are implemented. Physical punishment is not used.

If behavior problems persist, an individual behavior management program will be developed with parent participation. Ongoing discussions will occur to review possible solutions and alternatives.

OHIO LICENSING GUIDELINES

The following are the behaviors that shall not occur under the Ohio Licensing Early Childhood Guidelines:

- There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to: punching, pinching, shaking, spanking, or biting.
- No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
- No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period, such as in a protective hug, so that the child may regain control.
- No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, a box, or a small cubicle.
- No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, and derogatory remarks about himself, his family, or other verbal abuse.
- Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat or for toileting accidents.
- Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame, or frighten a child.
- Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest, or toilet use.
- Separation, when used as discipline shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability and the child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted and well-ventilated space.

The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN

- Children will be supervised by a faculty member at all times throughout the day.
- The outside play area will be supervised so that all children are visible to a member of the teaching staff at all times. Children will be supervised going to and coming from the outside play area and the classroom.
- Written notification from the parent is required when a change (i.e. time, driver) occurs in your child's regular transportation plan. No exceptions will be made to this policy.
- A monthly fire drill will be held.
- Emergency plans are posted in the classrooms in the event of a tornado or fire.
- A faculty member trained in first aid and recognition of communicable diseases is available at all times. A first aid kit is always on site.
- A registered nurse acts as a consultant to the school program as needed.

FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES

In the event of a field trip, the following precautions will be taken to ensure each child's safety:

- A first aid box which meets requirements of Ohio licensing rules will be available.
- A faculty member trained in first aid will be present.
- Each child will have identification attached to himself/herself containing the school's name, address and telephone number and child's name when required.
- An adequate number of adults will participate in each experience. This number will be determined by class size, class make-up and teacher's judgment.

SHARING INFORMATION

Young children are often affected by events and changes in their environment. Children may not be able to express their feelings or relay significant information.

In order to help your child deal with changes, please keep us informed of any events such as:

- Illness or hospitalization of family members
- Pregnancies and births
- Deaths of family members or close friends
- Changes in family structure within the home
- Plans for moving
- Extra stimulation such as visitors or celebrations
- Change of address or phone number

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We believe parent participation is a vital component of a child's school experience. Parents provide valuable input that helps to ensure a successful transition between home and school. Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in the preschool setting.

- A parent questionnaire, completed prior to entry into the program, provides important information about each child.
- Home visits provide parents and teachers with an opportunity to exchange information and interact with children on an individual basis. A home visit is scheduled for each child prior to the beginning of school.
- Parents are welcome to observe and visit classrooms. If a parent plans to stay for an entire class session, please arrange the visit in advance with the classroom teachers.
- Parent conferences are held twice a year. Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of parent or teacher.
- Parents are welcome to become involved in informal ways such as sharing a cultural heritage or special talent with a class, going on a field trip and/or volunteering in the classroom.
- A policy and procedure manual for the Hamilton County Educational Service Center Early Childhood Program is available for parent review.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

If a parent wishes to file a complaint about the Early Childhood Program, the following hierarchy should be followed:

- Discussion with the Early Childhood Educator at the Early Childhood Center.
- Discussion with the HCESC Early Childhood Supervisor (674-4200).
- Discussion with the Ohio Department of Education: Early Learning and School Readiness Division (614-466-0244).

Faculty

Class Size

Eligibility Varies

Arrival and Dismissal

Attendance

Transportation Varies

**Tornado Watches and Warnings
School Closing Information Varies**

MEDICAL POLICY

The Ohio Department of Education Rules for Preschool Program requires that each child have on file:

1. a medical form completed by a licensed physician prior to the date of admission or not later than thirty days after the date of admission and annually from the date of examination thereafter;
2. dentist's name and phone number on the Emergency Medical Authorization form;
3. physician's and dentist's authorization and written instructions to administer prescription medication to a child enrolled in the program;
4. immunization record as required by section 3313-67 of the Revised Code, which record shall include immunization required by section 3313.671 of the Revised Code.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY PLAN

Each child is required to have a current emergency card and an emergency medical authorization form on file. These forms must be completed and returned by the first day of school. Any child without these forms will not be permitted to attend class.

In the event of an emergency, the following procedures will be taken:

- Parents will be contacted immediately unless the situation is life-threatening. In this case, 911 will be called before attempting to reach the parents.
- If efforts to reach the parents are unsuccessful, the faculty will follow instructions listed on the Emergency Medical Form.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL DUE TO ILLNESS

It is sometimes difficult to decide when and how long to keep an ill child home from school. The timing of the absence is often important in order to decrease the spread of disease to others and to prevent your child from acquiring any other illness while his/her resistance is lowered. The following guidelines represent the more common childhood illnesses and the usual recommendations of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center School Nursing Services.

CHICKEN POX: A skin rash consisting of small blisters which leaves scabs. A slight fever may or may not be present. There may be blisters and scabs all present at the same time. Your child should remain home until all blisters have scabbed over, usually 5-7 days after the appearance of the first crop of blisters.

COMMON COLD: Irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose and eyes, sneezing, chilliness and general body discomfort. Your child should remain home if symptoms are serious enough to interfere with your child's ability to learn. Medical care should be obtained if symptoms persist beyond 7-10 days, fever develops, or nasal discharge becomes yellow or green.

FEVER: If your child's temperature is 100° F or greater (or 1 or 2 degrees above the child's normal temperature) (s)he should remain home until (s)he has been without fever for a full 24 hours. Remember fever is a symptom indicating the presence of an illness.

