

Florida Coalition of Christian Private Schools Accreditation

Gold Seal Accreditation Standards



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Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)

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INDEX

1.0 Vision, Mission and Philosophy of Education

Founding Principles	5
1.1 Vision, Mission and philosophy of Education	5

2.0 Governance and Administration

Founding Principles	6
2.1 Corporate Structure	6
2.2 Compliance Responsibilities	7
2.3 Fiscal Responsibilities	8
2.4 Administration	9
2.5 Admissions	10
2.6 Children's Information	11

3.0 Health, Safety and Transportation

Founding Principles	12
3.1 Supervision and Access	13
3.2 Transportation	14
3.3 Child Discipline/Discipline Policy	16
3.4 Physical Environment	17
3.5 Outdoor Play Areas and Equipment	20
3.6 Sleeping Areas	22
3.7 Hand Washing	23
3.8 Toileting and Bathing Facilities	24
3.9 Diapering Area	25
3.10 Fire Drills and Emergency Preparedness	26
3.11 Background Screening and Certifications	28
3.12 Personnel Training	29
3.13 Communicable Disease Control	30
3.14 Medication	31
3.15 Food and Nutrition	32
3.16 Record Keeping	33
3.17 Plan of Activities	34

4.0 Nutrition and Food Services

Founding Principles	35
4.1 Food Preparation	36
4.2 Parent/Guardian Information	38
4.3 Social Interaction	39
4.4 Food for Infants and Toddlers	40

5.0 Curriculum and Child Development

Founding Principles	41
5.1 Curriculum Overview and Implementation	41
5.2 Physical Development	43
5.3 Social and Emotional Development	45
5.4 Teaching Strategies	47

Core Subject Areas

5.5 Language & Literacy	53
5.6 Mathematical Awareness	56
5.7 Science	57
5.8 Social Studies	58
5.9 Fine Arts	59
5.10 Assessment	61

6.0 Personnel

Foundational Principles	64
6.1 Staff Hiring Practices and Benefits	64
6.2 Director	66
6.3 Instructional and Support Staff Qualifications	69
6.4 Instructional and Support Staff Policies	71
6.5 Supervision of Children	72
6.7 Internal Relations	73

7.0 Relationships

Founding Principles	74
7.1 Public Relations	74
7.2 Parent or Guardian Handbook	75
7.3 Communication	76
7.4 Developing a Nurturing Environment	77
7.5 Parent or Guardian Education	78

1.0 Vision, Mission and Philosophy of Education

Founding Principles

The vision is the foundation upon which the entire structure of the program is built. For a program to be properly evaluated, the process must begin with a clear vision or description of what the program is created to achieve, including expected child outcomes. That goal will not be obtained unless all members of the team are unified in purpose based on a clear understanding and agreement with the vision, and then apply consistent and directed effort to accomplish the goal.

The mission of the program is built on the vision statement and defines what the organization is, (Early Learning Program) why it exists, or its reason for being. At a minimum, the mission statement should define your clientele and describe the results that the program is designed to produce.

The Philosophy of Education defines the beliefs, principles and guidelines upon which the program is based. Philosophy means "*love of wisdom*." It is made up of two Greek words, *philo*, meaning "love", and *sophos*, meaning "wisdom". Education has been defined as "*the process by which children and youth develop knowledge, skills, and character, especially through formal instruction, training, and study*".

The resulting Philosophy of Education reflects the program's beliefs about how children learn, describes the environment, and includes specific methodology and overall goals for children. It is the guiding set of principles upon which curriculum is purchased or designed, staff are hired and trained, environments are designed, relationships are nurtured, and lesson plans are implemented.

Having and understanding a well developed Philosophy of Education is critical to the ongoing evaluations that examine current practices and develop strategic plans for improvements in the program. Ongoing improvements include documentation of the level to which the program is meeting quality goals, professional development of staff, and communication with families.

1.1 Vision, Mission and Philosophy of Education

1.1.1 Vision Statement: The program has a written and published Vision Statement.

1.1.2 Mission Statement: The program has a written and published Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose.

1.1.3 Philosophy of Education: The program has a written and published Philosophy of Education regarding the care and education of young children. The philosophy is based on "best practices" and is consistent with the program's vision and mission statements.

2.0 Governance and Administration

Founding Principles

The founding principles in the development of the Governance and Administration policies of any educational program should have as its base a commitment to sound stewardship. The long-term success and survival of any program is dependent on the leadership and faithfulness of its guiding board and/or administrator. Stewardship refers to processes and structures that manage, allocate, and monitor resources that are crucial to fulfill the program's academic mission. Areas of stewardship include: compliance with government regulations, fiscal responsibilities, and integrity in all relationships.

The program must function in a manner that ensures, on an ongoing basis, that all its operations align with and support its core academic vision, mission and philosophy of education. *Understanding the program's resources, and its responsibilities to the children and families it serves is the responsibility of all members of the team.* To accomplish this, principles of good stewardship must be constantly taught and reinforced so all team members understand and follow its principles at all levels.

These principles include, at a minimum, an appropriate respect for and use of the program's resources. Rigorous and effective stewardship of the program's finances, with appropriate "checks and balances," is critical. Clear areas of responsibility and lines of authority, along with a means to ensure accountability, are needed. There must be a commitment to open communication and transparency among administration, staff, children and parents as to the rationale and decision making process.

2.1 Corporate Structure

2.1.1 Incorporation: The governing body of the facility has met the legal requirements to operate in the state of Florida by filing as a corporation with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, or has met the requirement as an Unincorporated Association.

2.1.2 Bylaws: The corporate status of the entity, having oversight of the Early Learning program, has clearly articulated bylaws that include educational options sufficient to cover the Early Learning program. The bylaws detail administrative responsibilities in conjunction with and under the appropriate bylaws of the corporation.

2.1.3 Minutes of Meetings: Written minutes of governance meetings are maintained on file.

2.1.4 Governance Entity: Programs under the auspices *of another organization and/or agency* are represented by a governing entity or committee responsible for the general policies and financial stability of the early education program.

2.2 Compliance Responsibilities

2.2.1 Civil Authorities: The program meets and/or exceeds all requirements of Florida Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing Program, or have obtained Religious Exempt status through the FCCPSA. At a minimum, an outside authority inspects the program annually. Any reports of violations must remain on file for inspection.

2.2.2 Documentation of Inspections: The program is inspected by city/state agencies as applicable for licensing or exemption under state or federal law (i.e., fire department, health department, food services, etc.). Inspection documentations are on file. If the program is exempt from licensing, voluntary inspection has been sought, and recommendations for improvement have been followed.

2.3 Fiscal Responsibilities

2.3.1 Financial Stability and Integrity: The program is not undergoing financial reorganization to protect itself from creditors.

2.3.2 Responsibility for Fiscal Matters: The governance or administration has oversight of the program, and it reviews the financial position of the program and ensures its stability. Operating budgets are prepared annually, and there is at least quarterly reconciliation of expenses to budget. A system exists to review or adjust the budget if circumstances change, and it includes a yearly audit. Budgets are reviewed and amended as needed. Fiscal records (such as revenue and expenditure statements, balance sheets, banking reconciliation, etc.) are kept as evidence of sound financial management.

2.3.3 Financial Records: The program's Financial Records include an annual internal review. General accounting procedures used by the program, have been validated by an appropriate outside source and provide evidence of sound fiscal accountability using standard accounting practices.

2.3.4 Insurance: In order to ensure the stability of the program in the case of a significant litigation, the program is covered by insurance, including accident insurance for children and assistants (if employed), liability insurance, and vehicle insurance with the following minimums: \$5,000 multiplied by the rated seating capacity of the vehicle, or \$100,000, whichever is greater (if children are transported).

2.3.5 Staff Salaries and Benefits: The program approves wages and benefits. Wages, benefits, recruitment procedures and staff retention are reviewed at least annually by the administration or governing body. Policies reflect an effort to compensate and retain quality staff by including benefits such as health coverage, sick leave, vacation leave, continuing education, Social Security, and an opportunity to participate in a tax sheltered annuity, or other type of retirement plan on a prorated basis where applicable. *Paid planning time away from children is also provided.*

2.4 Administration

2.4.1 Policies and Procedures: The governance establishes and maintains written governing policies and procedures that are consistent with the program's philosophy.

2.4.2 Administrative Role and Responsibilities: The program has clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the Early Learning program. New administration and board members are provided with an orientation when they join the team, including written policies defining roles and responsibilities of board members and staff.

2.4.3 Evaluation of Director: The governing board or administration ensures an annual evaluation of the early education administrator/director.

2.4.4 Evaluation of Program: The director (or director-qualified personnel) submits an annual program evaluation based on early childhood/child development theory, research, and best practices, and assists the administration or governing board in setting and prioritizing short and long-range goals for the program.

2.5 Admissions

2.5.1 Admissions Policies: Clear admissions and operational policies are stated in writing. (Parent Handbook) These policies and procedures will not discriminate against any person or group of persons on the basis of age, gender, race, color, ethnic origin, or physical disability. In addition, the Parent Handbook will cover at a minimum:

- Fees
- Payment Schedule
- Days and Hours of Operation
- Child Sick Leave Policy
- Termination Policies Are Detailed
- Persons Authorized to Pick up Child
- Medication Administration
- Emergency Procedures
- Guidance and Discipline
- Use of Screen Media
- Parent Participation and Conferences
- Field Trips
- Religious Activities

2.5.2 Admissions Procedures: Clear admissions procedures are stated in writing. (Enrollment Packet) These policies and procedures provide an exchange of information between the provider and parent, working to assure a good match. Discussion includes a description of the program and policies as well as parents' values and wishes around such topics as eating, sleeping, toileting, and discipline. Family Enrollment Application/Contract must be notarized and include at a minimum receipt of the following:

- Parent Handbook and Agreement to Program Policies
- Permission to Treat Emergencies
- Field Trips Transportation Permission (if applicable)
- Know Your Child Care Facility Brochure
- Influenza Virus, Guide to Parents Brochure
- Student allergy profile

2.6 Children's information

2.6.1 Records: The Administration/Director ensures that current, complete, confidential records for each child are kept and are available to authorized personnel only. (*Authorized personnel include administrative staff, parents/guardians, and appropriate regulatory authorities.*) The file may include items such as the child's behavioral patterns, assessments of developmental and cognitive development, if appropriate. Within 30 days of enrollment the file will include at a minimum:

- Emergency contact information for the parent/guardian and alternate contacts is possible
- Birth Certificate (copy)
- Immunization, DH680 or Religious Exemption
- Physical, DH3040
- Family Enrollment Application/Contract
- Meals/Snack Listing of Known Allergies of the Child
- Daily Attendance Records
- Accident/Incident Reports
- Behavior/Discipline Reports
- Observation Log
- All Correspondence with Parents

2.6.2 Discipline: The director oversees interaction between staff and children, publishing the discipline policies and procedures for parents/guardians (Parent Handbook) and staff (Staff Handbook) and taking appropriate measures to maintain discipline. Corporal punishment or legally questionable practices will not be utilized.

2.6.3 Emergency and Security: Current emergency contact information for the Parent/Guardian and Alternate People authorized to take the child off of the premises is maintained for each child enrolled in the program.

3.0 Health, Safety and Transportation

Founding Principles

The Early Learning Program has been given a great responsibility by the parent/guardian to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of each child in attendance. It is then of the utmost importance that the staff have the best training in all areas of health and safety. Constant vigilance is required; not only to maintain the current level of safety, but also to be aware of how the surroundings may not prove safe for young ones. Active involvement from the teachers (including sitting on the floor in a classroom) will promote a view from a child's perspective.

There may come a need for quick action, such as in the case of a choking child. Only with the repetitive use of training and practice will the actions of CPR or other interventions promote a positive response when there is not enough time to think. That is why repetitive training, even over areas of safety that have been reviewed previously, is continuously reviewed on a regular schedule. No matter how many times the playground has been inspected, it must still be inspected today BEFORE children are given access, because today may be the day when a hazard is present.

NOTE: Health, Safety and Transportation Standards are listed below; however, the *Indicators of Compliance* are not detailed. The accreditation visit is primarily focused on the standards that define the Early Learning Program, from its Vision, Mission and Philosophy of Education, Governance and Administration policies, Curriculum and its implementation into all aspects of both the children and families that are served, including academic, social, and relationships.

Before a facility can progress to the accreditation level, it will have had to pass the Florida Department of Children and Families licensure process that focuses on the State's Health and Safety Standards. If the Early Learning Program is religious exempt through the FCCPSA, then it will have undergone a health and safety inspection. All FCCPSA inspectors are trained in Health, Safety and Transportation Inspections, and will use the detailed protocols and checklist as a part of the inspection process. For a copy of the Indicators of Compliance, the program director may contact the administration office and a PDF version will be provided. Several of the checklists, including, Kitchen, Playground and Vehicle Inspection, are provided in the Appendix Section at the back of this manual.

Many standards that have a clear health and safety component are categorized in different sections of the standards. Teacher to Child Ratios and Class Size, as an example, are listed in Section 6 of the FCCPSA Standards: Personnel. Standards in this section that begin with the number 3, and are in bold type, indicate standards from health, safety and transportation. Standards that are underlined, but not in bold type, indicate standards that are duplicated here. This provides the Center with one combined list detailed in the order of the Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, Health and Safety Checklist.

