

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

As part of the greater University community the Early Learning Center strives to uphold and promote the mission, vision, and core values of Ferris State University.

Mission:

Ferris State University prepares students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Through its many partnerships and its career-oriented, broad-based education, Ferris serves our rapidly changing global economy and society.

Vision:

Building on the vision of our founders, Ferris State University will be an agile and transformational university. By integrating theory and practice, we will foster opportunity, discovery, and professional preparation for a dynamic global society.

Core Values: Collaboration, Diversity, Ethical Community, Excellence, Learning, Opportunity.

Program Philosophy

The philosophy of Early Learning Center is based on the belief that each child is a unique individual. While at ELC, all children are given many opportunities to learn in their own way, pursuing their own interests and having their many individual needs met. The center's goal is to accept each child as they are and help foster their growth and development into a responsible, independent, and caring person. We strive to make all children more aware of the world around them through activities and experiences aimed at social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. ELC understands the importance of providing the opportunity for children to participate in group and individual activities, active and quiet times, large and fine motor activities, and time for social interactions to promote problem solving and listening skills.

Early Learning Center believes if given the chance, every child has the potential to develop a healthy sense of self-esteem; a feeling that he or she is special, and a foundation that will encourage enjoyable learning experiences now and in the future.

Program Goals

The goal of Early Learning Center is to provide a safe and stimulating environment which will help each child grow and develop at his/her own pace and to provide the community with a quality model early childhood program.

Program Goals for Children

Goals for the children at Early Learning Center are as follows:

1. To help children develop a positive self-image.

2. To provide opportunities to establish early friendships for social interactions among children and adults; a foundation on which to build future learning.
3. To provide activities encouraging development of large and fine motor skills.
4. To help children develop effective communication, interpersonal relations, listening and conflict resolution skills.
5. To encourage children to express themselves in appropriate and acceptable ways.
6. To develop in each child an interest in learning about his/her environment.
7. To offer experiences that enable children to develop self-esteem and confidence to make decisions for themselves.

Curriculum overview:

Early Learning Center (ELC) offers a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate curriculum where active learning is facilitated by flexible classroom arrangements that utilize interest centers and individualized activities based on each child's individual background and learning style.

The ELC utilizes the High Scope Curriculum for all age groups combined with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Developmentally Appropriate Practice standards and the State of Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality.

Utilizing High Scope's online Child Observation Record, (COR Advantage) goals and objectives are developed for each age group based on the developmental stages of the children enrolled. The curriculum is based on the belief that learning is an on-going, life-long process as well as emergent, child-centered, and play-based with activities and experiences designed to help children gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. ELC believes parents are valuable partners in their children's education and provides families with a copy of their children's daily schedule, curriculum goals & objectives, and a Family Information Form during the enrollment orientation process. To foster a positive school-home partnership parents also receive on-going communication from teaching staff and opportunities to be involved in their child's classroom.

The ELC holds the following fundamental beliefs that allow the children and families enrolled in our program the following benefits:

- A climate of acceptance and inclusion by enrolling children of varying cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds who have a range of abilities and special needs.
- Qualified and nurturing staff members who use developmentally appropriate practices and who develop warm, responsive relationships with each child and family.
- Enhancement to each child's social, emotional and physical health and well-being through the assignment to a consistent teaching team.
- Warm, stimulating, and multi-sensory environment filled with culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate materials and activities.
- On-going staff development reflective of the most current information about young children's development and early learning.

- Continuous assessment and evaluation system that regularly monitors individual children’s development and the important aspects of the program’s quality to support children’s continued development and learning.
- Collaboration with the community to ensure appropriate referrals as needed.

Special Needs Policy

ELC strives to provide appropriate developmental learning opportunities for all children in accordance with the Michigan Department of Education Early Childhood Standards of Quality.

The curriculum is designed to provide a developmentally and linguistically appropriate environment and adult guidance to enable the participation of children with special needs. We do our best to ensure our program:

- Supports all children in achieving a sense of belonging, contribution, and membership in their classroom.
- Adapts activities, make accommodations, and uses other social strategies that integrate children socially and enables them to participate in activities, regardless of abilities.
- Adapts materials and equipment so that all children can share in activities, contribute to the group, engage, develop, and keep friendships.
- Provides and arranges space to make play equipment and materials accessible to all children, both inside and outdoors.
- Assists children, if necessary, in playing with and using materials, communicating their discoveries, solving problems, or engaging for longer periods of time.
- Increases the complexity and challenge of activities, materials, play or learning opportunities, as children develop and find greater self-confidence.
- Observes children carefully to identify their preferred ways of interacting with the environment, taking into account their skills in handling objects and materials, frequency of conversations, interest in listening to stories and songs, and choices to work alone or engage with others.
- Provides multiple avenues for children to learn and to express themselves with others, alone, or through technology (e.g., children with disabilities have access to creative and physical experiences that enable participation in alternative ways).
- Requires each adult to be responsible for each child in the program so that every adult can support every child to meet their learning expectations.
- Discusses with parents and with relevant staff parental expectations for their children.

Family Relationships

Welcoming families

When openings become available, the assistant manager arranges to meet with each family to begin the enrollment/orientation process. The enrollment/orientation process consists of a tour of the facility, meeting the classroom teaching staff, and assistance in completing of all enrollment materials. Information will be shared regarding the High Scope Curriculum, daily schedules, assessment procedures, and program policies and procedures.

To keep families informed of their child's education, the teaching staff in each classroom will keep an up-to-date parent information board outside the classroom door with the following information posted:

- Daily Schedule
- Lesson Plans
- Staff Photos
- Copies of current communication (newsletters, letters home, etc.)
- A copy of the most current Health Services Plan
- A copy of the most current Curriculum and Assessment Plan

Transitioning to a new classroom

When children are transitioning into a new classroom within the center the current teaching team and the new teaching team will meet with the parents to inform and discuss the upcoming transition, introducing the family to the classroom and providing a Family Questionnaire for the new classroom, a daily schedule, and COR goals & objectives. After meeting with the child's parent, the teaching staff set up a transition routine which best meets the needs of the child. During the transition process frequent communication between teaching staff and families will occur to assure a smooth transition for the child.

