

Center Based Curriculum and Classroom Environment

Head Start Performance Standard

§ 1302.31

§ 1302.32

§ 1302.35

Policy

Community Action provides developmentally appropriate, high quality early learning experiences which support the development of the whole child across all program models.

Head Start Center-based Teachers use **The Creative Curriculum** as a framework to create a learning environment which fosters building trusting relationships with adults and peers, promotes growth across all domains, allows children to be actively involved in the learning process and is responsive to the individual needs and learning style of each child. Teachers will provide high quality, developmentally and culturally appropriate environments and activities to scaffold each child's growth.

Community Action believes children and families benefit from having strong community ties. Classrooms are communities of learners and staff plan intentional activities and interactions to promote a strong community in the classroom. Parents/guardians are invited and encouraged to create their community of parents/guardians who work together for the benefit of their children and their families. The values and culture of the children's families are considered when making planning decisions. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to participate in curriculum planning for our center-based classrooms.

All classroom spaces within Community Action will reflect the cultures of the children and families enrolled in those groups. Family pictures of all the children will be posted as soon as reasonably possible. Staff will work to incorporate decorative and culturally relevant touches the families have in their homes into the classrooms. They may ask parents where to purchase those items or invite the parent to make some for the classroom, in which case Community Action will purchase the materials needed. See **Curriculum Planning** on page 2 and **Classroom Environments** on page 4.

Curriculum Planning

Teachers use Creative Curriculum to inform lesson plans and the design of the environment. In addition, they utilize the following resources to inform curriculum development:

- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework
- Head Start Birth-to-Five School Readiness Goals

When developing lesson plans and creating the learning environment,

- Teachers will use observations of the child's interests and abilities as well as data from assessments to develop lesson plans and changes to the environment.
- Teachers will scaffold planned activities to meet the needs and abilities of all the children.
- Teachers will be responsive to the needs and interests of the children in the class, changing planned activities as needed in the moment to reflect the needs of the child/children.

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- Teachers will establish routine as part of the planned curriculum. Children need the structure of routines. Routines will be adapted in response to the needs of the child/children or to accommodate special events. Such changes to routines will be specifically taught to the child/children.
- Teachers will solicit ideas from parents/guardians for planning the environment and activities during their regular communications with them, such as phone calls, pick up and drop off, family well-being checks, home visits, meetings, or conferences. Opportunities for parents/guardians to actively participant in their child's classroom experiences include communicating ideas through **SmartTeach™**, donating or lending CDs with children's music or activities in their home language, recording of songs or books in the home language, or making videos of culturally relevant children's games for Teachers to learn and do with the children.

Developmentally appropriate practice generally excludes the use of *worksheets, coloring sheets, tracing, pre-drawn/pre-cut materials, and the use of electronic screened media*, such as television, movies and videotapes, or electronic games or devices. Any exception to allow the use of prepared materials for classroom use (such as worksheets or pre-cut materials) must be approved by the Program Area Supervisor (PAS) or the Education Services Supervisor prior to their use in the classroom.

Materials provided by the Northwest Regional Education Service District for modifications to support children with Individual Family Service Plans which do not align with this policy are permitted.

Screen Time and Computer Use

Tablets may only be used during class time for specific Head Start related activities, such as attendance, recording staff interactions with children as part of the staff member's coaching for professional development (see **Head Start Participation and Release of Audio and Video** Form), gathering observations utilizing the Teaching Strategies App, or to facilitate learning. Technology use by children with an IFSP as part of the service plan is permitted.

Staff may take videos and photos during class time for use as observations. Videos must meet the same guidelines as photo observations on the **Observation Rubric** (see **Observations and Portfolios Policy and Procedure**) for use as observations. Staff may **only** use the talk to text feature during class time when necessary to capture a child's specific language use. All other documentation data will be entered outside of class time.

Staff **will not** intentionally record any challenging, atypical or other non-strengths based specific behaviors to share with parents, staff or partners (i.e. Northwest Regional Education Service District staff or Mental Health Consultants) for any reason. All observation videos will be reviewed by the teacher **before** sharing them with parents to ensure all images and audio demonstrate the strengths of the children. Videos which accidentally include images or audio of any child in distress or exhibiting atypical behavior will be immediately deleted from the tablet and/or **SmartTeach™**.

Videos and computer games as part of regular or ongoing curriculum are developmentally inappropriate and therefore not permitted. Tablets or computers during choice time may be used with *preschool-aged* children to support the interests and goals of the children in the class. Teachers may facilitate research that is related to children's interest or the current study. Children's inquiry skills are often better supported when questions or curiosities are part of a group discussion about how to investigate to find the answer. Some techniques might include observation, experimentation, using library books as resources. Occasionally, it may be appropriate for one-on-one use. For example, a tablet may be used to look up a definition of a new word or look up a fact to answer a child's question or wondering related to the work the child is doing as opposed to the study.