NOTE: Health and Safety is a category that is impacted by most, if not all, accreditation standards and is, therefore, reflected throughout all seven divisions of these standards. Crossover standards are included in this grouping for reference.

3.1 Supervision and Access

3.1.1 Supervision of Arrivals and Departures: Safe arrival and departure procedures have been developed that ensure all children in the program are accounted for throughout the day and released only to authorized adults. Children are supervised by sight at all times, and transition of children from one teacher to another or from one area to another is accounted for to ensure the supervision and whereabouts of children at all times.

Cross Reference to additional Supervision and Access Standards

6.2.1 Qualifications of Program Director: Program Administrators must be at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of:

- An Associate's degree or higher.
- 9 credit hours in administration, leadership, or management.
- 15 credit hours in early childhood, child development, elementary education, or special early childhood special education that addresses child development and learning from birth through kindergarten.
- Two years experience as a teacher of children in the age group(s) they oversee.

6.3 Instructional and Support Staff Qualifications

All staff, regardless of position, must meet the requirements of 6.1.3 Background Screening and 6.1.4 Staff Orientation before they are permitted to work with children, alone or supervised. Primary Teachers must be at least 21 years of age, Associate teachers must be at least 18 years of age and all Teachers Aids/Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age.

6.5.2 Ratios and Group Size: When mixed age groups of infants and toddlers are in the same room, the child staff ratio is maintained according to the youngest child in the room. If all the children in the mixed age group are two years of age or older, the child-staff ratio is maintained according to the average age of the children. If the children in the mixed age group have children of one year old, but under two years of age, the ratio of staff to children shall not exceed 1 to 6.

6.6.3 Attendance/Monitoring: The staff maintains direct supervision of children at all times. Direct supervision is defined as within hearing and sight at all times, including during nap time, diaper changing, toileting, bathing, changing clothes and when separated from other children due to illness or possible communicable disease.

6.6.4 Internal Communication Related to Supervision: Primary and Associate teachers are assigned specific classes or groups of children to supervise, and are present with that class or group at all times. Staff members who are sharing the responsibility of a group of children communicate with one another to ensure smooth operation of the program.

7.2.2 Visitation Rights: The program has an open-door policy regarding visits by parents/guardians on the program's premises, including in their child's classroom. Policies concerning parent/guardian involvement (e.g., visiting, observing, and volunteering) are in place to ensure the partnership between home and program is maintained.

3.2 Transportation

3.2.1 Field Trip Policies and Procedures: Written permission and emergency treatment forms are obtained from parents/guardians for every student being transported. The form must be signed by a parent/guardian listed on the enrollment application. One permission form may be used for regularly scheduled pick up and drop off; individual permission forms must be obtained for any other scheduled event.

3.2.2 Vehicle Inspection, Permits, and Qualified Drivers: Current documentation is available on all vehicle safety inspections and driver qualifications. A certified mechanic verifying that all vehicles are in compliance with vehicle transportation safety requirements must inspect vehicles no less than annually.

3.2.3 Vehicles with Restraining Devices and Emergency Equipment: Vehicles are equipped with age-appropriate restraint devices. Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers never sit in the front seat of the vehicle; those over the age of 6 and under the age of 12 do not sit in the front seat of a vehicle with an active passenger airbag. Emergency reflectors in case of a break down, fire extinguisher, and a first aid kit are mandatory.

3.2.4 Qualified Drivers: All drivers are named as drivers on the insurance policy and hold a valid Florida driver's license, including any CDL endorsements that may be required based on the vehicle's capacity. All drivers must have current First Aid and infant/child CPR certification. In addition, drivers must have a Medical Examination Report for Commercial Driver Fitness Determination (DOT form 649-F) verifying fitness to operate a vehicle based on Federal DOT standards.

3.2.5 Field Trip Policies and Procedures: The program has written field trip policies and procedures that ensure the supervision of all children at all times and thus promote the safety of the children. These policies are shared with parents/guardians and implemented by the program in the Parent Handbook. Attendance checks are logged before, regularly during, and upon return to the program's facilities. Trip logs are to be filed in the center's office no less than weekly, and remain on file no less than six months.

3.2.6 Communication Devices, Contact Information: The driver or a member of the staff has a cell phone for communication as needed. The emergency contact information to the center, director or other staff members and emergency services is always with the vehicle or driver. Current contact information for the parents/guardians of each child being transported is present any time students are being transported.

3.2.7 Emergency Care/Medication: If any student (or students) has medical issues that may require additional care or intervention, necessary measures and supplies are available when the student is being transported.

3.2.8 Children are never left unattended in a vehicle. One worker must remain with the vehicle at all times when children are inside. An additional staff person is required to properly transition children from a vehicle into or from any building.

Cross Reference to additional Transportation Standards

2.3.4 Insurance: In order to ensure the stability of the program in the case of a significant litigation, the program is covered by insurance, including accident insurance for children and assistants (if employed), liability insurance, and vehicle insurance with the following minimums: \$5,000 multiplied by the rated seating capacity of the vehicle, or \$100,000, whichever is greater (if children are transported).

3.3 Child Discipline/Discipline Policy

Cross Reference to additional Child Discipline/Discipline Policy Standards

7.2.1 Contents and Communication: Parents/guardians of the children in the program receive a Parent/Guardian Handbook that includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) The philosophy statement regarding the care and education of young children attending the program, including what discipline techniques will be used; discipline methods are not severe, humiliating or frightening; food is not used as a reward or punishment, and corporal or physical punishment is not used,
- 2) Policies regarding holidays, illnesses, hours of operation, fees, refunds, enrollment, and termination procedures,
- 3) An explanation of the program's day-to-day functioning,
- 4) Parents/guardians sign a statement acknowledging that they understand and support the program's policies as outlined in the Parent/Guardian Handbook.

3.4 Physical Environment

3.4.1 Lighting and Ventilation: The physical environment of the program provides sufficient lighting, good ventilation.

3.4.2 Classroom Maintenance: The facilities are organized, well maintained, and free of vermin infestation, safety hazards, offensive odors or toxic plants.

3.4.3 Cleanliness of Facilities: The facilities are cleaned on a daily basis, including sanitizing the bathrooms and removing trash. The facilities are free of mold.

3.4.4 Sanitizing Toys and Equipment The program has an established plan of sanitizing toys and equipment regularly, but provides more frequent sanitization as needed to maintain a healthy environment for the children. Toys that are put into the mouth by a child are not to be used by other children until sanitized. Minimum sanitizing schedule:

- Infants: daily
- Toddlers: semiweekly
- Preschoolers: weekly

3.4.5 Proper Chemical Labeling and Storage: All chemicals, medicines, cleaning supplies, poisonous items and other “dangerous if swallowed” materials are stored in their original containers. All potentially dangerous products are stored in a locked area. An MSD (Material Safety Data) sheet is strategically placed near harmful chemicals.

3.4.6 Tobacco, Alcohol, Narcotics, etc.: The tobacco, alcohol and narcotics policy applies to all members of the staff, as well as parents/guardians when they are on campus, or assisting in any program activity. Tobacco products of any kind are not allowed on premises. Smoking cigarettes (including the use of electronic substitutes which will appear to children to be the same as smoking actual tobacco) or having any form of tobacco in the mouth is prohibited on campus, during any activity organized as an official part of the program. Possession of, consumption of, or being impaired by the use of alcohol is prohibited. Possession of, consumption of, or being impaired by the use of narcotics or other impairing drugs, even if legalized by the State of Florida, is prohibited.

3.4.7 Firearms/Weapons: Firearms or weapons are not permitted on campus, in program vehicles, or on any person located on the premises, with the exception of federal, state or local law enforcement officers.

3.4.8 Temperature: The physical environment of the program maintains a comfortable temperature no less than 65°F or greater than 82°F.

3.4.9 Telephone: At least one working telephone is available to all staff personnel during the hours of operation.

3.4.10 Classroom Size: Classrooms are suitable for the age and activities of the children in the program. Floor space meets or exceeds a minimum of thirty-five square feet of usable space per child.

3.4.11 Classroom Age Appropriate/Safe Furniture and Equipment: The environment facilitates optimal age-appropriate learning experiences with appropriate and safe furniture and equipment. Including, but not limited to:

- Shelving and storage units provide an organized flow to the room and thereby invite children to interact with materials and equipment,
- Heavy furniture, climbing equipment, swings, and slides are stable or securely anchored,
- Sturdy, low furniture is available for those who are learning to walk,
- If high chairs or boosters are used, they have a wide base or are securely attached to a table or another chair. They have a T-shaped restraint/harness that is fastened every time they are used,
- Cushioning materials are placed under all climbers, swings, and slides over 36 inches high, both indoors and outdoors,
- There are no movable baby walkers (stationary saucers are permitted),
- Children always wear a helmet while riding bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and in-line or roller skates.

3.4.12 Classroom Arrangement: The physical environment of the classroom is arranged not only to stimulate learning by accommodating large and small groups of children, but also to encourage exploration and experimentation. The following are examples:

- Infants have a protected space for crawling and playing away from more mobile babies,
- Mirrors, pull-up bars, and/or other interactive items are placed on the walls at babies' eye levels,
- Sturdy, low furniture is available for those who are learning to walk.

3.4.13 Classroom Children's Storage Space: Children are provided with individual spaces, such as cubbies, in which they can store their work and personal belongings.

3.4.14 Classroom/Play Area Flooring: The physical environment includes appropriate room flooring and soft areas that are comforting to children. All floors used by children are swept and/or vacuumed daily. Washable floors used by children are mopped with disinfectant at least twice a week.

3.4.15 Classroom Materials: Classroom materials are in good repair, non-toxic, stored and used in a safe manner. Toys and storage areas are inspected on a regular basis to prevent injury from broken toys or equipment. No list can be exhaustive with children but the following are examples for reference:

- Art and other materials are non-toxic,
- Music is pleasant, not over stimulating or distracting,
- Older children have a place to use materials without interference from younger children,
- Materials are stored in consistent places,
- If there is a toy chest, it has safety hinges and air holes, or there is no lid,
- Separate containers are provided for different kinds of materials

3.4.16 Hot Water, Water Pipes, Heaters or Beverages: If heated water is accessible to children, it is not hot enough to scald or cause discomfort to children. (110° or less) No hot water pipes or radiators are exposed in areas that children have access to. Hot beverages like coffee are not in areas where children can access them or cause a spill.

3.4.17 Safe Electrical Outlets/Cords: If there are children under the age of 6, electrical outlets in the wall are covered with a choke-proof, child-resistant devices, in use, or otherwise “child proof”. All electrical cords within children's reach are secured. No cords are placed under rugs or carpeting. This standard applies in every classroom or area where children play or have an activity, including mealtime, to prevent children from being shocked by electricity.

3.4.18 Windows: If windows more than 3 feet above ground can be opened, they cannot be opened more than 6 inches, or they are opened from the top and have safety guards, with bars no more than 4” apart. The safety guards must be removable from inside or outside by an adult in case of an emergency. Cords of window coverings are secured or out of children's reach. Windows that can be opened have screens in good repair.

3.4.19 Director's Office: The facilities include appropriate office space for the director of the program that is sufficient in size and location outside of the classroom to effectively administrate the program.

3.4.20 Staff Meeting Room: The facilities include an appropriate area for staff meetings and breaks.

3.4.21 Storage Space: The facilities provide suitable storage space, for limited use, or special event materials and for classroom items to be rotated.

3.5 Outdoor Play Areas and Equipment

3.5.1 Outdoor Safety: The program provides a balance of sun and shade. Ponds, wells, tool sheds, and other hazards are fenced or closed off. The outside activity areas are inspected daily (before children are allowed to enter) for insects that may cause injury such as ants, wasps, objects that may cause injury such as nails, glass, and other hazards including, but not limited to, broken equipment, fallen branches, sink holes, etc.

3.5.2 Outside Security: The program provides adequate protection for the play area, including fencing that is no less than four (4) feet at its lowest point. Equipment is safe and well designed for safe use and properly maintained. There is a clearance area and fall zone that extends at least 6 feet beyond the stationary swing that surrounds swings and other climbing equipment. Each swing hangs at least 30 inches away from the support poles. Swing seats do not have pinch points or "S" hooks. Hooks at the top of swing ropes or chains are closed.

3.5.3 Outside Maintenance: Equipment is safe and well designed for safe use and properly maintained. There is a clearance area and fall zone that extends at least 6 feet beyond the stationary swing that surrounds swings and other climbing equipment. Each swing hangs at least 30 inches away from the support poles. Swing seats do not have pinch points or "S" hooks. Hooks at the top of swing ropes or chains are closed.

3.5.4 Swimming Pools: If the program has access to a swimming pool, a certified lifeguard or equivalent is always present. The individual serving as the lifeguard cannot be counted in the class ratio calculations for the group, or be designated as the individual responsible for maintaining direct supervision.

3.5.5 Adequate Outdoor Space: To accommodate the children's various play activities, including open space for active movement, some play equipment and materials, and places for open-ended explorations are provided. The outdoor physical environment includes seventy-five square feet per child on the playground at any given time.