The teaching staff will follow up with a meeting with each child's family shortly after enrollment begins to discuss specific goals, concerns, or questions the family may have.

For children who are entering kindergarten the ELC will keep open communication with all the area schools on their enrollment dates and processes. ELC will share these with families, and with parent/guardian approval, provide the new school with pertinent information regarding the child's progress while at ELC.

Communicating with and involving families

Maintaining an on-going reciprocal partnership with families is key to providing a quality learning environment for young children. ELC will use the following methods to communicate with families:

- **Daily verbal communication** – greet children and parents by name, share accomplishments, or something the child enjoyed during the day, solicit feedback

from parents, be an active listener when parents share information, use objective statements and comments when relaying concerns regarding the child

- **Daily written communication** -a Daily Activity Record for each child is completed each day and given to the parent prior to departure
- **Copies of individual lesson plans** – upon request parents are provided with a copy of their child’s individual lesson plans and/or portfolio contents. These plans will be shared and adjusted as needed during family conferences.
- **Parent conferences** – are scheduled at least two times per year (more often as requested by parents and/or teaching staff). Conferences are scheduled in advance at times of convenience for families
- **Parent meetings/family events** – are scheduled throughout the year based on the interest of the parents. Surveys are used to determine the frequency and format for such meetings
- **Parent Advisory committee** – parents are invited to participate in the Parent Advisory board meetings. Surveys and feedback from advisory board members is used to determine the frequency and format of meetings
- **Volunteer Opportunities** – ELC staff value parent participation in the program. Children benefit from having family members involved in their daily activities. This is a wonderful way to demonstrate to children the value of a home– school partnership. Parents are welcome at any time to assist with class projects, field trips, special events, or just spending time in the classroom
- **Other forms of communication** – monthly center-wide newsletters, notes from teachers, emails, and phone conversations are other ways center staff communicate with families
- **Additional ways to involve families**- Parents are welcome to work with staff and participate in community and advocacy projects such as Great Start Collaborative Meetings and Family Events, Month of the Young Child Activities, FSU Students with Children, etc.

Resolving differences with families

Early Learning Center strives to build reciprocal partnerships with all families to make them feel welcomed and valued as part of their child’s educational team. Inevitably, challenging situations come up from time to time; such situations can be viewed as learning opportunities for everyone involved. When situations arise which involve differences between the center staff and family members, the following steps are taken as part of the problem solving approach:

- Arrange to meet with family members in a private setting away from children
- Remain calm and help others involved remain calm – try to understand the family member’s point of view and validate their feelings. Gather information on why they feel the way they do, and restate what you think you hear them saying for clarification
- Clarify the problem and agree on goals – allow family members to explain their perspectives and share the ELC program goals for all children. Together as a team try to generate specific goals

- Brainstorm to generate possible solutions – together as a team openly discuss ways each team member can support the child to achieve the agreed upon goals. Be sure to allow the family to contribute ideas and work together to implement the solutions whenever possible
- Create a written plan of action – include the goals established and a timeline for touching base with all parties involved
- Follow up and continue discussions – once an agreement has been made, make plans to check back on progress. Update plans as needed based on the success of the specific plans established. It may require several meetings and discussions to find successful solutions

In the event a conflict and/or differences are not able to be solved by the following steps, it may be necessary to involve the manager for assistance. The manager will also follow the steps listed above to resolve the issue. Based on the needs of the child, family, and other children enrolled a decision will be made on the next steps to be taken which may include referral to the Associate Vice President of Auxiliary Enterprises, and/or removal from the Early Learning Center.

Cultural Competency Policy (10E.5)

ELC strives to provide culturally sensitive environments in which all families and children feel welcomed and accepted, in accordance with the Michigan Department of Education Early Childhood Standards of Quality. In addition to seeking information from families, ELC staff will work closely with the Ferris State University International Education Office and the Diversity and Inclusion Office to connect staff and families with resources and/or networking support.

The curriculum is designed to include experiences related to multicultural awareness. Our goal is to:

- Provide opportunities for children to interact with adult members of their own and of other cultural groups.
- Provide classroom activities which include books, pictures, props, music, foods, materials, field trips, and clothing representing a wide range of cultural groups as they are represented in present day and historic settings.
- Assures that children receive positive, accurate information about a variety of cultural groups, including those specific to their families and/or community.
- Integrate multicultural activities into the daily routines of the program rather than reserving them only for holidays or special occasions.
- Support learning cultural competence among staff that is carried into all aspects of the program.
- Reflect the culture of the children in each classroom.
- Recognize, model, and support respect for language diversity.
- Provide a learning environment where no child is mocked, belittled, bullied, or ignored.
- Provide a minimum of 3 hours annual Professional Development in areas that support the backgrounds, cultural belief and/or special needs of the children enrolled.

Teaching Interaction Strategies

To support the program philosophy and goals, the teaching staff refer to Michigan Standards of Quality and NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice (third edition) to assist in the process of becoming an "intentional teacher". The intentional teacher provides a developmentally appropriate (DAP) environment by creating a community of learners, planning curriculum to achieve established program goals, assessing children's development and learning and establishing reciprocal relationships with families. The following teaching strategies will support a classroom environment where children feel welcome confident and secure in exploring the world around them.

It is essential that all adults (teachers, practicum students, student employees, as well as interns and student teachers) working with children understand and actively participate in supporting children's active learning.

