**MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARKANSAS, E.O.C.**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

45 CFR §1302.31-2

**TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

**POLICY:**

Center-based programs will ensure that teachers and other staff provide responsive care, effective teaching, and an organized learning environment that promotes healthy development and children’s skill growth through our implementation of scientifically valid curriculum, screening and assessment tools and ongoing supervision and professional development for staff.

**PROCEDURE:**

**TEACHING PRACTICES**:

Teaching practices must:

* Emphasize nurturing and responsive practices, interactions and environments that foster trust and emotional security;
* Be communication and language rich;
* Promote critical thinking and problem-solving; social, emotional, behavioral, and language development;
* Provide supportive feedback for learning;
* Motivate continued effort;
* Support all children’s engagement in learning experiences and activities
* Promote growth in developmental progressions described in the Head Start Early Learning Framework: Birth to Age 5 through implementation of curriculum, organized activities, schedules, lesson plans, and the implementation of high-quality early learning experiences that are responsive to and build upon each child’s individual pattern of development and learning
* Integrate child assessment data in individual and group planning
* Include developmentally appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts, and physical development

**DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS**:

The program recognizes bilingualism and bi-literacy as strengths and implements research-based teaching practices that support their development.

For an infant or toddler dual language learner, the program includes teaching practices that focus on the development of the home language, when there is a teacher with appropriate language competency, and experiences that expose the child to English.

For a preschool age dual language learner, the program includes teaching practices that focus on both English language acquisition and the continued development of the home language.

If staff do not speak the home language of all children in their classrooms, staff must make every effort to support the development of the home language for dual language learners such as

having culturally and linguistically appropriate materials available. The program must work to identify translators or volunteers who speak the children’s home language who could be trained to work in the classroom to support children’s continued development of the home language.

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**:

Teachers must implement well organized learning environments with developmentally appropriate schedules, lesson plans, and indoor and outdoor experiences that provide adequate opportunities for choice, play, exploration, and experimentation among a variety of learning, sensory, and motor experiences.

For infants and toddlers, learning environments must promote relational learning and include individualized and small group activities that integrate appropriate daily routines into a flexible schedule of learning experiences.

For preschool age children, learning environments must include teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, active and quiet learning activities, and opportunities for individual, small groups, and large groups learning activities.

**MATERIALS AND SPACE**:

The program provides age-appropriate equipment, materials, supplies and physical space for indoor and outdoor learning environments. The equipment, materials and supplies must be accessible and include any necessary accommodations and the space must be accessible to children with disabilities. Staff must change materials intentionally and periodically to support children’s interests, development, and learning.

**REST TIME**:

Rest time is built into each classroom’s schedule as an intentional, age-appropriate approach to accommodate children’s need to nap or rest. Children are encouraged by staff (back patting, etc.) to rest during rest time, but are never forced to rest or nap. Staff must provide alternative quiet learning activities for children who do not need or want to rest or nap.

**SNACK AND MEAL TIMES**:

The program implements snack and meal times in ways that support development and learning. Bottle fed infants are fed on demand and must be held during feeding to support socialization. Snack and meal times are structured and are used as learning opportunities that support teaching staff-child interaction and foster communication and conversations that contribute to learning, development and socialization (i.e., family style meals). Sufficient time is provided for children to eat, practices never use food as reward or punishment, and children are not forced to finish their food. See Family Style Meal Policy for additional guidance.

**ROUTINES**:

The program approaches routines, such as hand washing and diapering, and transitions between activities, as opportunities for strengthening development, learning, and skill growth. Children will always be clean before parents take them from the center. Healthy routines positively spill over into the children and family

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**:

The program recognizes physical activity as important to learning and integrates intentional movement and physical activity into daily routines in ways that support health and learning. The program does not use physical activity as a reward or punishment. Separation between I/T and Preschool play areas and schedules is strictly adhered to.

**CURRICULUM**:

The program implements the scientifically valid, Creative Curricula for Preschool, Infants, Toddlers, and Twos, and Homebased. The Pregnant Women’s program utilizes the Partners for Healthy Babies Curriculum. It has standardized training procedures and materials to support implementation and are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five and state early learning standards and Arkansas Early Learning Standards. The program has previously used the Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) Parent Curriculum. Just recently, the program acquired the Ready Rosie Family Engagement curriculum.