3.5.6 Playground Equipment: Playground equipment is varied and sufficient for the number of children on the playground at the same time. The playground is designed and equipped to provide optimal learning experiences for children. Outdoor play equipment is spaced to avoid safety hazards for active children. No trampolines are accessible to the children in care, except for therapeutic equipment used with supervision.

3.5.7 Playground Supervision: Children are supervised at all times, and the child-adult ratio is maintained while the children are on the playground.

3.5.8 Playground Surfaces: Woodchips, mulch, sand, and other cushioning materials of adequate depths are used on all surfaces. Under equipment such as swings and climbing apparatus, six (6) inches is recommended. Allowing for wear and time, the cover is never less than three 3 inches in depth.

3.5.9 Inspections and Repairs: Through routine inspections and resulting timely repairs, the outdoor play area is well maintained to prevent children from being injured by broken equipment, sharp edges, and rusty parts. If there is a sand area or box, it is covered when not in use.

3.5.10 Substitute and Adequate Space Indoors for Large Group Play: When inclement weather prevents children from playing outdoors, alternative activities are planned to ensure large-motor exercise and to foster large-motor development.

3.5.11 Maintenance of Buildings Exterior and Grounds: There is a process in place that ensures proper maintenance of the buildings, grounds, and equipment. Play space, including neighborhood playground, if used, is free of animal feces, broken glass, paint chips, or trash. There is no flaking or peeling paint or bare soil within 15 feet of a structure.

3.6 Sleeping Areas:

3.6.1 Sleeping Areas: Children are provided with sanitary, individual sleeping spaces and a mattress or floor mat. Younger children will be provided with an adequate bed, cot, crib or playpen.

- Space will be provided allowing their faces to be at least 3 feet apart from each other.
- Each child will be no less than eighteen (18) inches apart.
- Floor mats are at least one (1) inch thick and covered with an impermeable surface.
- Children up to one year old are in their own crib, port-a-crib or playpen.
- Each child's bedding is stored so that it does not come into contact with other bedding.
- Personnel ensure that young infants are not capable of rolling over on their own and are positioned on their back on a firm surface when napping and sleeping.
- Sleeping areas for babies do not have any surface that can conform to the face, including a soft pillow, soft mattress, comforter, or stuffed animal.
- Even with lights dimmer or turned off, staff can still see each child clearly to maintain proper supervision.
- Double or multi-deck cribs, cots or beds are not used.

3.6.2 Cribs and portable cribs: Both full size and non-full size which are used for babies have a date of manufacture label after June 28, 2011 or a Certificate of Compliance from the manufacturer. This does not apply to mesh/net/screen cribs, non-rigidly constructed cribs, cradles (both rocker and pendulum types), car beds, baby baskets, and bassinets that may be used.

3.6.3 Washing of Infant and Toddler Bedding: Infant and toddler bedding is washed at a minimum of twice per week and more often when soiled, and it is used by only one child between washings. Bedding used by preschoolers is washed a minimum of once per week and more often when soiled, and is used by only one child between washings.

3.7 Hand Washing

3.7.1 Hand Washing: Children and adults wash their hands after toileting, before eating or handling food, and as otherwise necessary to prevent the spread of disease. Hand washing procedures (Use soap and running water, dry thoroughly.) are posted in all locations that are used by children to wash their hands.

3.8 Toileting and Bathing Facilities

3.8.1 Accessible & Appropriate Sinks and Toilets: Sinks and toilets are readily accessible to children. The number of sinks and toilets (child-sized ones are recommended) must be adequate for the number of children in attendance and easily accessible.

3.8.2 Bathroom Sanitization:

- Platforms and stools have surfaces that can be easily cleaned and sanitized as needed.
- Soap, running water, and paper towels or hand drying machines are provided within reach of children.
- If paper towels or hand drying machines are not used, then each child has an assigned towel that is used consistently, doesn't touch other towels, and is laundered weekly or more often if needed.
- If a potty chair is used, it is washed and sanitized after each use.

3.8.3 Facility Bathroom: Except in facilities that only serves school-age children, at least one bathing facility is available for staff members, which is not used by the children.

3.8.4 Bathroom Safety: Any area with access to water by children requires additional safety precautions. A secure step stool that will not slide from under younger children, but can be moved for older children if they use the same facility is to be used. Children under the age of two may be held while washing their hands. Children cannot lock themselves into rooms. Privacy locks on bathroom or bedroom doors are inaccessible to children, or locks can be opened quickly from outside. No cleaning supplies, plungers, toilet brushes, etc. are accessible to children.

3.9 Diapering Area:

3.9.1 Diapering of Infants and Toddlers:

- The diapering area has an impermeable surface in good repair and is cleaned with a sanitizing solution or disinfected after each use.
- Adequate supply of clean diapers, clothing and linens are on hand at all times.
- Soiled linens, or articles of clothing are changed promptly when soiled or wet.
- Diapering and toileting areas are separated from food areas. (No direct access to food prep areas.)
- All diapers are stored in a sealed, plastic lined container that is covered with a step-operated lid, and is emptied and sanitized when full but no less than once daily.
- Diaper area is located out of reach of babies and toddlers.
- Gloves, as well as running water and soap for hand washing, are accessible and utilized by the staff during diapering.

3.10 Fire Drills and Emergency Preparedness

3.10.1 Exits and Stairs: All exits are clearly marked and clear of obstructions. Doors are locked to protect from unauthorized access from outside. Multiple methods of exiting the building in the case of an emergency are provided. Exits are usable by toddlers and older children. Stairs, if present, have additional safety measures in place including, but not limited to:

- Each floor used by children has at least two exits that lead to the ground level,
- Stairs with more than 3 steps, or a total rise of 24 inches or more, have railings usable by the children,
- Railings are on the right side when descending, if possible,
- Secure and safe gates or barriers close off the top and bottom of all stairs adjoining areas used by children under the age of four (4),
- There are no pressure gates or accordion gates with openings large enough to entrap a child's head.

3.10.2 First Aid Kits: The program maintains adequate first aid supplies that are conveniently available in the classrooms and all activity areas, but not to the children. The program has a system of maintenance to insure that kits are re-stocked regularly. The program maintains a detailed medical log regarding the use of these items: NOTE: No First Aid Kit will have medications of any kind.

Thermometer
Minimum of one instant ice pack
Bandages (minimum of 12)
Three (30 gauze pads (3" x 3") or larger
One self-sticking gauze roll
Elastic gloves

3.10.3 Fire Drills: An ongoing system of Fire Drills is in place to assure children are prepared for an emergency evacuation.

- A minimum of one each month.
- Drills are conducted at various days of the week.
- Fire Drills are conducted during different times of the day, including one during naptime.
- The staff person designated as the individual responsible for maintaining direct supervision accompanies staff out of the building with the day's current attendance record, which is used to account for all children.

3.10.4 Emergency Preparedness Plans: The program has a general disaster plan and/or an Emergency Crisis Manual that includes evacuation procedures and inside actions in the event of a disaster or crisis (e.g., snowstorm, tornado, lightning, flooding, fire, bomb threat, violence, and hostage situation). The plan includes at a minimum:

- Directions for disasters common to the geographic area,
- Staff members are trained and familiar with routes and procedures,
- The address and directions to the facility and emergency phone numbers including ambulance, fire, police, poison control and the Florida Abuse Hotline are posted near all phones,
- Emergency evacuation routes are posted in each classroom, and staff regularly practice drills with the children.

3.10.5 Fire Extinguishers and Detectors: Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are provided and checked on a regularly maintained schedule.

- All staff members are trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- A working ABC-type fire extinguisher is located in or near the kitchen and on each floor used by children, with instructions for its use attached or posted.
- The recommended dates on fire extinguishers are not expired.
- A qualified inspector annually inspects fire extinguishers.

3.10.6 Fire Safety: Flammable materials are not stored in areas used for childcare. Children do not have access to matches or lighters.

Cross Reference to additional Fire Drills and Emergency Preparedness Standards

2.2.2 Documentation of Inspections: The program is inspected by city/state agencies as applicable for licensing or exemption under state or federal law (i.e., fire department, health department, food services, etc.). Inspection documentations are on file. If the program is exempt from licensing, voluntary inspection has been sought, and recommendations for improvement have been followed.

3.11 Background Screening and Certifications

3.11.1 First Aid Certified Personnel: At least one staff member with first aid certification—and infant/child CPR certification will be present on the premises at all times. No less than 50% of staff will have completed first aid and infant/child CPR to met the minimum accreditation standard. All personnel should be scheduled to complete CPR training within ninety days of employment.

Cross Reference to additional Background Screening and Certifications Standards

6.1.3 Background Screening: The program’s hiring procedures include Level 2 background screening and fingerprinting to obtain a history regarding abuse and any criminal convictions for all employees and for others who have direct access with the children in the program. This includes the Director, Primary Teachers, Associate Teachers, Teacher's Aids, Volunteers, Office Personnel, Kitchen and Maintenance Staff.

6.2.13 Personnel Files: The Director maintains a confidential personnel file on each employee, volunteer and substitute. The file should contain, but not be limited to the following and/or contain information that civil authorities require:

- Resume
- Application
- Copies of college or university transcripts
- Background screening and results
- Fingerprints/clearance
- First Aid/Infant/Child CPR Certification
- Annual staff evaluations
- Documentation of any grievances
- Evidence of in-service training
- Copy of contract/work agreement
- I-9 form (Not required for volunteers)

3.12 Personnel Training

Cross Reference to additional Personnel Training Standards

6.2.1 Qualifications of Program Director: Program Administrators must be at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of:

- An Associate's degree or higher.
- 9 credit hours in administration, leadership, or management.
- 15 credit hours in early childhood, child development, elementary education, or special early childhood special education that addresses child development and learning from birth through kindergarten.
- Two years experience as a teacher of children in the age group(s) they oversee.
- A minimum of eight (8) hours of basic training in serving children with disabilities within five years after employment.

6.4.4 In-Service Training: All Child Care personnel must have continuing education and professional development training that relates to topics specific to early education. The majority of which must be provided by an outside source relating to: child growth and development in the areas of cognitive learning and social, emotional, and physical development; safety and health issues for young children; family and community relations; classroom and program management; and professional development, which may include special needs. Training may also include related language development, discipline, and technology. Whenever possible, continuing education should be validated by college credit.

The DCF 40 clock hour introductory course in childcare is required unless exempt under 402.305(2)(d)(1). Additional Guidelines:

- All Child Care personnel must begin the 40 hours course within 30 days of employment.
- A minimum of 5 hours in Early Literacy and Language Development of children from birth to 5 years of age, as approved by the Department of Children and Families.

3.13 Communicable Disease Control

3.13.1 Children or Other Personnel Who Are Ill: A written policy regarding the attendance of children or staff members who are ill, have been diagnosed with a contagious disease, or have been found to have a communicable condition has been developed and made available to parents/guardians. An isolation area is made available for ill or contagious children while they wait for someone to take them home. The isolation area is:

- Adequately ventilated,
- Temperature controlled,
- Equipped with a bed, mat or cot,
- Linens or other materials can be easily cleaned, sanitized and disinfected after use and they are removed and properly cleaned, sanitized and disinfected, immediately after use,
- Any child or staff member who has a condition that is easily transmitted is not permitted to return until treatment has been completed and verified.

3.13.2 Notification of Local Health Departments: If the outbreak of any communicable disease is suspected, the local Health Department is notified immediately. The center will then comply with any and all directions provided by the department.

Cross Reference to additional Communicable Disease Control Standards

2.5.2 Admissions Procedures: Clear admissions procedures are stated in writing. (Enrollment Packet) These policies and procedures provide an exchange of information between the provider and parent, working to assure a good match. Discussion includes a description of the program and policies as well as parents' values and wishes around such topics as eating, sleeping, toileting, and discipline. Family Enrollment Application/Contract must be notarized and include at a minimum receipt of the following:

- Parent Handbook and Agreement to Program Policies
- Permission to Treat Emergencies
- Field Trips Transportation Permission (if applicable)
- Know Your Child Care Facility Brochure
- *Influenza Virus, Guide to Parents Brochure*
- Student allergy profile

3.14 Medication

3.14.1 Administering Medicines: A written policy for administering and storing medications has been developed and made available to the parents/guardians of the children in the program in the Parent Handbook. Whenever possible the parent/guardian should visit the center to administer any medication. Medicines are securely stored and can only be accessed by authorized personnel.

The provider does not administer any medications and other remedies without:

- Written directions from a health care professional,
- Parent/guardians signed permission.
- Prescription medication is only administered from the original container.
- The written directions on the label are always followed.

3.14.2 Medical Log: A detailed medical log is maintained that includes a record of all medications given to children, time parent/guardian was notified, and by whom, the time and dosage of the medication and the person administering the medication.

3.15 Food and Nutrition

Cross Reference to additional Food and Nutrition Standards

4.1.2 Nutritional Guidelines: The meals and/or snacks provided for the children meet the nutritional guidelines regarding food groups and quantities that are age appropriate for the children, as suggested by the Child Care Food Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. If parents bring food, the provider assures that it is nutritious, appears fresh, or supplements it. Juice is 100% juice.