Adult's Role in the Learning Environment – All Adults

- Arrive to the site well rested, dressed comfortably, and clean (no smoke and or strong perfume smells etc.)
- SMILE and greet children and staff as you enter the room (communicate when you leave the rooms and/or playground for any reason)
- Be prepared to be actively engaged and involved with the daily schedule and routines (this could be getting messy on the floor, going outside, mealtime, etc.)
- Be a positive role model (adults should never engage in behaviors that children are not allowed to)
- Spend your time focused on the children not in conversations with other adults in the classroom unless it is to speak with a supervisor to communicate questions or get feedback
- Turn cell phones to silent, and put away out of view. No photos and/or videos are allowed to be taken of the children
- Always be aware of what is going on in the classroom
 - **CHILDREN ARE TO BE SUPERVISED BY SITE AND SOUND AT ALL TIMES (**
 - If you see harmful behaviors – stop them immediately using positive conflict resolution
 - Be aware of when children enter and leave the classroom – if you hear a door opening do a visual check to make sure all children are accounted for
 - Be sure that adults are spread throughout the classroom – try to make sure you do not have your back to children. Align yourself to have the best visual of as much as the classroom as possible
 - Follow children's lead – if they all leave an area, adults should follow

Stay on children's level:

- Adults should always place themselves in close physical proximity to the children
- Most of the time spent in an early childhood classroom will be down on the floor with the children.

- Adults in an early childhood classroom should never be standing over children while supervising the room, or reach over children’s heads. Interaction is best when face-to-face

Body Language:

- Be calm, even in high stress situations. Children will react to how the adults around them are behaving
- Be respectful to everyone, children, adults, faculty, parents, etc.
- Be warm and genuine – children have a knack for sensing when adults are upset or don’t want to be around them
- Avoid negative facial expressions (eye rolling, frowning, etc.)

Appropriate tone of voice:

- How you speak to children can have as much impact as the words you say
- An effective tool to elicit children’s interest is to utilize a variety of fluctuation in the tone of voice used in the classroom
- Try to use a variety of tones to match different situations. If you are telling a story, use your tone, pitch, and fluctuations to match the story (i.e., whisper, excitement, sadness, etc.).
- If the situation calls for a firm voice, use a calm but firm tone.
- There are a variety of situations that occur on any given day. Practice a variety of tones, pitches, and fluctuations.
- Adult voices should not be predominately heard over children’s voices – except in special situations such as emergencies, storytelling, giving directions for class, etc.

Awareness of whole room:

- Adults should be aware of what is happening in the whole room
- Following children’s lead in what they want to do
- Be aware of children moving from area to area
- Be available to provide support to children in solving potential conflicts, and to offer assistance with potential safety risks.
- You should also be available to facilitate children’s interactions with each other

Interaction Strategies- All Adults

All adults working with children should view the High Scope Interaction videos for Infant/Toddler and Preschool classrooms.

Note: If you have not viewed this video within your first 2 weeks of participation please see your immediate supervisor to arrange

Acknowledgement:

- Let children know that you have noticed something positive they have done by giving them attention in a positive manner using verbal acknowledgement
- Use non- verbal cues such as smiling, or by placing a reassuring hand on their shoulder.
 - *“You helped Jonny find his seat”*
 - *“Thank you for working that out with Jenny”*

- *“I noticed you used your words”*

Encouragement:

It is important to understand the difference between encouragement and praise when working with young children. ELC believes encouragement is the key to child guidance. Praise does not always provide a positive outcome and can seem insincere when given too often (“great”, “good job”). Praise is often given automatically and may not convey belief in children’s abilities. Below are some examples and guidelines that demonstrate some of the differences between encouragement and praise.

Give children encouragement through factual phrases instead of praise or by placing adult value on their actions. There is a distinct difference between encouraging children and praising them.

Praise	Encouragement
Praise is given to the doer : “You are a good girl/boy for drawing such a nice picture for me”	Encouragement is given for the deed : “I’m sure you enjoyed drawing your picture, tell me about the colors you used”
Praise is given for work well done: “What a pretty picture you drew”	Encouragement is given for work regardless of outcome: “Wow, look at that, what colors did you use to make it”?
Praise implies a demand for continued high performance	Encouragement makes no demands, recognizes effort
Praise given too freely seems phony	Encouragement is sincere
Praise does not always increase self-esteem	Encouragement fosters self-esteem.

Modeling

Children are very observant of the adults around them. If teachers model appropriate behavior using words calmly to solve problems and admit to mistakes in a positive manner, the children in the classroom will pick up on the way adults handle issues.

Demonstration

Teachers assist children by demonstrating tasks which need to be completed in a certain manner, such as writing a letter of the alphabet or filling a measuring cup to a specific level. This should not be confused with creative processes (SEE BELOW)

Adult's role in creative activities

Teaching staff, including interns, students, full-time, and part-time staff should not actively engage in doing creative activities planned for children. The adult's role is to facilitate learning by encouraging the children to participate using verbal encouragement (instead of praise). When adults do the activities it can have negative impact on a child's learning experiences. The unintended effects include children feeling self-conscious about the ability they have to complete the activity (they will be more likely to ask the adult to draw for them), and it can inhibit children's creativity by seeing an example of a finished project. In all circumstances the creative process over a finished product is expected. The use of "dittos" and other predetermined type of work are not developmentally appropriate to use in an early childhood classroom.

Add or adjust challenge

Teachers become familiar with each child's developmental level and modify the challenge of particular activities based on that knowledge.

Ask questions

Questions are asked to invoke thought from children. Too many questions can frustrate children. When asking questions teachers use open ended questions and wait for children to respond before asking more questions. Use "How" and "What" questions instead of questions that have a "yes" or "no" answer to help expand on children's thoughts and ideas.

Give assistance

Give children assistance to help them complete a task or activity. Teaching staff can give cues and/or hints to help children successfully accomplish the task or activity without giving the complete solution. This will help children feel more confident in their accomplishments and foster problem solving skills.

Give direction

Teachers give children directions for action or behavior instead of doing for the child. A child will learn more from a caring adult giving specific directions and support than from the adult doing for the children while they watch. For example, when children are learning how to use a mouse on the computer, the adult can explain to the child how to move the arrow on the screen and click the mouse once, rather than the adult taking the mouse and doing it for the child. The younger the child the simpler the directions should be.

Infant and Toddler Specific Strategies

There are some strategies that are used in the infant and toddler classrooms which may not be appropriate in the older age groups. When in question speak with the Supervising Teachers in the classroom to clarify expectations.