Tablets and computers will be used sparingly and as an investigational aid, rather than the source of answers for most questions. Tablets and computers will not be available to children at any other time. Use will be controlled and facilitated by Head Start Staff.

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Prior to use with children, videos and websites must be screened and approved by the Education Services Supervisor or PAS to ensure content is age and culturally appropriate, facilitates active thinking and engagement, is free of advertisements (passive and overt), and is nonviolent. Adults will engage with the child(ren) using the tablet or computer to prompt thought processes, model language and facilitate learning. Requests for use must include:

- A copy of the video or link to the video or website for previewing
- The title and description of the video or website
- The length of the video
- The learning objectives for the video or website
- Plan for adults to engage with the child(ren) using website or watching the video to prompt thought processes, model language and facilitate learning.
- Plan for actively engaging the children while watching the video (such as when to pause the video and ask a question or otherwise engage the children)
- Follow-up activities related to the video or website (such as questions to ask afterward, new classroom or outdoor activities as a result of the video or plans for more research).

Teachers will inform parents of the screen time policy at the orientation and/or enrollment visit. Families enrolling after orientation day will also receive a written outline of the policy. Staff, parents, and other volunteers may not use electronic devices, including phones or tablets, for personal communication while working with or supervising children.

Classroom Environment

Classroom Environment Setup

Center-based Teachers will complete the **Classroom Environment Setup Checklist** located in ChildPlus at the beginning of each quarter of the program year. PAS's will monitor and support corrective action plans. The Classroom Environment Setup Checklist aligns with Creative Curriculum, developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood, licensing requirements and **Head Start Program Performance Standards**.

Each classroom will have the following activity areas:

- Blocks
- Art
- Toys and Games
- Sand and Water table
- Dramatic play
- Discovery
- Literacy (includes library and writing center)
- Cozy area, which will include social/emotional support tools such as books and posters about feelings, stuffed animals for snuggling, small individual use fidgets or toys, etc.
- Area for whole group gatherings
- Food products may **not** be used for sensory experiences (such as in a tactile table or tub), unless they are going to be eaten by the children as part of the experience. Requests for exceptions related to the needs of an individual child **must** be approved by the Education Services Supervisor **prior** to use.
- The Infant Room will be a shoe free zone.
- The Ones Room will be a shoe free zone until **all** children are walking as their primary mode of movement in the classroom. Children may be barefoot or wear socks with non-slip grippers on the

Forms Referenced:

[Head Start Birth-to-Five School Readiness Goals,
Classroom Environment Setup Checklist, Observation Rubric,
Head Start Participation and Release of Audio and Video,
Head Start Visitor Sign In/Out form]

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bottom of the foot. Booties will be provided for staff and families to wear. Once all children in the Ones Room are walking, shoes may be worn inside.

- Children in the Twos Room may wear shoes.
- **All Early Head Start and Head Start Classrooms**, except the Infant Room:
Staff may **encourage** children to wear shoes, but **may not require** it, unless mandated by a medical professional. A child who repeatedly takes off their shoes throughout the day is signaling they do not want to wear shoes. We must honor the child's culture or physical comfort as well as their autonomy over their own bodies. Staff may **ask** the child to put on shoes once or twice during each inside period of inside and outside times and again after nap. No child will be forced to put them on or threatened if they do not.
- Teachers may create an office space not to exceed ten feet by ten feet square.

Outdoor Environment

The outdoor environment is an extension of the classroom environment. Outdoor materials and equipment will be available to provide engaging experiences for all children. Examples of materials and equipment include:

- Different sizes and shapes of balls or other gross motor equipment
- Book baskets
- Art materials
- Dramatic play props
- Large blocks
- Materials for dancing and movement
- Magnifying glasses, journals and bug catchers
- Parachute
- Bikes, scooters, wagons and helmets
- Sensory experiences, such as a water table, buckets of water and sand
- Musical instruments, scarves

Parent/Guardian/Volunteer Interest

Teachers will post copies of the following items on the Parent Board for the classroom:

- Teachers will display Policy Council Meeting notes on the parent board.
- Post a parent version of the **Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children Policy and Procedure** on the parent board. The parent version can be found in the parent handbook under guidance.
- Post the daily schedule on the parent board where it can be easily viewed. *If the schedule changes, post the new schedule immediately.* See **Daily Class Schedule Policy and Procedure**.
- Post a copy of the current lesson plan on the parent board. Any changes to planned activities must be written on the lesson plan on the day the activity changes. See **Lesson Plans Center-Based Policy and Procedure**.
- Post signs in each interest area so volunteers can understand how their play facilitates learning. If needed, request signs from the Education Services Supervisor.

Each class will have a volunteer sign-in book. Teachers will email the **Head Start Visitor Sign In/Out** form at the end of each week to the Compliance Supervisor to be recorded in ChildPlus. See **Volunteers in Head Start Centers Policy and Procedure**.