4.1.3 Food Storage: Food (including breast milk) is stored, prepared, and served to children in a safe and sanitary manner. Stored food and drink must be stored in such a manner as to be free from dust and dirt.

- Food must be stored in sealed waterproof containers that snap closed or zip closed at the end of each day and dated.
- Leftover food items may be served within five calendar days from date of preparation.
- After five calendar days, leftover food items must be discarded.
- If parents bring food, perishable items (including baby bottles) they are to be labeled and refrigerated immediately with the child's name and date of preparation.
- Baby formula is in factory-sealed containers, or powdered formula is used.
- Breast milk and infant formula remaining in bottles after feeding are discarded within one hour.

4.1.4 Meals and Snacks: Meals or snacks are available at least every 3 hours.

- Safe drinking water is available at all times, and Children are encouraged to drink water frequently.
- These times are relaxed, with some conversation; meals are not rushed.
- A written menu is posted daily or weekly and modified if it is changed - or parents bring food.
- Children's food allergies are posted in the food preparation and eating areas.
- The temperature of heated foods and bottles is tested to prevent injury before feeding to children.
- Foods that may be a choking hazard must be chopped up to age appropriate sizes.
- There is no use of screen media during mealtime.
- Food is never used as a reward or withheld as a punishment.
- Children do not have bottles or Sippy cups of milk, juice, or other beverages while lying down or walking around.

4.3.1 Standards for Mealtime: Mealtime is to be cultivated as a pleasant social time. Staff members sit with children and encourage healthy social interaction, appropriate table manners, and good eating habits. Children are either individually fed or supervised and are offered age-appropriate food.

4.3.2 Size of Furniture: There are a sufficient number of tables and chairs used for snack/mealtimes that are appropriate for the sizes of the children.

3.16 Record Keeping

3.16.1 Accident and/or Minor Injury Report: If a child receives an injury beyond a minor scrape or bruise, the provider contacts a parent/guardian as soon as possible. Parent/guardian is given a written accident report within 24 hours, which includes a description of the accident, action taken, outcome, and how the child responded. Parent/guardian must sign the report to validate notification. Accident reports are then filed with in the student file.

Cross Reference to additional Record Keeping Standards

2.6.1 Records: The Administration/Director ensures that current, complete, confidential records for each child are kept and are available to authorized personnel only. (*Authorized personnel include administrative staff, parents/guardians, and appropriate regulatory authorities.*) The file may include items such as the child's behavioral patterns, assessments of developmental and cogitative development, if appropriate. Within 30 days of enrollment, the file will include at a minimum:

- Emergency contact information for the parent/guardian and alternate contacts if possible
- Birth Certificate (copy), Immunization, DH680 or Religious Exemption
- Physical, DH3040, Family Enrollment Application/Contract
- Meals/Snack Listing of Known Allergies of the Child
- Daily Attendance Records, Accident/Incident Reports
- Behavior/Discipline Reports, Observation Log
- All Correspondence with Parents

6.6.3 Attendance/Monitoring: The staff maintains direct supervision of children at all time. Direct supervision is defined as within hearing and sight at all times including during nap time, diaper changing, toileting, bathing, changing clothes and when separated from other children do to illness or possible communicable disease. If students are dropped off and picked up directly into a classroom the Primary or Associate Teacher will be staff person designated as the individual reasonable for maintaining direct supervision will maintain the attendance records. If children are dropped off or picked up at a central location the supervisor at that location must communicate with the classroom teacher to assure an accurate total, and individual group or class counts are maintained. Attendance records are file in the administrative office for a period of no less than one year.

3.17 Plan of Activities

Cross Reference to additional Plan of Activities Standards

5.1.3 Schedules and Routines: An orderly, peaceful, and predictable daily routine gives stability and confidence to young children. Schedules of the daily activities and routines must be posted publicly and followed. The teachers provide a consistent schedule of daily events, but remain attentive to individuals and can adapt smoothly to changes when necessary.

5.3.2 Emotional Development, Self-Awareness, and Self Esteem: True self-esteem comes from the Biblical understanding that all children are precious and have value and purpose. The idea that children have great worth apart from their behavior must be cultivated. The classroom should not be a place where children are ‘good’ when they behave and ‘bad’ when they misbehave. Rather, children should feel loved and be taught the benefits of making right choices as a way of being a successful part of the group and honoring those around them. Teachers and all staff working with children will:

- Help children to gain awareness of other people’s feelings and to understand how their own actions affect others.
- Guide children in resolving conflicts and disagreements by finding peaceful resolutions, including the use of asking for and giving forgiveness.
- Provide age appropriate program that assists children in preventing and avoiding physical and mental abuse.
- Teach children the preciousness of others and to be respectful of the belongings of others.
- Help children understand and respect people who are different from themselves and will look for effective ways to respond to teasing, bullying, and other forms of discrimination.
- Support children as they grow in the areas of self-awareness and self-acceptance.
- Acknowledge student’s individual achievements, accomplishments, and efforts, especially in areas where they have made great improvement.
- Understand children’s emotional needs as they maneuver through the changing aspects of dependent and independent behavior.
- Correct children in a positive manner and never tease, put-down, criticize, or use humiliation.

4.0 Nutrition and Food Services

Founding Principles

Nutritious foods contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children.

Nutrition plays a vital role in improving the quality of early learning centers for children. More children are in early learning centers today than ever before. Some spend more time in these centers than they do at home. The meals and snacks that they are served are an important part of their growth and development.

Improving child nutrition is an important focal point of the early learning centers. The Early Learning Center plays a key role in children's lives. By working with children each day, they help them learn and grow. By serving children nutritious meals and snacks, they help children get the nourishment and energy that children need to learn and grow - and be healthy.

Research has shown that there are crucial relationships between nutrition and health, and nutrition and learning. Early Learning Centers are in a special position to show children what it means to eat for good health, including how important it is to eat a variety of foods.

Nutrition is important especially for children because it is linked to all aspects of their growth and development. By helping to promote proper nutritional habits in the children, Early Learning Centers allow children to partake in more activities and with greater enjoyment. In addition the social aspects of meal and snack time are one of the best environments to promote social skills that will be essential to a child's further developments.

For an early learning center, the job does not end with the goal of healthy food. The proper equipment to prepare food must be acquired and maintained. Food must be preserved in the proper storage area or units. A system must also be in place to assure that items are used in a timely manner while they are at their peak of freshness. Daily sanitizing and safety systems must also be in place to protect the child from harmful germs and bacteria.

4.1 Food Preparation

4.1.1 Response to Civil Authorities' Standards: If food is prepared on the premises, the program must be in compliance with the requirements of local and state authorities for food storage, preparation, and service. Food may be prepared at an approved licensed facility and transported to the program in approved containers and at approved temperatures.

4.1.2 Nutritional Guidelines: The meals and/or snacks provided for the children meet the nutritional guidelines regarding food groups and quantities that are age appropriate for the children, as suggested by the Child Care Food Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. If parents bring food, the provider assures that it is nutritious, appears fresh or supplements it. Juice is 100% juice.

4.1.3 Food Storage: Food (including breast milk) is stored, prepared, and served to children in a safe and sanitary manner. Stored food and drink must be stored in such a manner as to be free from dust and dirt.

- Food must be stored in sealed waterproof containers that snap closed or zip closed at the end of each day and dated.
- Leftover food items may be served within five calendar days from date of preparation.
- After five calendar days, leftover food items must be discarded.
- If parents bring food, perishable items (including baby bottles) they are to be labeled and refrigerated immediately with the child's name and date of preparation.
- Baby formula is in factory-sealed containers, or powdered formula is used.
- Breast milk and infant formula remaining in bottles after feeding are discarded within one hour.

4.1.4 Meals and Snacks: Meals or snacks are available at least every 3 hours.

- Safe drinking water is available at all times, and Children are encouraged to drink water frequently.
- These times are relaxed, with some conversation; meals are not rushed.
- A written menu is posted daily or weekly and modified if it is changed - or parents bring food.
- Children's food allergies are posted in the food preparation and eating areas.
- The temperature of heated foods and bottles is tested to prevent injury, before feeding to children.
- Foods that may be a choking hazard must be chopped up to age appropriate sizes.
- There is no use of screen media during mealtime.
- Food is never used as a reward or withheld as a punishment.
- Children do not have bottles or Sippy cups of milk, juice, or other beverages while lying down or walking around.

4.1.5 Kitchen Safety: Kitchen equipment is monitored to ensure healthy and sanitary conditions. The stove and other cooking appliances are not used while children are present. Lower cupboards are free of sharp and dangerous utensils, cleaning supplies or other chemicals or have locks.

NOTE: Children do not play within six (6) feet of stove while in use; however, school-agers may cook on stove as part of hands on activities if they are carefully supervised.

4.1.6 Kitchen Sanitation: Dishes, utensils, cooking and serving items, and bottles are washed in a dishwasher, or washed in clean, hot, soapy water, rinsed, and air dried in a sanitized drying area, or disposable dishes, cups, and utensils are used. Containers for wet garbage are plastic-lined and covered with a step-operated lid, and are located out of reach of children. A cold pack or equivalent is kept in the freezer or refrigerator. Cutting board must be cleaned and sanitized after each use, and may not be made of wood. Kitchen sinks cannot be used for hand washing. Effective restraints to keep hair from food or food preparation areas.

4.2 Parent/Guardian Information

4.2.1 Availability of Menus: Parents/guardians have access to written menus that meet all nutritional guidelines established by civil authorities. Written menus of all snacks and meals provided by the program are also posted in such a way that they are easily seen by parents/guardians. At least two food groups are included for each snack (programs are encouraged to ensure one of these items is a protein source), and four food groups are included for each meal.

4.3 Social Interaction

4.3.1 Standards for Mealtime: Mealtime is to be cultivated as a pleasant social time. Staff members sit with children and encourage healthy social interaction, appropriate table manners, and good eating habits. Children are either individually fed or supervised and are offered age-appropriate food.

4.3.2 Size of Furniture: There is a sufficient number of tables and chairs used for snack/mealtimes that are appropriate for the sizes of the children.

4.3.3 Children's Responsibilities: The children are encouraged to wash their hands and serve themselves and assist with cleanup, within age-appropriate levels of ability.

4.4 Food for Infants and Toddlers

4.4.1 Feeding Infants: Infants are held when bottle-fed and not placed with bottles into cribs at any time.

4.4.2 Recording of Food Intake and Times: Feeding times and amount of food consumed are recorded and made available to parents/guardians of infants and toddlers on a daily basis.

5.0 Curriculum and Child Development

Founding Principles

Each child has unique qualities, intrinsic value, and great potential. Understanding this statement is the foundation from which the early learning program is developed. Children are designed to learn and given a safe environment, quality materials, and thoughtful guidance, they will progress through the stages of learning and development as each new level builds on previous successes. The provider should strategically organize the environment, plan the activities, and provide teaching materials based on Biblical principles to work with the child's natural inclination to learn and grow.

Not only should the atmosphere be warm, kind, and positive, but also the teaching materials must complement the Biblical principle that each child is special and that learning is a pleasant experience. Play should be a part of every child's daily experience as it creates the framework for which a child practices and develops skills, learns to work with others, and safely explores the world around them.

Quality curriculum and materials based on Biblical principles provide a continuum of learning and opportunity for creative development that moves at a natural pace and with the child's ability to learn. Along this path, over time, young children explore, learn, and grow in the development of their bodies (physical activity), their minds (cognitive and language skills) and their awareness of themselves and others (social and self-development).

In these early years it is important to prepare young children to be ready for school by implementing programs supported by relative research that provide opportunities in literacy, pre-reading, pre-math, science as exploration, and early social studies. The provider should have academic and skill development goals for each individual child as well as goals for the group as a whole.

5.1 Curriculum Overview and Implementation

Curriculum is defined as the structural program and teaching materials that provide the framework for meeting the goals in each area of development (physical, academic, and social), being appropriate to the age and development of each child.

General Guidelines

- Curriculum may be purchased or specifically designed by the administration as long as it meets the academic and developmental benchmarks provided in relevant early education and/or The Core Knowledge Pre-School Sequence.
- Curriculum must lend itself to and not be in opposition to the Foundational Principle that each child is unique with both value and potential.
- A schedule of activities or goals alone is not a curriculum.
- Curriculum and its implementation over time, must include exposure to various experiences (physical, academic, rehearsal through play, repetition and a variety of activities that lead to fluency in a child's learning and experience.
- Each provider will require Administrators, Primary Teachers, and Associate Teachers to be familiar with The Core Knowledge Pre-School Sequence and the scope and sequence for the curriculum they are currently teaching/overseeing.

5.1.1 Curriculum Guidelines: Each provider will maintain a curriculum, scope and sequence, and goal sheet for each child and each group. Curriculum will include but is not limited to:

- Literacy and language (reinforced with natural age-appropriate integration in every day interaction and not by rote or drill), reading, phonetic awareness, telling stories, dramatic plays, language/phonetic-based play, and writing readiness skills.
- Pre-math, sorting, counting, shapes, part to whole and whole to part relationships and math readiness skills.
- Science in exploration of the child’s environment.
- Health, safety, and manner
- Music and movement
- Creative expression and dramatic presentation

5.1.2 Lessons Plans: Lesson Plans are the step-by-step teacher instructions outlining the objectives, the daily activities designed to meet those objectives, and curriculum implementation in the classroom. Lesson Plans are designed to meet the age appropriate needs of each child and the group.