- When getting down on the floor be sure to stay in a position where you can get up and stop negative child behaviors before they occur

- If an adult finds themselves not moving for more than 90 seconds, double check the area around you – if children are gone move with them or to another area that may need additional supervision
- Since the children have limited verbal skills it is important for adults to initiate conversations with the children
- The adults in the infant and toddler rooms speak out loud many of their actions as well as the children's actions. This serves 2 purposes
 - Provides a language rich environment for children
 - Let's other adults know what is happening and what your intentions are so they can supervise appropriately

Guidance Policy (1B.8, 1B.9, 1B.10)

The staff at Early Learning Center will use only positive methods of discipline/guidance, which encourage each child to develop self-control, self-esteem, and self-direction. When children are actively involved in developmentally appropriate learning activities, misbehavior is less likely to occur. The goal is to assist children in conflict resolution strategies to help strengthen their problem solving abilities.

The following methods of punishment, psychological abuse, and/or coercion shall never be utilized by staff in accordance with State of Michigan Licensing Regulations and NAEYC Accreditation Standards:

- Physical punishment such as: shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, pulling of arms, hair, ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time, restricting a child's movement by binding or tying up
- Psychological abuse such as: shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening children, ostracism, withholding affection.
- Coercion such as rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part; forcing a child to sit down, lie, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up)
- Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use
- Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box or similar cubicle
- Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities
- Excluding a child from daily learning experiences

Conflict Resolution Strategies

ELC utilizes the High Scope Approach to resolving conflicts with children. The adults working with children can support them by facilitating the six steps of conflict resolution, as developmentally appropriate for each age group.

1. Approach: Place yourself between children, at their level, use a calm voice
2. Acknowledge: Use phrases like "You look really upset"
3. Ask: "What's the problem"
4. Restate: "So the problem is...."
5. Ask: "What can we do to solve this problem". Encourage children to think of a solution. It is important children agree on a solution together.
6. Follow-up: "You solved this problem". Stay close to offer follow up if needed

The more these strategies are used, the more successful children will become at being critical thinkers and problems solvers.

Infants and Toddlers

It is developmentally appropriate for infants and toddlers to be curious about their surroundings. During active exploration of their environment, children may engage in actions which could cause harm to themselves, others, or the environment around them. A child's natural curiosity can override their ability to comply with rules; ELC staff will strive to provide a "child – proof" environment so children are able to enjoy free exploration of the world around them. This is a delicate stage in a child's development; during this stage they are forming a self-concept of themselves. Teaching staff attempt to eliminate negatives such as "NO" and "DON'T", instead using phrases which let the child know what appropriate choices they can make, staff also redirect inappropriate activities.

Infants and toddlers do not typically possess the verbal skills needed to express their anger or frustration; instead they may use unacceptable behaviors (aggression, biting, and temper tantrums) to communicate. It is important to understand these are typical behaviors children this age exhibit. The goal is to help them learn replacement behaviors.

The first step is to try to determine the cause of the behavior and focus on what the child needs, rather than on what they are doing or saying. Record observations and speak with other teaching staff and/or the child's parents to gain understanding of why the child may be using the behaviors.

Preschool

During the preschool years children begin to understand classroom expectations. The teaching staff set guidelines through classroom limits, schedules, and teaching strategies geared toward assisting children to become self – confident, critical thinkers and problem solvers. The teaching staff realizes conflicts will occur with young children. The teaching staff will use these situations to help children learn conflict resolution strategies and problem solving skills. Staff model positive techniques by teaching children the importance of listening to other points of view, identifying the problem at hand, seeking solutions, and agreeing on solutions. It is important for adults to be facilitators in the problem solving effort rather than dictate what the solutions should be.

Physical Aggression

When physical aggression occurs the behavior will be stopped immediately by positioning yourself between the aggressive child and the victim. The victim is given immediate attention to be sure they are all right. Staff position themselves at the aggressive child's level and clearly state the rule about hurting others. The aggressive child is involved in comforting and taking care of the victim (if the victim allows it). Staff remain calm when dealing with both children. Both children are given positive attention throughout the incident.

Temper Tantrums

When temper tantrums occur teachers make sure the child is safe from harming themselves or others around them and reassure the child that teachers are there to

help. The best defense for temper tantrums is planning ahead to minimize them. Some strategies include:

- Give children opportunities to be helpers
- Give children many opportunities to make choices for themselves
- Label shelves and materials with pictures so children can easily use them independently
- Give children a wide variety of toys and materials to play with including items they are familiar with
- Offer children comfort often (hugs, cuddles, verbal acknowledgement, etc.)
- Know children's physical needs and schedules –such as when they are hungry tired, etc.
- Give children opportunities to play outdoors and/or active play indoors throughout the day

Biting

A typical behavior especially for infants and toddlers is biting. Biting can cause a very stressful atmosphere for the children, staff, and for parents. It is important to remain calm and focus on what may be causing the child to bite. When biting occurs, ELC staff follow these strategies:

- Respond calmly and promptly
- Comfort and care for the victim – wash the wound and apply an ice pack to reduce swelling
- Deal with the biter by stating firmly biting is not all right (do not use tone of voice to punish the child, or become overly dramatic)
- Encourage the biter to care for the victim (if the victim will allow)
- Give the biter suggestions for a replacement behavior such as using words or growling, etc.
- Document the biting injury and give copy to manager
- Complete an Incident Report
- Keep a positive prospective on the biting child
- Speak with both parents (biter and victim) to seek information and try to help parents understand the situation, **retain confidentiality of all involved**
- Continue to observe to identify possible patterns/causes
- Speak with manager if biting persists beyond normal/typical occurrences

Challenging Behaviors (1E.1, 3B.2)

Occasionally, children's behaviors go beyond what is typically considered developmentally appropriate.

Challenging behaviors are “any behavior that (1) interferes with children's learning, development and success at play (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults [or] (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure”.

(Kaiser&Rasminky, Challenging Behavior in Young Children (2nd Ed.), Pearson Education Inc.

p.8). Examples of Challenging behavior include, but are not limited to: physical aggression such as hitting, biting, shoving, whacking with toys, destruction of property, relational aggression [“you can’t play with us”], verbal bullying, tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions and/or observe classroom rules, and/or imposing safety risks to self and/or others around them.