FLU: Abrupt onset of fever, chills, headache and sore muscles. Runny nose, sore throat, and cough are common. Your child should remain home from school until symptoms are gone and the child is without fever for 24 hours.

HEAD LICE: Lice are small grayish-tan, wingless insects that lay eggs called nits. Nits are firmly attached to the hair shafts, close to the scalp. Nits are much easier to see and detect than lice. They are small white specks which are usually found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Following lice infestation, your child may return to school after receiving treatment with a pediculicide shampoo, **AND ALL NITS HAVE BEEN REMOVED.**

IMPETIGO: Blister-like lesions which later develop into crusted pus-like sores. Your child should remain home from school until receiving 48 hours of antibiotic therapy and sores are no longer draining.

PAIN: If your child complains, or behavior indicates, that (s)he is experiencing persistent pain, (s)he should be evaluated by a physician before your child is sent to school.

PINKEYE: Redness and swelling of the membranes of the eye with burning or itching, matter coming from one or both eyes, or crusts on the eyelids. Your child should remain home from school until receiving 24 hours of antibiotic therapy and discharge from the eyes has stopped. Spread of infection can be minimized by keeping the hands away from the face, using good hand washing practices, using individual washcloths and towels, and **NOT** touching any part of the eyes with the tip of the medication applicator while administering the antibiotic ointment.

SKIN RASHES: Skin rashes of unknown origin should be evaluated by a physician before your child is sent to school.

STREP THROAT AND SCARLET FEVER: Strep throat begins with fever, sore and red throat, pus spots on the back of the throat, tender swollen glands of the neck. With scarlet fever there are all the symptoms of strep throat as well as a strawberry appearance to the tongue and rash of the skin. High fever, nausea and vomiting may also occur. Your child should remain home from school until receiving a full 24 hours of antibiotic therapy and until without fever or vomiting for 24 hours. Most physicians will advise rest at home 1-2 days after a strep infection.

Antibiotics ordered for strep infections are to be taken for 10 days or until all medication is gone. Only when these directions are followed correctly is the strep germ completely eliminated from the body, no matter how well the child feels after the first few days of receiving medication.

VOMITING AND DIARRHEA (INTESTINAL VIRAL INFECTIONS):

Stomachache, cramping, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea, possible fever, headache, and body aches. Your child should remain at home until without vomiting, diarrhea or fever for a full 24 hours. If your child has had any of these symptoms during the night, (s)he should not be sent to school the following day.

PLEASE KEEP THESE GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

POLICY ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

In compliance with Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, any employee of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center who is acting in his or her official or professional capacity, and knows or suspects that a child under eighteen years of age or a physically or mentally handicapped child under twenty-one years of age has suffered any wound, injury, disability or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child shall immediately report that knowledge of suspicion to the Hamilton County Department of Human Services by calling 241-KIDS (5437), or to the Department of Human Services or the local law enforcement department where the child resides.

Following the oral report, the employee shall immediately report to the principal/administrator of the building in which the employee is located or in which the child is enrolled and to the Hamilton County Educational Service Center designated coordinator, that a report has been made. It shall be the responsibility of the designated coordinator to assist the employee or district administrator in any way necessary to insure that established procedures are followed and to serve in a supportive and advisory role to better insure the cooperation of the agency or departments involved.

Within twenty-four hours of the oral report, the employee shall prepare and send a written report (Form SS120) to the agency receiving the oral report and the Hamilton County Educational Service Center designated coordinator.

Any report made as a result of the policy and Ohio Revised Code, section 2151.421 shall be maintained as confidential and available only to the person initiating the complaint, the Hamilton County Educational Service Center designated coordinator, the Superintendent of schools, Board of Education and legally constituted authorities entitled to said report pursuant to section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code. Procedural guidelines for execution of this policy shall be contained in the employee handbook published by the Hamilton County Educational Service Center.

Immunity from civil and/or criminal liability for reports of child abuse and neglect is provided by ORC 2151.421. Failure to report suspected child abuse and neglect shall be subject to ORC 2151.99.

CODE OF ETHICS

General Statements

We are committed to supporting each child's optimum social, emotional, intellectual and physical development within a safe, healthy and enriched environment.

We will respect the racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic differences of all children, parents, and others with whom we work.

We will maintain confidentiality in our dealings with children, parents and colleagues.

We will avoid misrepresentation of our professional skills, qualifications and affiliations.

We have the right and obligation to share in the maintenance of the ethics of our profession.

Families

We will respect families' rights to make decisions for their children, and will uphold their beliefs and practices whenever possible.

We will be aware that not only the family, but also other people and experiences influence the development and attitudes of the children in our care.

When conflicts arise between parent and early childhood educator concerning generally accepted professional and/or developmental practices, we will make every attempt to clarify the issues for the parent through education and communication.

Children

We will uphold the principle that the early childhood educator's primary professional responsibility is to the child.

Even though working with children may satisfy our own emotional needs, the child's total development will remain our primary concern.

Because we believe that everyone has the right to feel that s/he is a worthwhile human being, we will treat each child with respect and dignity.

We will not mentally, physically or emotionally abuse the child in any way.

We believe in positive, productive discipline and guidance as the means for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

Colleagues

We uphold the right of every early childhood educator to participate in an evaluation process which compares current job performance to job expectations, and the right to written grievance procedures.

We are committed to seeking and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

We support cooperation among all early childhood professionals.

(As adopted by the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children)