Lesson planning is three-fold and is primarily functional for 3, 4, and 5 year olds.

- Long-Range Planning—Yearly Overview with goals highlighted
- Medium-Range Planning—Semester, Quarter, or Week with specific activities and benchmarks highlighted
- Daily Plans—specific lessons designed to meet the objectives, goals, and benchmarks appropriate to each child and age group.
 - Primary and Associate teachers are responsible for lesson plans and seeing that the planning process is thorough and reflects the Foundation Principles, objectives of academic and developmental growth, and/or The Core Knowledge Pre-School Sequence in both short term and long term planning.
 - Plans require the teachers’ understanding of the curriculum, goals, and objectives for each child and age group.
 - Teachers have regularly scheduled planning sessions where they develop lesson plans and share ideas, experience, and resources.
 - Plans are to be written in an organized format, dated, and include specific concepts (literacy, pre-math, science, health, , corresponding activities (large group/small group), daily play time (inside and/or outside), and resources required.

5.1.3 Schedules and Routines An orderly, peaceful, and predictable daily routine gives stability and confidence to young children. Schedules of the daily activities and routines must be posted publicly and followed. The teachers provide a consistent schedule of daily events, but remain attentive to individuals and can adapt smoothly to changes when necessary.

- Children and parents should be greeted warmly every day.
- Children should be gently instructed in the drop-off and pick-up routines until they are comfortable. They should be directed to participate in opening activities such as play, social interaction, or quiet activity
- Teachers should calmly reassure children who demonstrate anxiety upon separation and redirect them to an appropriate activity. Teachers should assist parents in coping with this transitional time.
- Children should know what is expected of them, and consistent, clear, calm instruction will help them establish the ‘habits’ necessary for a positive daily experience
- Teachers will establish the routines and schedules of the day in such a way that encourages children to become independent and to accept personal responsibility with initiative. For example, routines are clearly established so that children know when to clean and organize the room, when to put on clothing for outside activities, and/or when to transition to different activities.
- Transitions between activities are announced, giving the children time to finish and prepare for the next learning experience. Transitions should be unhurried and flow smoothly.
- Daily schedule will include indoor and outdoor activities, weather permitting.
- Daily schedule will include nap and/or rest time.
 - The environment for rest will be quiet and provide quiet activities for older children.
 - The schedule of activities leading up to nap time will be calming and preparing children for rest.
 - School-age children will have a time of relaxation after the school day.
 - Babies may be rocked, patted, or have music playing as aids to falling asleep. Babies should be allowed to sleep on their own schedule when they are sleepy.
- Children will be expected to clean up after themselves as part of the daily routine.
 - Children will be instructed on how to clean up and positive reinforcement will encourage them to participate daily.
- Children will have access to water and rest periods, especially after rigorous play and physical activity as part of the daily routine.
- Children who use the toilet should be instructed on how to notify the teacher throughout the day and not be prohibited from using the restroom when needed.
 - If children wear diapers, the teacher should check every two hours and change children who are wet or soiled.
 - Parents and teachers will agree when a child is ready for toilet training and which approach to take. The process will be positive and not incorporate punishment.

5.2 Physical Development

5.2.1 Physical Development—Core Knowledge The curriculum and activities are designed to meet the physical needs and the developmental abilities of each child as they grow. Children should be given opportunities daily to play indoors and outdoors developing gross motor skills, balance, and coordination. Although certain physical abilities are expected at certain ages, all children are individuals and develop at their own pace. Since many of the physical development activities take place in groups and in play, the atmosphere will be kept positive, fair, and safe.

The goals and standards of Physical Development will be in accordance with the Core Knowledge Pre-School Sequence for Movement and Coordination. This sequence describes motor and coordination skills, and related movement activities that extend and refine notions of body image and the body's capabilities. It also provides opportunities for enhancing time, space and language concepts, as well as social development (when activities are carried out with others).

- Refine physical attention and relaxation by asking the child to stop and start movement according to a signal.
- Learn relaxing muscles or the whole body as the child learns to go from a high activity level to a relaxed focused state.

5.2.2 Motor Skills At every stage of development, babies and young children are given opportunities to develop motor skills and teachers watch to see that they are progressing at a rate that is appropriate for the child. These goals are reached through a variety of tasks, and traditional childhood games.

- Infants and toddlers will move through the appropriate stages of motor development including: kicking, rolling, swinging, walking, climbing, jumping, sliding, reaching, grasping, dropping, retrieving, carrying, and stacking according to their individual developmental time table.
 - Infants and toddlers do not spend long periods of time confined in swings, bouncers, high chairs or other confining furniture.
- Children will move through the appropriate stages of motor development including: balancing; moving through space, with or without obstacles, in a variety of ways; throwing and kicking objects and moving cooperatively with others.
- Gross-motor activities are provided in the preschool classroom which may include such activities as jumping, running, climbing, ascending and descending stairs swinging, sliding, balancing, riding, stacking, squeezing, lacing, tracing, sorting, pounding, connecting, and snapping.
- Fine motor skills will be developed by offering activities that utilize the skills of: grasping, scribbling, cutting with scissors, buttoning, tying shoes, using art materials, or playing with manipulatives.
- Sensory experiences are provided for children, especially babies and toddlers to use their senses- seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching through a variety of materials and activities.
- Non-crawling babies spend short periods (three to five minutes) of supervised time on their tummies each half day when they are awake. Time may be increased as the baby shows that the activity is enjoyed.
- Children's progress and development are monitored through the use of observations, trends, checklists, anecdotal notes or other forms of documentation, such as portfolios or commercial instruments.

5.3 Social and Emotional Development

5.3.1 Social Development Teachers set the tone for the classroom experience, making it a positive, warm, safe, and inviting atmosphere. Teachers plan and organize the environment to support this tone, implement the curriculum, and allow for play, exploration learning, and creative expression. A positive teacher-child relationship is key to the successful social and emotional development of each child. Teachers will be trained in the specific skills that build a strong connection between themselves and their students. Teachers and all staff working with children will:

- Speak clearly and kindly, making eye contact when addressing students, modeling appropriate communication and manners.
- Use affirming language to reinforce positive behaviors and give the students a sense of acceptance and approval.
- Be respectful to children and will honor their families. Disagreements with parents will never be discussed or mentioned to the children. Families will not be stereotyped, or demeaned.
- Remain pleasant and relaxed using the techniques of classroom management (stop, re-direct, and reinforce) to encourage proper behavior, social interactions, and student participation.
- Let the students know that they are important to them and to the group by listening, responding to their needs, and calling them by name.
- Use tools and activities such as music, singing, physical activity, team building games, etc. to give each child opportunity to be a successful participant in the group.
- Foster a positive social environment by teaching and modeling the skills of sharing, cooperating, helping, taking turns, problem solving, working together, learning to transition from home to school, developing self-discipline, gaining confidence in performing age-appropriate tasks, and relating appropriately to adults and peers.

5.3.2 Emotional Development, Self-Awareness, and Self Esteem True self-esteem comes from the Biblical understanding that all children are precious and have value and purpose. The idea that children have great worth apart from their behavior must be cultivated. The classroom should not be a place where children are ‘good’ when they behave and ‘bad’ when they misbehave. Rather, children should feel loved and be taught the benefits of making right choices as a way of being a successful part of the group and honoring those around them. Teachers and all staff working with children will:

- Help children to gain awareness of other people’s feelings and to understand how their own actions affect others.
- Guide children in resolving conflicts and disagreements by finding peaceful resolutions including the use of asking for and giving forgiveness.
- Age appropriate program that assists children in preventing physical and mental abuse
- Teach children the preciousness of others and to be respectful of the belongings of others.
- Help children understand and respect people who are different from themselves and will look for effective ways to respond to teasing, bullying, and other forms of discrimination.
- Support children as they grow in the areas of self-awareness and self-acceptance.
- Acknowledge student’s individual achievements, accomplishments, and efforts especially in areas where they have made great improvement.
- Understand children’s emotional needs as they maneuver through the changing aspects of dependent and independent behavior.
- Correct children in a positive manner and will never tease, put-down, or use humiliation.

5.4 Teaching Strategies

5.4.1 Variety and Balance of Activities Young children need to physically move throughout the instructional day and have opportunities for a variety of activities to meet their need for hands-on experiences. The daily schedule/routine should provide a variety and balance of activities including large group (teacher directed), small group (teacher-student interactive), individual (child initiated), and indoor and outdoor play. Times for each activity should be appropriate to the age and development of the children.

- Plans will include regularly scheduled times for activities indoors.
 - Each student will have sufficient space in a large group setting at appropriately sized tables, desks, play areas and/or seating areas
 - Teacher will consider the developmental stage(s) of the children and design the activity appropriately in terms of length of activity and transition from one activity to another.
- Plans will include regularly scheduled times for activities outdoors.
 - Each student will have sufficient, safe space to participate in outdoor group games and play (group and/or individual activity).
 - Teachers will clearly explain the activities assuring that each student understands how to safely participate.
- Plans will include regularly scheduled times for quiet activities, rest time, and naps where appropriate.

5.4.2 Transitions

Transitions between activities should be planned, smooth, and flow naturally giving children time to finish what they are currently engaged in, prepare for the next activity, and make the transition.

- Teachers should utilize transition tools such as visual aids, songs, poems, or other signals that children recognize as a sign to transition into the next activity.

5.4.3 Activity Resources and Learning Centers

Curriculum is incomplete without the age appropriate materials, equipment, learning centers, and supplies necessary to meet the objectives of the scope and sequence. Young children are primarily tactile learners and they must have access to a variety of hands-on materials to reinforce learning and allow for the rehearsal of ideas and creative expression. Very young children need exposure to a variety of colors, sounds, and textures. Children are given opportunities every day to play, using their imaginations and self-expression. Materials and supplies must be sturdy and safe.

Educational materials may include but are not limited to:

- Manipulatives
- Puzzles,
- Dress-up clothing and materials for children to make their own costume pieces and props
- Building materials such as blocks or Duplos
- Dolls and stuffed animals
- Child-sized replicas of real world appliances such as cooking centers or workshop benches, including dishes, pots/pans, and hand tools
- Musical instruments
- Art supplies
- Books will be:
 - purchased, made by the teachers and/or in class
 - in good repair, rotated and replaced as necessary
 - stored and displayed in an appropriate way giving children access

5.4.3 Activity Resources and Learning Centers (continued)

Appropriate materials are organized into learning centers where like-items are grouped and space is provided for small group and individual play. Learning Center materials will be:

- maintained and kept in good repair
- rotated to stir imagination and keep the children's interest

5.4.4 Group Instruction and Classroom Interaction Educational, social and physical goals for young children will be met in a variety of group and individual settings. Teachers must carefully plan each day, orchestrating the varying elements of learning objectives, cognitive development of the children, large and small group instruction, activities, and individual play/exploration time. Teachers will be proactive and diffuse contention that rises between children before negative behaviors erupt whenever possible, keeping the children focused on the positive activity they are engaged in.

Large Group: Teachers will organize and regularly provide large group activities and projects that:

- involve all of the children working toward a common purpose.
- encourage children to work on projects and play games together.
- include assisting children in the proper way of participating in a group such as waiting their turn, raising their hand, or standing in line.

Small Group: Teachers should look for opportunities to work with smaller groups inviting children to work at stations, in teams or small groups allowing children the opportunity to be involved in work, discussion, and accomplishing tasks together. Teachers will organize and regularly provide small group activities and projects that:

- provide opportunities and encouragement for children to share, work together, and take turns in a smaller setting within the classroom.

Individual: Children are individuals and must receive individual attention throughout the day apart from group activities. Teachers will:

- use each child's name and make eye contact when speaking.
- take the time to remember a child's interests and/or talents and make mention of them regularly, using these as a basis of play and goal setting.

5.4.5 Involving the Children in the Classroom Environment There are times when children have difficulty in being a part of the classroom environment. Whether they are shy, frightened, or unsure how to join in, children often need time and careful reassurance as they develop the confidence they need to participate fully.

- The teaching staff will respond to children who are not engaging in classroom activities in order to encourage the involvement of these children.
- Teachers will use gentle tones and reassuring words when a child is frightened or withdrawn from classroom activities.
- Children will not be forced, coerced, or ridiculed into participating in any activity.
- Positive reinforcement will be given when a child begins to open up to participation.
- Teachers will offer opportunities for children to practice and explore new skills in a range of developmental areas.
- Children will be given the help they need to succeed in a range of activities and to feel comfortable trying new activities.
- Teachers help children engage in activities by breaking complex tasks into simple ones – or increasing the difficulty of activities by combining familiar materials in new ways and contexts.

5.4.6 Child-Directed Activities Children must have daily opportunities to make their own choices, organize their own environment, and explore their own interests.