If repeated redirection attempts are unsuccessful, ELC staff reserves the right to have a child displaying extreme behaviors picked up from the center for the remainder of the day. This will allow the child with extreme behaviors a chance to calm down away from the physical environment.

In the event potentially harmful situations persist, the following measures will be taken:

- Teaching staff will work together to assess the function of the challenging behavior.
- Teachers will observe the challenging behavior through observations (including but not limited to: a Scatterplot form completed by classroom staff for no less than 2 weeks), input from other staff who interact with the child
- A conference with the parent(s), the teacher, and the manager will be scheduled to coordinate a behavior modification plan and share and connect families with other resources and support services available.
- Together with families identify positive behavior support strategies (such as removing materials or modifying the classroom environment that could be triggering the challenging behavior, or create a predictable daily schedule so children know what to do and when to do it), set reasonable goals, and monitor progress.

In accordance with federal, state, and civil rights laws the ELC’s goal is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures as much as possible.

If after the above attempts to eliminate extreme behaviors are not successful, the center staff may request the child be removed from the center to ensure the health and safety of all children enrolled. Should removal from the program be necessary the center will assist the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

Infant & Toddler Curriculum

Research indicates that the first three years of life are critical years for children to develop cognitive, social/emotional, physical, and language skills. ELC curriculum for infants and toddlers is based on the following fundamental beliefs:

- Developing trusting relationships between each child and caregiver
- Delivering responsive, individualized care to each child
- Creating environments which encourage exploration
- Ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of each child
- Forming partnerships with families
- Embracing cultural, family, and individual differences

Primary Caregivers/Continuity of care (10B.23, 10B.24)

The basis for all learning for infants and toddlers is warm, responsive relationships with consistent adults. Whenever possible infants and toddlers are kept with their primary caregivers for at least 9 months (typically the academic year).

Primary caregiver assignments are established to assist in developing meaningful, nurturing connections between caregivers and children. The assignments are made based on children's schedules and individual needs. There are generally 2 primary caregivers in the infant classroom, and 2 in the toddler room. They are the teachers who will be spending the most consistent amount of time with children and their families. Each family will be notified in writing who their child's primary caregivers will be. A copy of the assignments is posted in the classroom as well.

Primary caregivers are responsible for the major care routines such as arrivals, mealtimes, diaper changes, sleeping, departures, individual planning and on-going assessments in their primary care group.

The requirement to be classified as a primary caregiver includes but is not limited to the following:

1. A degree in Early Childhood Education (or related field) or the equivalent of academic coursework and documented work hours as defined by Michigan Licensing Regulations.
2. Training in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Safe Sleep
3. Certification in Diaper and Toilet practices
4. Certification in Infant/toddler food service
5. CPR/First aid training

Learning Environment

Physical Setting

All items within the classroom must meet safety standards for infants and toddlers. There is a choke tube available in each classroom. If any item does not meet the size requirement of the choke tube (i.e. anything which goes through the tube is a potential

choking hazard) it will not be available for child use. Additionally, the use of baby walkers is prohibited at ELC.

Emergent Classroom practices should be implemented; such as opening centers appropriately, involving children in creating classroom rules etc.

Routines & Transitions

Routines and transitions are important aspects of providing consistency to infants and toddlers. Establishing consistent routines and transitions helps children to develop a sense of trust and autonomy.

Arrival & Departure Routines

Primary caregivers spend time each day with every child and their families. Children and family members are greeted by name every day. Arrival and departure routines set the tone for the remainder of the day or evening. The following guidelines are used by staff for conducting arrival and departure procedures with children and families:

- Create a physical environment that is warm and welcoming
- Greet children and their family members with warm **smiles** and display **enthusiasm** and **excitement**
- Convey positive, receptive body language at the door or as close to the door as possible
- Have pictures of the children and their family members posted at the children's eye level
- Encourage families to bring their child's comfort items from home and make them available to the child as needed for comfort
- Provide interesting toys and/or materials where children can see them upon arrival
- Offer quiet, soft retreats in the room to comfort children after difficult separations
- Suggest using the observation rooms to families to ease anxiety from separations if needed
- Speak with families to support departure rituals whenever possible
- Encourage adults to never leave without saying "good-bye" to their child
- When giving parents daily sheets at the end of the day, be sure to include verbal communication to provide a summary of the child's day.
- Maintain a communication log for shift changes of adults to ensure that important information is conveyed and communicated with families

Daily Attendance

Teaching staff create a mechanism for daily attendance that children actively participate in which is appropriate to the development level of the children in the classroom. It is at the discretion of the teaching staff to determine the exact method to be used which best fits the children enrolled in their classroom.

Rest time Procedures

Young Infants

Rest time for infants is based on each individual child's schedule. A crib is available for each child under 12 months. ELC's safe sleep procedures include:

- Infants **MUST** be placed on their backs
- Once an infant is able to roll, they will initially be placed on their back, but allowed to assume whatever sleep position they choose.
- Cribs must have tightly fitting bottom sheets w/ no padding placed between the sheet and the mattress
- Infants' head must remain uncovered during sleep
- No items in crib w/ infant (unless prescribed by a licensed physician and approved through Licensing)
- Infants may **NOT** wear a bib or hooded sweatshirt while sleeping
- Blankets shall **NOT** be draped on or over crib
- Pacifiers are allowed, but no pacifier clips or pacifiers with animals attached.
- Sleep sacks or wearable blankets are allowed, but swaddling sleep sacks are not allowed after 2 months of age. (See Technical Assistance R 400.8176(8)-(11) for more details)

A PHYSICIANS NOTE AND AN APPROVED VARIANCE MUST BE ON FILE IN THE CENTER PRIOR TO ANY CHANGES IN THE SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES OUTLINED ABOVE.

Sleeping children are to be monitored by sight and sound at all times.

Monitoring must be continual and must include visual observation, with caregivers periodically standing close enough to infants to observe breathing patterns, sleep position and any signs of distress or discomfort.

Older Infants and Toddlers

Older infants and toddlers begin to sleep on a group schedule, however, if a child needs to have additional or different sleeping times, staff will arrange for the child to have a quiet place, **supervised by sight and sound**. Cots are labeled with each child's name and placed in the same area each day to foster security for the children. Cots and sheets are washed and disinfected weekly and/or as needed. Primary caregivers sit with children to rub backs, rock, and comfort children until they are asleep. Staff should consult with each child's family on the sleeping ritual the child is used to. Each primary caregiver should become familiar with each child's sleep and waking patterns.

As children begin to wake up from rest time, staff will assist them in waking up, change diapers, or toileting, and engage them in activities until the rest of the children are awake.

Sleeping routines are recorded on each child's Daily Activity Record and given to parents each day at departure.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule is guideline for the predictable sequence of events, which are flexible, adaptable, and responsive to individual children's needs, and responsive to the children in attendance. It allows for transitions, provides a balance of active and quiet activities, allows for children to play alone and in small groups, and provides for outdoor play at least twice daily.

During all times of the day (arrival, activity, meal, sleeping, toileting, and outdoor play) teaching staff are to supervise infants and toddlers by sight and sound.

Sensory Play

Infants and toddlers are inherently sensory learners. It is important to provide them with a variety of sensory opportunities throughout each day. A covered sand box is available on the playground and is offered as a choice every day, weather permitting. The following safety practices are required for all sensory experiences:

- Refill and empty water tubs for each use (standing water is a drowning hazard)
- Sterilize props after each use
- Wash and sterilize tubs at least once per day or more as necessary to prevent against contagious disease or spreading of infection
- Never let children with open sores participate in group sensory play (provide individual container if necessary)
- Cover sensory area when not in use
- Children are never allowed to ingest any item offered for sensory play
- **Children and adults wash their hands using the established hand washing procedures after playing in the sensory table including water when two or more people have participated in play**

Preschool Curriculum

Teaching staff use a variety of teaching methods to actively engage children in gaining knowledge and understanding of the curriculum content areas. The specific content in each curriculum area is determined by considering the individual children enrolled in the class, where their interests lie, what they already know, what is relevant to the community we live in, and are planned to allow children hands-on opportunities to manipulate and investigate materials in an active learning environment.

Content Areas

Teaching staff use the Key Developmental Indicators (KDI's) in the Content areas listed below to guide setting up the classroom environment, developing plans for children that support active learning, and to create warm nurturing relationships.

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Communication, Language, and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science & Technology
- Social Studies
- English Language Learners

Learning Environment

Physical Setting

Teaching staff arrange the classroom to allow children to:

- Make choices and select activities
- Use materials appropriately and creatively once they enter an interest area
- Stay involved with an activity for sustained period of time
- Experience success while they play
- Help care for materials in the classroom

Learning Formats

In addition to choosing a variety of teaching strategies while interacting with children, teaching staff also use a variety of learning formats, or venues, to present information to children. Determining which learning formats to use in different situations is the responsibility of the teaching staff based on observations of the children and knowledge of children's current abilities.

Large Group

The daily schedule provides for two large group times each day. The specific amount of time will be determined by the children's interest and interaction. Large group times are most successful when children are actively engaged and interested in what is happening during the group time. The ELC philosophy does not support forcing children to sit through group time; rather teaching staff plan group time based on observations of children's interest and tailor group time to meet the interests of the children. If children do not wish to participate in group time they are offered the alternative of the quiet area until they are ready to join or group time is over. Group time is an important component of the daily schedule as it allows children to feel a part of a group, or community, gives them opportunities to practice social skills such as speaking and listening, gives them the opportunity to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings to share with the group, and time to discuss and solve problems cooperatively.

In setting up the large group area teaching staff provide the following:

- Sufficient floor space for children and adults to sit comfortably
- Comfortable sitting on a rug or mats
- Space to display charts, schedules, and brainstorming sheets from group discussions
- Area is located adjacent to electrical outlets and storage for instruments, scarves, etc.

The following activities are included in group time:

- Stories (books, storytelling, puppets, flannel board stories, etc.)
- Music & movement activities
- Sharing & discussing new ideas, solving problems, introducing new choices to the environment, cooperatively making classroom guidelines, etc.

Small Group

Small group time provides the opportunity for teachers to work more individually with small groups of children, typically 4-6 children at a time. The purpose of small group time is to introduce children to new concepts, teach particular skills based on children's developmental levels, and to give teachers the opportunity to focus on observing and documenting children's learning. Teaching staff are creative in designing small group lessons at different areas throughout both the classroom and the outdoor environment. Small group time is an excellent opportunity to expose children to new concepts in the curriculum content areas as well as work on skills to promote school readiness.

Plan-Do-Review

During the Plan-Do-Review process (sometimes called Learning Centers) children learn to take initiative to solve problems, work with others, to accomplish their goals. This process assists children in developing self-confidence, a sense of control and independence, as well as developing valuable communication skills with others.

Plan- during this portion of the process children communicate with their teachers and peers in small groups what they would like to do during “work time”. Teaching staff will create various methods for children to connect what their plan is. Methods should vary from simple and concrete to complex and abstract as children grow and develop.

Do- during “work time” children are given the opportunity to carry out their play in an active learning environment with many materials to work with and manipulate. Children will also have the opportunity to solve problems that may develop as they construct knowledge of the classroom environment. At the end of “work time” children will cooperatively put away the materials they have used.

Review – immediately following the “do” portion of the day, children and adults gather back into their small groups and revisit and recall what materials and choices they used. This may entail using the same method that was used to plan or it may be something different such as having a child bring an item they utilized during “work time”.

During all the portions of this segment of the daily schedule it is important for adults to offer support and guidance as children move through the choices they have made and share them with their peers.