- The daily schedule will include child-directed free playtime (indoors or outdoors).
- Learning Centers should contain items that extend and support a child's self-directed play, building on their individual interests and skills.
- Children's learning can be extended even during individual playtime when teachers engage in describing what the children are doing and asking them open-ended questions.
- Teachers support children's play, by observing and not dominating, offering materials, joining in, or making gentle suggestions as needed.
- Teachers may play interactive games, especially with babies and toddlers. (Interactive games include imitating babies' sounds, peek-a-boo, call and response rhymes, Simon Says, and card or board games).

5.4.7 Healthy Nutrition in Curriculum Good nutrition and healthy habits should be part of the curriculum and teachers should take every opportunity to encourage young children to make healthy choices in eating. Teachers will include but not be limited to the following:

- providing samples of simple nutritious foods and snacks
- utilizing books and other learning materials that highlight healthy choices in eating

5.4.8 Good Health Practices Young children need to be made aware of good health practices, habits, and routines and these practices should be part of the curriculum. Teaching about healthy habits and making them part of the daily schedule will help children feel familiar with them. Hand washing will be a part of the daily routine as needed and will always come before eating and after using the restroom or playing outside. Teachers will instruct and assist children in proper hand washing techniques. Methods of incorporating good health practices in the classroom may include but are not limited to:

- reading books, singing songs, making posters/charts about health topics
- showing when and how to do basic healthy routines such as brushing teeth,
- inviting members of the healthcare profession to speak to children (dentists, doctors etc.)
- taking field trips to local health care providers

5.4.9 Positive Discipline Children need clear directions, specific instruction and modeling as to proper behavior, time to repeat and learn the skills until fluent, and positive discipline for when they make poor choices or exhibit a lack of self-control. Positive guidance, appropriate for the developmental abilities of each child, is used to help children gain self-control and take responsibility for their own behavior.

Children also need to know that they are loved and valued apart from their behavior. In other words children should not be made to feel that they are loved more and when behave and loved less or devalued when they misbehave. Teachers will use effective techniques such as redirection, reflective listening, and reinforcing with affirmations. Such techniques include but are not limited to:

- clearly explaining to children in a calm, patient, and positive way what is expected of them
- being aware of children’s frustration and diffusing situations before they erupt
- frequently letting children experience the consequences of their own misbehavior, (if this is safe), rather than punishing them.

Teachers will:

- avoiding arguing or participating in a power struggle with children.
- look for ways to allow independent, choleric children to assert their leadership skills by making them helpers, line leaders etc.
- use redirection and positive reinforcement
- “time outs” as a cooling-off time and not as a punishment. They are to be no more than one minute in length for each year of the child’s age.

Teachers will not:

- use corporal punishment.
- engage in using humiliation or demeaning practices with children.
- criticize, shame or tease.
- threaten or yell at children.
- be physically rough with a child.

The administration will publish the disciplinary policies and procedures making sure that all child care workers and parents understand the philosophies and practices of positive discipline.

5.4.10 Technology and Media Technology, when used, should be a tool to reinforce topics taught should be used sparingly with young children.

- If screen media is used, be certain the content is appropriate for the ages of the children. Screen media is free from violent, sexually explicit, stereotyped content (including cartoons) and advertising.
- If screen media is used, the amount of hours per week is limited to 2. Additional time may be permitted for educational purposes or for physical activity.
- Screen media is not recommended for children under the age of 2.
- Use of the computer should promote children's active involvement, group participation, learning, creativity, or fun.
- If a computer is used by children, each child's computer time is limited to no more than fifteen minutes at a time for a total of no more than the 2 hour per week screen media limit. When school-agers are engaged in an educational project or when children require the use of assistive technology, time using the computer may be extended.
- Any internet usage should be closely monitored with the appropriate safe-guards in place.

Core Subject Areas

Regardless of primary publisher used, curriculum content for the subject areas of Language and Literacy (Oral Language, Rhymes, Storybooks, Reading, Writing), Math (Reasoning and Number Sense), Science (Physical World, Sensory Exploration), Social Studies (Family, Cultural Awareness, Community), and Enrichment (Fine Arts, Music, Movement, Creative Art) will meet the basic goals as outlined in the *Core Knowledge Sequence, Content and Skill Guidelines for Pre-School*.

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5.5 Language & Literacy - Core Knowledge

The development of language skills and literacy in young children is of utmost importance and will have an impact virtually on every aspect of future development. Although young children, in general, will under typical circumstances acquire basic skills on their own through interaction, such as learning to speak, this does not automatically evolve into sophisticated language skills. Building a vocabulary, understanding and using complex grammatical structures, and using language symbolically, depend heavily upon the opportunities provided to engage in language experiences. These experiences begin with infants through oral language, eye contact, print media, music and play. As children progress through pre-school they continue to develop in the areas of reading, writing, receptive (comprehension), and expressive (production of language) skills.

5.5.1 Oral Language Experience Literacy skills begin with spoken language. Children benefit from the tone and sound of language before they have understanding of the structure of language. Research shows that the manner in which adults respond to children's speaking along with the opportunities offered for conversation clearly influence children's language development.

Infants/Toddlers: Teachers will:

- speak gently and appropriately to children often giving them an opportunity to respond.
- give opportunities throughout each day for receptive (comprehension) and expressive (production of language) experiences throughout each day
- encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings and listen with interest and respect, making eye contact and expanding on what was said to invite further conversation
- take time every day for meaningful conversations with each child.
- take an interest in and respond positively to babies' vocalizations and imitate their sounds, smiling and speaking in soothing tones such as cooing and singing.
- encourage children to listen to and respond to each other.
- Move from open-ended questions (Where is the puppy going?) to questions that offer a structured choice (Is the puppy going into the playhouse or is he going into the yard?) in order to invite a child to respond verbally.
- will provide experiences and opportunities for children to talk and listen in a variety of circumstances, moving from using language in contextualized situations (referring to objects and present events) to decontextualized language (moving beyond the here and now). Opportunities can be provided for children by asking them questions such as "What did you do at Grandma's house?" and making meaningful responses to the children's answers.

5.5.2 Nursery Rhymes, Poems, and Songs While still part of the oral language experience, nursery rhymes, poems, fingerplays, and songs engage children while introducing them to more formal structured language. By listening to and reciting these poems and songs, children have an opportunity to model and practice various oral language skills, including pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax. They can then build upon their familiarity with certain well-known rhymes by experimenting with rhyming words. This competency, in turn, focuses attention on the sounds of language, a skill that will enhance later efforts in initial reading. Plans will include regular introduction and repetition of positive nursery rhymes, poems, and songs.

In addition to the sheer enjoyment of listening to and repeating the rhythmic and musical combination of words, learning these selections provides skill and discipline in developing the ability to memorize and further extends children's understanding and use of both the form and function of language.

- Children will be encouraged to participate in reciting and doing accompanying motions
- Teachers will provide the repetition necessary over time for children to be able to learn the nursery rhymes, poems, fingerplays, and songs.

5.5.3 Storybook Reading and Story Telling Books play an important role in the development of literacy skills in young children. Children should have access to books, a print-rich environment, be read to, and participate in the telling of stories. In listening to and talking about stories that are read aloud, children build both listening and speaking skills. They are introduced to new vocabulary and formal written syntax, ways of linking and relating ideas. They also refine skills in:

- Narrating: understanding and describing illustrations, setting, characters, and events of stories.
 - Predicting: telling what will happen next in a story or suggesting a possible alternative ending.
 - Imagining: telling their own stories, either based on illustrations or creating a story using their imagination.
- Children have access to books every day and they are encouraged to look at or read books on their own.
 - Children are read to or participate in storytelling every day. Teachers will read with expression and interest.
 - Teachers will expand upon books by providing activities such as accompanying art projects, plays, puppets, having the children re-tell the story, opening discussion about the story etc.
 - Children are taught to take care of books as needed.
 - Teachers provide a print-rich environment by providing access to and use of books, labels, pictures, posters, signs, etc.
 - Teachers use a variety of rich language with children, reinforcing what was read by using new vocabulary words in daily speech.
 - Teachers share a genuine love of reading for enjoyment as well as for information.
 - Teachers share suggestions for activities the parents can do at home with the child to support early literacy.

5.5.4 Emerging Literacy Skills in Reading A crucial part of learning to read is developing phonemic awareness, the understanding that individual sounds are associated with individual letters and combinations of letters. Children are asked to take apart and put together smaller and smaller units of sound, from individual words in a sentence, to syllables in words, to the beginning sounds in individual words. Lesson plans include activities that encourage phonemic awareness such as:

- listening to sounds in words, particularly in rhymes and songs.
- isolating the syllables in a word using clapping, tapping or rhythmic recitation
- learning to differentiate between sounds that are alike and sounds that are different
- learning to identify when words share sounds (big, bottle, butter)
- displaying the Alphabet and introducing (when appropriate) that letters have sounds

5.5.5 Emerging Literacy Skills in Writing In order to write, children must learn both the connection of oral language to print and develop the hand/eye coordination and small motor skills to produce the print. Children first learn to associate specific familiar spoken words, such as their own names or names of familiar objects, with specific written words. Children then go on to recognize that the distinct marks that make up each word are letters in our alphabet. Children learn that these letters have names through such means as singing the alphabet song. They learn to identify and name the specific letters in their own names.

- Children will be exposed to the form and function of the alphabet through tracing shapes, copying and writing letters, and practicing writing their names.
- Opportunities will be provided to help with small motor skill development such as coloring, drawing, ‘pretend’ writing, using chalk etc.
- Teachers build on children's emerging interest in print and writing in the context of meaningful activities. Depending on their developmental levels, they are encouraged to scribble; to recognize signs, alphabet letters and their sounds, to write their names, notes, and stories; to label their drawings; make books; or keep journals.

5.6 Mathematical Awareness - Core Knowledge

A child's first experience with math concepts comes from their natural inclination to explore the world around them. Teachers will build on this curiosity by guiding their discoveries and providing opportunities for children to: count, build, organize, and classify objects.

5.6.1 Mathematical Reasoning Children will be given daily opportunities to use manipulatives and specific objects in the concrete learning stage: to observe and recognize similarities and differences, classify objects and shapes, recognize/create patterns in sequences of objects and make comparisons among objects, using simple measurement skills.

- Teachers will highlight math as it occurs naturally as well as in the curriculum, by allowing children to learn math and science concepts in the context of everyday activities, such as setting the table, preparing food, sorting the mail, cooking, gardening, and playing games.
- Children will (as they are able), they match, sort, arrange things in sequence, count things, measure, and recognize and create patterns.
- Children will be exposed to identifying written numbers (1,2,3...) without necessarily having a concept of what they represent at first.
- Teachers will provide ample opportunities to rehearse numbers with counting games, songs, and writing activities.

5.6.2 Mathematical Number Sense Children will be directed to quantify small groups of objects, to count and to demonstrate a basic understanding of addition and subtraction as “putting together” and “taking away.” In each instance, the child is asked to move from the concrete experience to representing knowledge symbolically using mathematical language.

- Children will move from the concrete (counting) stage to the abstract (using math symbols to represent items) as they are developmentally able.
- Teachers will incorporate concepts such as ‘more than, less than, and same’ in the natural course of the curriculum and daily activities.
- Teachers will incorporate concepts such as ‘longer, shorter, heavier, lighter’, and other measurements in the natural course of the curriculum and daily activities.
- Teachers will use ordinal numbers (first, second, third...) and help children to organize and sequence items.

5.7 Science - Core Knowledge

Science introduces children to a systematic way of looking at, describing and explaining the world around them. Children should be given many opportunities for systematic observation and hands-on investigation of both the living and material world. Building on these experiences, children can progress from describing and explaining what is observed to making predictions based on these observations.

5.7.1 Physical World Children need opportunities to explore the natural and physical environment around them such as watching insects, planting seeds and caring for plants, playing with water and sand, and playing with balls and ramps. Through hands-on exploration and real world activities, children, at the appropriate age, should be directed to:

- observe, participate, and ask questions.
- plan an activity and predict what will happen.
- carry out the activity and observe what happens.
- report the findings through drawings, discussions, displays, photos, etc.
- ask related questions

Suggested Science Materials for the Classroom:

- magnets
- magnifying glass
- outdoor thermometer
- a balance scale
- sand or similar substance
- blocks, toy cars, and ramps
- water

5.7.2 Sensory Exploration Children learn about the world around them primarily through their senses and the preschool classroom must be a sensory-rich environment. It should include numerous objects and organisms with which the students can touch and interact. Opportunities are provided throughout the day for children to use their senses for observing and learning about objects, events, and organisms.

- Babies/infants should be presented with a variety of colors, objects, shapes, and textures to explore as they are developmentally able.
- Children should have a variety of shapes, objects, and textures that they can interact with on a daily basis.
- Children are given opportunities throughout the day to use their senses for observing and learning about objects, events, and organisms.
- Children age 3 and older should have opportunities to observe and make predictions about things in the environment through activities and language. Teachers should ask them "what if" questions.

5.8 Social Studies - Core Knowledge

A child's view of the world is very small and is limited to what they have experienced. Social Studies for young children begin with this familiar territory of family, and develop the concept of self, the interaction with others, awareness of other cultures and traditions, and community.

5.8.1 Social Skills Students should be given ample opportunities to learn about themselves, others, and how to interact appropriately through participation in group games and activities, and daily routines.

- Teachers may help students understand that everyone plays an important role by assigning different students 'jobs' during the week such as 'line leader, class helper, weatherman(girl)', etc. giving them a sense of purpose in the class.
- Teacher can model positive interactions by showing what it means to take turns.

5.8.2 Cultural Awareness Children can learn about the world and have an appreciation for those who are from a different culture than their own. Without using stereotypes, teachers can provide experiences in cultural diversity. Some suggested activities:

- learn about children around the world including what they wear, foods they eat, and holidays they celebrate
- help children understand and celebrate others in their own class who are culturally different from themselves pointing out the beautiful diversity in creation.
- learn words, phrases, and songs from different languages.
- include books, posters, toys/dolls that positively illustrate people from other cultures
- listen to music or look at art from different cultures

5.8.3 Community

Young children are able to identify important members of their community based on what they wear (such as uniforms) or where they work (grocery store clerk, or waiter.) Children can begin to understand that people have jobs and functions in the community. Some suggested activities to nurture this exploration of people in the community are:

- inviting guests to come (parents, grandparents, friends) and present what they do
- taking field trips to experience work places like the fire station, grocery store, or library.
- allowing children to play make believe with different roles such as policeman, teacher, or nurse. Children should have access to costume pieces or props.

5.9 Fine Arts - Core Knowledge

Music and Art are key components of early childhood education. They lend themselves to the participation and experiential needs of children and they can be great fun. Music and Visual Arts should be used throughout the curriculum to allow for expression, reinforce concepts and lessons, and facilitate memorization skills.

5.9.1 Musical Experiences Experiences in listening to music, singing songs and learning fingerplays provide opportunities to practice oral language skills. Music affords the opportunity to expand and clarify various concepts, such as “loud, soft,” “fast, slow,” etc. In addition, efforts that focus attention on discriminating differences in discrete environmental or musical sounds facilitate subsequent attention to phonemic awareness, awareness of the discrete sounds of language. Group musical experiences, performing or singing together, also offer the opportunity to practice social skills. The basic goals of this section ask the child to listen to and identify sounds, indicate whether certain sound pairs are the same or different, imitate sounds and rhythm sequences, sing songs individually and with others and move interpretatively to music.

- Provide music experiences that allow children to listen to, enjoy and produce music.
- Present music in a variety of ways such as singing, finger plays, clapping games, playing instruments, and playing a variety of recorded music.
- Provide opportunities for children to participate in making music with their voices or instruments (purchased or home-made).
- Encourage children to dance and to use movement to recreate meaningful experiences, tell stories, or act out concepts.
- Classical or Sacred music can be used to bring a peaceful atmosphere and calm children, especially infants.

5.9.2 Visual Arts The use of various media and techniques provides rich opportunities for sensory exploration and manipulation, as well as the development of fine motor skills. In addition, through painting and drawing, children make their first attempts at graphic representation, a precursor to writing. The guided examination of works of art provides practice in focusing attention on visual detail, important for developing skill in discriminating visual differences in objects, images, print and letters, as well as appreciating basic elements of art. The further examination and discussion of works of art also afford rich opportunities for language development.

Children should be given opportunities daily to experience creative expression through visual arts and dramatic play. Art activities are used throughout the curriculum and at the appropriate age-level would include, but not be limited to:

- drawing and painting (including fingerpainting)
- cutting with scissors for design purposes
- gluing items together to create art
- combining mediums
- molding with clay
- creating books, posters, pictures

Children's art expressions should be respected for what they are and not judged as 'good' or 'bad'. Their efforts should be appreciated and displayed whenever possible. Suggestions for display are:

- specific areas for art such as walls, doors, or bulletin boards
- photo albums or scrap books
- portfolios or wall hangings
- hand-made books

Children should have a variety of teacher directed art projects and child-directed free expression projects. Suggested Art Materials:

For children under the age of 3:

- crayons, markers, or pencils
- paint brushes
- large pieces of paper
- non-toxic paint
- play dough

For children age 3 and older:

- tools for drawing and painting
- scissors (child-safe, including left-handed scissors for left-handed children)
- papers of various sized and colors
- glue or paste
- play dough and/or clay
- miscellaneous materials such as scraps of construction paper, fabric, yarn, or wood
- household recycled materials
- second hand materials

5.10 Assessment

Children are individuals and develop at their own pace. Assessment with young children must be an ongoing process and part of the daily observation of children. Using the model of “Assess—Plan/Modify—Teach” cycle of assessment and focusing assessment on specific skills ensures that what is being assessed is developmentally and educationally significant.

5.10.1 Curriculum Involvement and Training Teachers must have a working knowledge of the curriculum and materials that they use in the classroom especially the objectives and intended outcomes that have been set as goals before assessment can be effective.

- Train teachers annually to review the curriculum, standards and objectives, and renew perspective.
- Allow for ongoing opportunities for teachers to discuss and offer suggestions and ideas for curriculum implementation, presentation, and assessments.

5.10.2 Continuous Student Assessment Assessment is an ongoing and purposeful activity used to inform the planning and modification of classroom lessons and activities. Assessment for the purpose of program evaluation and accountability is used to ensure that desirable outcomes are being achieved by children who participate in a particular program.

- Effective teachers use ongoing assessment (assess, plan, teach, assess) to inform and guide the planning of lessons and activities.
- Effective assessments are objective, specific, and systematic. Effective assessment takes place over time.
- Children are variable in their development—one day they may seem to know something and the next day they may not. Repeated assessment ensures a better understanding of children’s progress and mastery of skills.
- Assessment can take place throughout all parts of the daily routine.

5.10.3 Training for Assessment Teachers must be qualified to observe children and record these observations for assessment or have aid from personnel trained in methods of observing children and recording these observations for assessment. Results of observations are used for curriculum planning after identification of each child's stage of development, and parent/guardian conferences.

5.10.4 Characteristics of Effective Assessments

- Effective assessments are accurate. Assessments are conducted and documented in real time and don't rely on one's memory of what happened or how a child performed.
- Effective assessments are objective. Assessments capture objective information free from biases such as feelings and opinions. When documenting observations, effective teachers write about what they observe and omit feelings and opinions about those observations.
- Objective assessments capture observable words and actions (e.g., Mary said, "The yellow block was beside the red block") and specific skill levels (e.g. "Johnny caught the beanbag four out of five times").
- Objective assessments do not describe attitudes, general skills (e.g., "Johnny has good fine motor skills"), or feelings and opinions (e.g., "I don't think Mary likes working with the blocks").
- Effective assessments are specific and explicit. Assessments capture observable behaviors and characteristics and are free from non-tangible characteristics.
- Effective assessments are repeated. Young children are variable in their development—one day they may seem to know something and the next day they may not. Therefore, it is important that assessment take place over time. Sometimes, a child will overhear another child and will simply repeat what has been heard—not a sign of real understanding.
- Effective assessments are systematic. Effective teachers plan for assessment in the same way they plan for instruction. Effective teachers note assessment opportunities in their lesson plan and conduct ongoing assessment as part of each lesson or activity.

5.10.5 Methods and Tools of Assessment A variety of methods and the use of multiple tools are necessary for the ongoing, effective assessment of children’s progress. Observations are recorded with objective language and may include the following:

- Observation during everyday classroom activities
- Samples of children’s expressions and explorations (writing and art projects)
- Written observations such as time and event samplings of children’s interactions, individual and group activities, and language while alone and in groups
- A checklist of developmental levels and behaviors on which to mark children’s progress and increasing capacities over time
- Observations that address all areas of children’s development (*visual/ spatial, body/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal/others, intrapersonal/self, linguistic, logical/mathematical*) not just cognitive development
- Individual portfolios containing a variety of records and documentation
- Specific curriculum related or other assessment tool based on age-appropriate, relevant research used to identify the developmental levels and growth of children

5.10.6 Observations of Child Development Teachers will observe all areas of children’s development, including but not limited to:

- multiple intelligences,
- learning styles,
- learning preferences and
- character development.

Teachers will use these observations to incorporate classroom activities that address the individual needs, strengths, and preferences of the children in their care.

6.0 Personnel

Founding Principles

Parents and or guardians are responsible for their children’s spiritual, mental, and physical development. They are the first caregivers, and have a lifelong commitment to their children, not just the early years. They instill and promote certain values, reward or reinforce specific behaviors, and shape choices that form life-long habits.

When a parent or guardian seeks out an early learning center, they are enlisting the help of an organization that will partner with them in the highest calling of their lives. Early learning centers have the opportunity to present the highest standards of child. The guiding principles and methodology of the program must be completely and accurately presented so parents/guardians can make informed and appropriate choices that meet their needs and requirements.

Each member of the team must be in agreement with the fundamental vision, mission and philosophy of education that the center is founded and operates on, because a house divided brings confusion. Up to date, and thorough background screening of all personnel that may come into contact with the child is, of course, required, as safety must be foremost of importance in the mind of the administration and staff. While philosophy, vision and screening are important foundations, training is the ingredient that separates a true early learning program from simple baby-sitting. Training in the past to develop skills, combined with current and ongoing training that never ends, meets the needs and challenges of an ever-growing and diverse population.

6.1 Staff Hiring Practices and Benefits

6.1.1 Employee Handbook: All staff receives a copy of the Employee Handbook. The staff is instructed at least annually on the program's employee policies.

6.1.2 Nondiscrimination Policy: The program has a published Nondiscrimination Policy relating to its hiring practices, stating that it does not discriminate against any person or group of persons on the basis of gender, race, color, ethnic origin, physical disability or age. (Age has the exception of minimum age requirements for many positions.)

6.1.3 Background Screening: The program’s hiring procedures include Level 2 background screening and fingerprinting to obtain a history regarding abuse and any criminal convictions for all employees and for others who have direct access with the children in the program. This includes the Director, Primary Teachers, Associate Teachers, Teacher's Aids, Volunteers, Office Personnel, Kitchen and Maintenance Staff.

6.1.4 Staff Orientation: New staff is provided with an orientation and/or a Staff Manual that includes, but not limited to the following:

- Goals and philosophy of the program
- Planned activities for the program
- Appropriate classroom management techniques
- Routines and transitions in which the children in the program are engaged
- Discipline policies and procedures
- Communication with parents
- Mealtimes and food-handling policies
- Occupational health hazards
- Emergency health and safety procedures
- General health policies and procedures including, but not limited to the following:
 - hand-washing techniques
 - diapering techniques and toileting (including proper diaper disposal and diaper-changing techniques where applicable)
- Child abuse/child neglect detection, prevention, and reporting
- Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures
- Recognition of symptoms of illness, documentation of these symptoms, and implementation of ill-child policies that include the following: Applying the program's policies regarding exclusion of ill children and readmission of them after illness
- Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures, documenting and administering prescribed medication if given to children during program hours by program employees
- Notifying parents/guardians regarding a communicable disease occurring in children or staff
- Assessing the health of children daily

6.2 Director

6.2.1 Qualifications of Program Director: Program Administrators must be at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of:

- An Associate's degree or higher.
- 9 credit hours in administration, leadership, or management.
- 15 credit hours in early childhood, child development, elementary education, or special early childhood special education that addresses child development and learning from birth through kindergarten.
- Two years experience as a teacher of children in the age group(s) they oversee.
- A minimum of eight (8) hours of basic training in serving children with disabilities within five years after employment.

6.2.2 General Responsibilities of Program Director: The director is charged with assuming responsibility of the day-to-day operations of the program, maintaining program policies, and monitoring the program's compliance with applicable requirements of civil authorities. The director's leadership addresses the program's goal of fostering the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, spiritual and character development of children.

6.2.3 Continuing Education and Development: The director obtains a minimum of thirty clock hours during the first year of employment, especially as related to State requirements. An additional twenty-four hours per year of continuing professional development, provided by a qualified entity, in such areas as emergent literacy and mathematics, child or staff development, programming, administration, health and safety, family relations, legal issues, communications, and technology is recommended. Whenever possible, continuing education should be validated by college credit and provided as a benefit of employment, part of tuition reimbursement program or financial assistance.

6.2.4 Hiring Staff: The director/administrator is responsible for hiring staff that supports the philosophy and mission of the program in accordance with applicable governance procedures.

6.2.5 Evaluation of New Employees: The director ensures a formal evaluation of new employees takes place no more than six months into the orientation period and at pre-determined periods thereafter.

6.2.6 Evaluation of all Employees: The director ensures for each staff member an annual written confidential, evaluation is conducted, recognizing strengths as well as areas needing improvement. Areas needing improvement receive follow-up. The evaluation is kept in the staff member's file.

6.2.7 Staff Substitutes: The director has a current list of qualified substitutes who may be called upon to maintain the integrity of the program.

6.2.8 Acting Director: The director designates a qualified person to assume leadership and responsibility of the early education program in the event of his/her absence.

6.2.9 Developing Relationships Among Staff: Staff treats colleagues with equal respect and consideration regardless of gender, race, color, ethnic origin, or physical disability. Respectful relationships between colleagues are encouraged and reflect mutual trust, respect, and support for each other. Staff members seek out and acknowledge the ideas and opinions of others. Staff members give positive recognition to each others' skills and accomplishments and provide appropriate support for each other in dealing with stress to maintain confidence at all time.