Routines & Transitions

Arrival & Departure routines

Teaching staff should spend time each day with every child and their family. Children and family members are greeted by name every day. Arrival and departure routines set the tone for the remainder of the day or evening. The following guidelines are followed by staff during the arrival and departure of children and families:

- Create a physical environment that is warm and welcoming
- Greet children and their family members with warm **smiles** and display **enthusiasm** and **excitement**
- Convey positive, receptive body language at the door or as close to the door as possible
- Have pictures of the children and their family members posted at the children’s eye level
- Encourage families to bring their child’s comfort items from home and make them available to the child as needed for comfort
- Provide interesting toys and/or materials where children can see them upon arrival
- Offer quiet, soft retreats in the room to comfort children after difficult separations
- Suggest using the observation rooms to families to ease anxiety from separations if needed
- Speak with families to support departure rituals whenever possible
- Encourage adults to never leave without saying “good-bye” to their child
- When giving parents daily sheets at the end of the day, be sure to include verbal communication to provide a summary of the child’s day

- Maintain a communication log for shift changes of adults to ensure that important information is conveyed and communicated with families

Daily Attendance

Teaching staff create a mechanism for daily attendance that children actively participate in which is appropriate to the development level of the children in the classroom. An example would be a poster divided into two sides, one side with a picture of school and the other with a picture of a home. Using a photo for each child with their name on it and children can place their picture on the poster under the school section. When children leave for the day they can place their picture on the home side. It is at the discretion of the teaching staff to determine the exact method to be used which best fits the developmental level of the children enrolled in their classroom.

Transitions between activities

Transitions are important to the success of the daily schedule. Teaching staff develop transitions to meet the needs of the children enrolled in their classroom. To allow for smooth transitions teaching staff keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Give children notice** –children are never expected to drop what they are doing without prior notice from adults. Adults give children both verbal and physical prompts (ex. turn off lights) to alert them to a change in activity
- **Allow sufficient time** – so children do not feel rushed
- **Give specific tasks and directions** – sometimes the concept of clean-up is overwhelming for children, and staff give them a specific task to take things one step at time, or asking them to be “special helpers”
- **Be clear and consistent** – transition routines are kept the same so children know what to expect
- **Be flexible** – sometimes children need extra time to complete the transitions and/or need extra assistance in doing so
- **Meet individual needs** – children are not expected to move from activity to activity as a group. Those who are done are given something to do, or allowed to go ahead to the next activity to avoid long waiting times which can cause problems
- **View transitions as learning opportunities** – learning games are created to reinforce concepts or matching when children are moving from one activity to another

Rest time Procedures

After lunch, children begin nap preparation by using the bathroom, and getting books for individual reading. When all children are done using bathroom, books are placed under the children’s cots or collected by teachers.

Cots are labeled with each child’s name and placed in the same area each day to foster a sense of security for the children. Cot sheets are washed weekly or as needed and cots are disinfected weekly. Teaching staff sit with children to rub backs, rock, and comfort children until they are asleep. Staff consult with each child’s family on sleeping

routines for each child. Teaching staff become familiar with each child's sleeping and waking patterns.

Classroom Rules

Teaching staff establish classroom rules together with the children at the beginning of the school year. Teaching staff should guide children in developing the classroom rules with the following principles in mind:

- The classroom should be safe for everyone
- Everyone's rights should be respected
- We should not hurt others feelings
- We should take care of our classroom environment

Allow the children to decide as a group the specific wording to be used. After group discussion and decision making the teaching staff create a poster, to illustrate with pictures and written words, the specific rules. The rules are posted at the children's eye level and referred to as needed. Sometimes it is necessary to update, add, delete, or change rules. This is done as needed to meet the needs of the children in the classroom.

Classroom Jobs

To assist children in developing a sense of community, responsibility, and belonging, a job chart is established to give children daily duties within the classroom. Teaching staff establish the specific jobs and the specific system to be used. The job chart is posted at the children's eye level and should be easily understandable to children (i.e. pictures and words).

Large Motor

Children are provided with large motor activity at least two times per day. Outdoor play occurs whenever possible unless prohibited by weather conditions or for some other health/safety reason.

Outdoor

The outdoor environment is an extension of the classroom and is equipped with a wide-variety of activities and plans. Teaching staff plan for the outdoor environment in addition to the indoor environment. Daily outdoor choices each day consist at a minimum the following choices:

- Fitness
- Creative
- Construction
- Dramatic Play

Prior to use by children teaching staff should monitor the equipment daily for safety hazards. A playground safety checklist should be turned in to the manager for equipment which requires repair and/or removal.

Assessment

Assessment Plan (4A.1)

At ELC, assessment is an on-going process designed to meet the individual developmental needs of children as well as to improve overall program quality. The assessment procedures are designed to gather information on each child and each group of children from several forms of evidence. As data is gathered it is organized to guide teaching staff in planning which supports children's growth and development.

The majority of the assessment process is completed by teaching staff as part of typical daily routines with the children in their classroom setting by teachers who are approved Rater Reliable through High Scope's COR Advantage **(4E.4)**. The ELC assessment plan is sensitive to and informed by family culture, experiences, children's abilities, and home language.

ELC utilizes High Scope's online Child Observation Record (COR Advantage) which provides a systematic ongoing assessment to allow teaching staff to monitor each child's progress in each content area, which will allow staff to plan and scaffold children's future learning experiences.

Teaching staff share written reports created through the assessment process with families at least 2 times per year generally through parent conferences. Upon request the reports can be shared more frequently. **(4E.2)**. At enrollment families are provided with information on the center's assessment process. Teaching staff set up a meeting to discuss the parent's goals for their child, screening results, and observations of the child's progress in the classroom. Shared goals are monitored and adjusted on an on-going basis between teaching staff and parents **(4E.3)**.

Assessment Methods

ELC uses a variety of methods such as developmental and health screenings, input from families, teacher observations/anecdotal notes, checklists, rating scales, etc. to collect information. The information is used to assess each child's progress across all areas of development including cognitive skills, language, social/ emotional development, and physical development. Formal assessment using the collection of data explained above is typically completed 4 times per year for each child. The results of the assessment are used to establish goals for each child to further support future learning opportunities.

ELC routinely evaluates the standardization samples, procedures, scoring, reliability and validity of all formal and informal assessment methods to ensure that the tools and methods are meeting the needs of our children and program.