6.2.10 Developing Relationships with Children: Team members treat children with equal respect and consideration regardless of gender, race, color, ethnic origin, or physical disability. Respectful relationships with children are developed by smiling, touching, holding, and speaking to children at their eye level throughout the day, during routines such as arrival and departure and mealtimes, as well as during teacher-planned and child-initiated experiences.

6.2.11 Staff Meetings: The director builds strong relationships and communication between the staff and administration, and encourages team collaboration and spirit among the staff. Regular staff meetings are held for staff to consult on program planning, to plan for implementing and attaining goals, to plan for individual children and family involvement, and to discuss program and working conditions.

6.2.12 Program Evaluation with Staff: The director meets with the staff annually to evaluate the early education program and to discuss areas of strengths as well as areas needing improvement. The areas needing improvement are addressed after the meetings through a specific Program Improvement Plan.

6.2.13 Personnel Files: The director maintains a confidential personnel file on each employee, volunteer and substitute. The file should contain, but not be limited to the following and/or contain information that civil authorities require:

- Resume
- Application
- Copies of college or university transcripts
- Background screening and results
- Fingerprints/clearance
- First Aid / Infant/Child CPR Certification
- Annual staff evaluations
- Documentation of any grievances
- Evidence of in-service training
- Copy of contract/work agreement
- I-9 form (Not required for volunteers)

6.3 Instructional and Support Staff Qualifications

All staff, regardless of position, must meet the requirements of 6.1.3 Background Screening and 6.1.4 Staff Orientation before they are permitted to work with children, alone or supervised. Primary Teachers must be at least 21 years of age, Associate teachers must be at least 18 years of age and all Teachers Aids/Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age.

6.3.1 Primary Teacher Qualifications (Staff Credential): *(The primary teacher is in charge of oversight and implementation/teaching of curriculum and classroom learning activities and assessments.)* Must be at least 21 years of age and have met one of the following qualifications:

- Active National Child Development Associate (CDA) or other early childhood credential that meets or exceeds the requirements of the National CDA
- B.A., B.S. or advanced degree in ONE of the following areas: Early Childhood Education/Child Development, Pre-Kindergarten or Primary Education, Preschool Education, Family and Consumer Sciences (formerly Home Economics/Child Development), Exceptional Student Education, Special Education, Mental Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities, Physically Impaired, Varying Exceptionalities, Emotional Disabilities, Visually Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Speech-Language Pathology or Elementary Education with certification to teach any age birth through 6th grade.
- A.S., A.A. degree or higher in Early Childhood Education/Child Development.
- Associate's degree or higher WITH at least six (6) college credit hours in early childhood education/child development AND at least 480 hours experience in a child care setting serving children ages birth through eight.
- Active Birth through Five Child Care Credential (Formerly the Florida Child Development Associate Equivalency Credential (CDAE)).
- Active School-Age Child Care Credential.

6.3.2 Associate Teacher Qualifications: *(The associate teacher fulfills the normal duties of a teacher in a classroom under the supervision of the primary teacher.)* Must be at least 18 years of age and meet all of the qualifications listed below:

- Have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED.
- Have a CDA or its equivalent. (A minimum of 12 college credits in early childhood/child development courses) or (Florida 40-clock-hour Introductory Child Care Training comprised of Part I and Part II courses.)
- Be working toward the completion of an AA degree, earning a minimum of 12 credits per year.

6.3.3 Teachers Aid/Volunteers Qualifications: *(May assist in classroom duties or group activities under the supervision of the primary teacher.)* A teacher's aid/volunteer may have no experience. Teacher's aids/volunteers must be at least 16 years of age and work under the direct supervision of an adult at all times. In addition, they must have begun the Florida DCF 40-hour training.

6.3.4 Non-teaching Support Staff Qualifications: Support staff indicates individuals who have any duties on campus and therefore may come into contact with children. They do not assist in class or activities. Support Staff must be at least 16 years of age and work under the direct supervision of an adult at all times. Regardless of position, if they come on campus, the requirements of 6.1.3 Background Screening and 6.1.4 Staff Orientation apply.

6.4 Instructional and Support Staff Policies

6.4.1 Job Descriptions/Staff Policies: Clear up-to-date written personnel policies have been developed by the program. These policies include, but are not limited to job descriptions; wages and benefits; and resignation, termination, and grievance procedures.

6.4.2 Communication of Personnel Policies: Written personnel policies have been communicated with the staff, and receipt of them by the staff has been documented.

6.4.3 Pre-Service Orientation: All personnel, including volunteers and substitutes, must have on file the appropriate screening and background checks and be adequately oriented about the program. Orientation includes but is not limited to:

- Knowledge regarding the goals and philosophy of the program
- Emergency, health and safety procedures
- Child abuse and neglect reporting procedures
- Curriculum & planned daily activities
- Guidance and classroom management techniques
- Regulatory requirements
- Individual needs of children
- Expectations for ethical conduct

6.4.4 In-Service Training: All Child Care personnel must have continuing education and professional development training that relates to topics specific to early education. The majority of which must be provided by an outside source relating to: child growth and development in the areas of cognitive learning and social, emotional, and physical development; safety and health issues for young children; family and community relations; classroom and program management; and professional development, which may include special needs. Training may also include related language development, discipline, and technology. Whenever possible, continuing education should be validated by college credit.

The DCF 40 clock hour introductory course in child care is required unless exempt under 402.305(2)(d)(1). Additional Guidelines:

- All Child Care personnel must begin the 40 hours course within 30 days of employment.
- A minimum of 5 hours in Early Literacy and Language Development of children from birth to 5 years of age, as approved by the Department of Children and Families.

Annual Training Minimums:

- Administrators -24 hours
- Primary Teachers -20 hours
- Associate Teachers and Teacher Aids -12 hours

6.5 Supervision of Children

6.5.1 Primary Teacher/Caregiver In order to help ensure the care, bonding, and nurturing of the individual child, each group of children has one primary teacher/caregiver per class or age group.

6.5.2 Ratios and Group Size: When mixed age groups of infants and toddlers are in the same room, the child staff ratio is maintained according to the youngest child in the room. If all the children in the mixed age group are two years of age or older, the child-staff ratio is maintained according to the average age of the children. If the children in the mixed age group have children of one year old, but under two years of age, the ratio of staff to children shall not exceed 1 to 6.

Minimum Staff to Child and Group Ratios for each age group are as follows:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Class Size</u>	<u>Adult/Child Ratio</u>
0-12 mos.	8	1:4
1 yr.	10	1:5
2 yrs.	12	1:6
3 yrs.	16	1:8
4 yrs.	20	1:10
5 yrs.	24	1:12
K	28	1:14

6.6.3 Attendance/Monitoring: The staff maintains direct supervision of children at all time. Direct supervision is defined as within hearing and sight at all times including during nap time, diaper changing, toileting, bathing, changing clothes and when separated from other children do to illness or possible communicable disease. If students are dropped off and picked up directly into a classroom the Primary or Associate Teacher will be staff person designated as the individual reasonable for maintaining direct supervision will maintain the attendance records. If children are dropped off or picked up at a central location the supervisor at that location must communicate with the classroom teacher to assure an accurate total, and individual group or class counts are maintained. Attendance records are file in the administrative office for a period of no less than one year.

6.6.4 Internal Communication Related to Supervision: Primary and Associate teachers are assigned specific classes or groups of children to supervise, and are present with that class or group at all times. Staff members who are sharing the responsibility of a group of children communicates with one another to ensure smooth operation of the program.

6.7 Internal Relations

6.7.1 Teacher/Caregiver/Staff Survey: All early care and education teachers, caregivers and staff are given the opportunity to complete a survey in which they are asked to evaluate the quality of the early care and education program and work environment yearly. For the initial and renewal accreditation visits, the FCCPSA Teacher/Staff survey form will be used. The survey is to be sent along with a letter that explains the purpose of the survey as an integral part of the program and solicits full participation. The letter also instructs the personnel to return the completed survey sealed in an envelope and given to a designated holder. The inspector processes the sealed surveys the day of the site visit. Responses from the Survey will be provided to the early childhood program administration with a summary included in the final evaluation report. During the non-visit years surveys are to be conducted internally.

7.0 Relationships

Founding Principles

Being a child's first teacher, parents have the ultimate responsibility for their care and development. The early learning program respects the critical role parents play in supporting the growth and development of their child. It is critical that the program and all members of the team invest in building positive relationships with the children they work with every day, fellow team members and administrative staff, but most importantly with the parents/guardians that have chosen them to be their ally the transformation of their child's development.

7.1 Public Relations

7.1.1 Public Relations: All informational sources established by the program accurately describe the early learning program, including its enrollment policy, vision, mission, philosophy of education and statement of nondiscrimination.

7.2 Parent or Guardian Handbook:

7.2.1 Contents and Communication: Parents/guardians of the children in the program receive a parent/guardian handbook that includes but is not limited to:

- 1) The philosophy statement regarding the care and education of young children attending the program, including what discipline techniques will be used; discipline methods are not severe, humiliating or frightening, food is not used as a reward or punishment and corporal or physical punishment is not used.
- 2) Policies regarding holidays, illnesses, hours of operation, fees, refunds, enrollment, and termination procedures;
- 3) An explanation of the program's day-to-day functioning.
- 4) Parents/guardians sign a statement acknowledging that they understand and support the program's policies as outlined in the parent/guardian handbook.

7.2.2 Visitation Rights: The program has an open-door policy regarding visits by parents/guardians on the program's premises, including in their child's classroom. Policies concerning parent/guardian involvement (e.g., visiting, observing, and volunteering) are in place to ensure the partnership between home and program is maintained.

7.3 Communication

7.3.1 Communication Events Activities: Administrators and staff communicate with the parents/guardians in a variety of ways on a regular basis daily and weekly by verbal communication or posted information and monthly by newsletter and/or classroom calendar of events, or through electronic means.

7.3.2 Communication Resources: The provider shares information with parents about common child-rearing issues such as signs of infectious disease or temper tantrums. The provider has information about community resources that offer services to parents and children. These resources may include but are not limited to health, mental health, nutrition/fitness, child care resource and referral, special needs, care for infants including breast feeding supports, and child care subsidies.

7.3.3 General Conferences about their Children: Conferences with each child's parent(s)/guardian are offered at least twice per year—and at other times as needed—to discuss the child's developmental progress, personal care, and education. Conference schedules accommodate working parents/guardians.

7.3.4 Conferences Regarding the Child's Development Progress: Parents/guardians of the children in the program receive communication regarding their children's developmental progress at least twice per year. During parent/guardian conferences, summaries of the results of child observation forms used during scheduled observations of the child are shared with parents/guardians, and parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in the goal-setting process for the child.

7.3.5 Reporting of Significant Changes in Behavior: Significant changes in a child's pattern of behavior and or physical condition are reported to the parents(s)/guardians(s), documented, and placed in the child's file.

7.3.6 Reporting of Accreditation Status: Centers must appropriately refer to their participation in the accreditation program and report their status correctly and ethically, throughout the process. Any misrepresentation by an institution will result in the removing of the program from the accreditation process, loss of membership and forfeiture of any funds paid.

7.4 Developing a Nurturing Environment

7.4.1 Sincere Commitment to Children: The provider cares about, respects, and is committed to helping each child develop to his or her full potential. The provider is sincere and comfortable with children. The provider lovingly accepts all children and to enjoy being with them.

7.4.2 Affection: The provider shows affection to each child in some way. She holds or carries babies frequently, depending on their individual preferences as shown by expressions of discomfort, such as crying or fussing, as well as their expression of well-being, such as smiling and cooing as well as their body language or settling in or pulling away.

7.4.3 Responds To Child Behavior Indicators: The provider observes children's behavior, verbal and body language, and abilities. The provider uses this information to respond to each child. The provider recognizes signs of stress in children's behavior and responds with appropriate stress-reducing activities. For example, the provider responds to a baby's crying as promptly and effectively as possible.

7.4.4 Positive Attitudes: The provider shows positive attitudes toward bottle weaning, diapering, toilet learning, discipline, and special needs of children.

7.5 Parent or Guardian Education

7.5.1 Parent Training Programs: The program director plans and implements regularly scheduled parent/guardian programs that support parents/guardians in their parenting role and reinforce the mission of the program. These programs take place at least quarterly.

7.5.2 Referral to Community Resources: The director is familiar with community services and resources regarding children with specific needs and provides this information to parents/guardians. The director and staff work collaboratively with community agencies in providing information as needed.

7.5.3 Parent Survey: All parents/legal guardians of children enrolled in the early care and education program are given the opportunity to complete a survey in which they're asked to evaluate the quality of the program. A survey form is sent along with a letter that explains the purpose of the survey as an integral part of the program and solicits full participation. The letter also instructs the parents/guardian to return the completed survey sealed in an enclosed, pre-stamped and addressed envelope. The sealed surveys are opened and processed by a designated validator the day of the site visit and responses of the Survey will be provided to the early childhood program administration and staff with a summary included in the final evaluation report.