Assessment Training (4E.4)

Teaching staff that have assessment responsibilities have completed training specific to the established Assessment Procedures including but not limited to, High Scope COR Advantage Assessment training, early childhood development, training on recording anecdotal records, completing checklist, administering developmental screenings and working with families.

Authentic Assessment

Individual Child Portfolio

Each teaching team will establish an on-going routine to collect information for each child. Each child's portfolio will contain:

- Anecdotal Records which are organized and recorded into the COR Advantage Observation Tool
- Work Samples (to be collected at a minimum at the beginning and end of each semester)
 - Infant and toddler work samples will include but are not limited to: a sample with a writing tool (crayon, marker, pencil) a sample with paint, scissor and/or tearing sample, and other samples unique to each child
 - Preschool work samples will include but are not limited to: name writing sample, self-portrait, pattern, scissor, and other samples unique to each child
- Developmental Checklist – including but not limited to letter, number, shape, and color recognition (checklists differ for each child and classroom depending on each child's current level of development)

COR ADVANTAGE - Uses of Assessment Results

ELC will use the information gathered and collected to support children's development and learning by:

- Identifying children who may benefit from special services and arrange for referrals as appropriate
- Identifying individual interests and developing goals for children
- Adapting teaching practices and the environment to support children
- Communicating with families regarding their child
- Improving overall program quality by identifying ways to improve instructional practices, target future professional development opportunities, and resources needed

Program uses for Assessment Results through COR Advantage:

- Outcomes Report
- Strengths and Opportunities Report

- Other reports as needed to support on-going children’s development and needs

Screening

An integral part of the assessment plan is to complete timely developmental screenings in order to identify children who may benefit from the support of community service agencies. The screening process begins at the time of enrollment with families completing a Family Questionnaire which provides meaningful background information on the child and their family. Additionally, each child has a Health Appraisal completed by a licensed physician within 30 days of initial enrollment. Infant and toddlers are required to have annual Health Appraisals while preschool age children are required to have bi-annual Health Appraisals.

Each fall ELC will arrange to have vision and hearing screening through the District Health Department #10 for children 1 month – 4 years old as developmentally appropriate. **(4C.2)**

ELC conducts the Brigance Early Childhood Screening after 30 days (and not more than 45 days) of initial enrollment. A second screening is completed if the child transfers classrooms and/or reaches the age of the next developmental screen. **(4C.3)**

Referrals and Resources

When indicated through screening procedures, classroom observations, and/or parent request there are a number of community resources available to assist children and families within the Mecosta– Osceola Intermediate School District. After screening and classroom observations have taken place the teacher, manager, and assistant manager will meet with the parent to determine the need for a referral. **Prior to ELC initiating contact with outside agencies regarding a referral for children and/or families, a Release of Information Authorization Form must be signed by a child’s parent/legal guardian.**

Typically the following procedure would be followed for initial contact:

Children 0-3 years old

Early On - Andi Strickler - 592-9605

Early On will make initial contact with the families and visit children at the center

Children 3-6 years old

Big Rapids School District Evaluation Team – Cathy Connor- Eastwood Early Childhood Center – 592-9605

Lesson Planning

As part of the overall assessment process, teachers use all of the information collected in the assessment process along with input from families to facilitate planning for the children in their classroom on both an individual and group basis.

Group Planning

Preschool/Pre-K

For group planning, teaching staff observe the children and their areas of interest and develop units of study which extend and scaffold learning into in-depth investigations.

Based on previous knowledge of the children in their classroom teaching staff will develop a group lesson plan each day using the COR Advantage system. The plan will build upon the children's prior knowledge and current interest. The teaching staff will indicate the KDI's/COR items that will be met with each of the learning experiences planned. Daily lesson plan will be posted for parents on the parent board outside the classroom and in the classroom so all staff and volunteers are prepped and ready for the learning experiences each day.

Infant/Toddler

The majority of the daily experiences offered to the infants and toddlers will be based on individual interests and choices of the children. The intent of the primary group plan will be to organize topics, ideas, and children's interest to offer a variety of experiences to the children throughout the day. Based on previous knowledge of the children in their classroom teaching staff will develop a daily lesson plan using the COR Advantage system. The plan will build upon the children's prior knowledge and current interest. The teaching staff will indicate the KDI's/COR items that will be met with each of the learning experiences planned. Daily lesson plans will be posted for parents on the parent board outside the classroom and in the classroom so all staff and volunteers are prepped and ready for the learning experiences each day.

Individual Planning

After the screening process and collection of data (authentic assessment), teaching staff will meet with parents to establish goals for the next cycle of assessment. Teaching staff will establish goals with parents and develop plans to support these goals in the classroom environment. As goals are met and/or changed based on the child's needs and input from parents and teachers the document will be updated and kept with the child's portfolio. The plan will be routinely updated and shared with parents as changes are made and/or at conferences.

These plans can be integrated into the classroom group plan and/or conducted individually whichever method is most beneficial.

Planning schedule/procedures (4D.4, 6A.7)

Planning for group and individual lessons for children is done on a daily basis. Teaching teams will have time when children are resting as well as out-of-class office time for 1 hour daily to collaborate with their teaching team. This time is used to develop individual and group plans, collect and record authentic assessment data, team meetings, parent meetings, professional development, etc. When scheduling conflicts occur, each teaching team will work with the manager to develop an alternate plan.

Confidentiality

All information pertaining to children's records and assessment materials will be treated with respect and will be handled in a professional manner. Individuals who will have access to the child's records include the manager, assistant manager, the classroom teacher and classroom assistant teacher(s).

Child records and portfolios kept on the computer are available only to the individuals mentioned above. Hard copies of the Brigance screening results, Health Appraisals and Assessment Portfolios are kept in secured offices (managers or teacher's) in locked filing cabinets. Children's records are kept for seven years and disposed of through Ferris State University Archive department unless otherwise requested by a child's parent or legal guardian.

More information regarding the Brigance Screening tool and High Scope COR Advantage please visit www.brigance.com or www.CORAdvantage.org. Teachers and management staff can also provide further information on the Early Learning Center's Assessment procedures.