



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
College of Human Sciences

Center *for* Early Head Start

# Education Plan

## Philosophy

Texas Tech University Center for Early Head Start (TTU CEHS) believes that children reach their highest potential in an atmosphere of caring and respect that offers many opportunities to learn in ways that meet the needs of each individual child.

One of the primary program goals is to provide a developmentally appropriate program that supports individuality, cultural diversity, and children with special needs.

TTU CEHS has three program options: a center based program, a home based program, and a childcare partner site. Our center- based program uses the HighScope curriculum, a widely recognized, evidence-based approach to early education. High Scope's premise is that children learn best from experiences they plan and carry out themselves. The role of the teacher is to build upon each child's existing strengths and accomplishments, using his or her choice of activities as the springboard for further development.

Through individual, small-group, and large group experiences, teachers initiate activities designed to meet the needs of every child involved, with an emphasis on facilitating the development of the total child—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. Learning through play, exploring the environment, and interacting with others are essential components. Children progress at their own pace as they are supported and encouraged to participate in both child-selected and adult-initiated activities. HighScope supports the development of all children, including those who are dual language learners and those with special needs.

Our home based program uses Partners for a Healthy Baby curriculum, a university-developed, widely used home visiting curriculum. Partners for a Healthy Baby's vision includes strengthening families and enhancing child health and development. This curriculum provides information and activities for pregnant mothers and parents for each stage of their baby's growth in the domains of health, nutrition, cognition, social, and emotional development.

Our childcare partner site, Lil' Precious Steps, uses Creative Curriculum. This is a successful, well-researched curriculum that views relationship building, active, hands-on learning, and individualization as critical to each child's success.

## School-Readiness Goals

TTU CEHS has developed School-Readiness Goals for children, based on the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (2015).

Goals are set in several important areas of development. The Texas Tech University Center for Early Head Start goals are:

**Approaches to Learning:** children will develop and demonstrate initiative, curiosity, and persistence as they engage with their surroundings including making choices, problem solving, and reflecting on past events.

**Social and Emotional Development:** children will develop and demonstrate social relations and emotional self-control as they distinguish themselves from others, form attachments, relate to others, understand and express feelings, self-regulate, respond to the feelings of others, play with others, solve conflicts, and begin to respond to a routine.

**Physical Development and Health:** children will develop and demonstrate fine motor, gross motor, and personal care skills, including, moving and using their body in increasingly complex ways, expressing their physical needs, using their senses to interact with their environment, and performing developmentally appropriate personal care tasks.

**Language and Literacy:** children will develop and demonstrate communication and language skills including listening and responding, speaking, showing interest in books, rhymes and songs, increasing vocabulary and alphabet knowledge, and exploring print and writing.

**Cognition and General Knowledge:** children will develop and demonstrate creativity, imitative play, and symbolic representation including the intentional use of art materials, exploring and responding to music, and engaging in pretend play.

Children will also develop and demonstrate exploration of their environments and early logic, including problem-solving, use of tools and technology, exploration of objects and the natural world, categories, counting, sorting, comparing, and identifying patterns and shapes; identifying self, and understanding concepts related to space and time.

## Individualized Goal Setting

All families enrolled in the TTU CEHS program are encouraged to participate in the Family Partnership Agreement, a voluntary process that includes collaborating with EHS staff to assess family strengths and needs, and accomplish child and family goals. This process takes place after enrollment and is reviewed and updated a minimum of four times per year. As families and

teachers complete home visits and parent conferences, existing goals are re-evaluated and new goals are set as needed.

The Office of Head Start has determined specific family outcomes in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE). TTU CEHS uses a locally developed family assessment tool that measures family strengths based on the PFCE Framework to improve these family outcomes. **Family goals and child goals are determined by each family so that we can work together to improve outcomes for every child.** EHS staff support families in a confidential, non-judgmental manner that encourages trusting relationships and a strength-based approach to the goal setting process.

## Child Assessment

With parent permission, teachers conduct developmental screenings on each child within 45 days of their enrollment in the program. These screenings include looking at each child's cognitive and physical development, social-emotional development, and hearing and vision. Screening results are shared with families, and as needed, referrals for more specialized services may be made with parent consent.

Teachers in the program use the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) to conduct ongoing assessments for each child. These assessments allow teachers to look at each child's individual progress in various developmental areas including Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Health, Language, Literacy, and Communication, and Cognition and General Knowledge. These assessments are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and based on daily authentic observations of children's naturally occurring behaviors.

Assessment results are used to determine the interests and needs of individual children, assess developmental progress, and make improvements to lesson plans, teaching practices, and the classroom environment. Results are discussed with the families during home visits and parent conferences. These assessments are used to develop individual learning goals for each child with the help of the family, as well as used to determine areas where both individual classroom and program improvements can be made.

Teachers and families work together to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE) twice each year to assess children's behavioral development. This assessment looks at behavioral skills such as self-regulation, persistence, and relationships with peers and adults.

Informal daily contact with parents and family members at drop-off and pick-up times, during socializations, and at special events provides teachers and families with time for conversation in order to build trusting relationships. Informal conversations also give families the opportunity to share developmental

information about the child, which may then be used as part of the assessment process.

Formal contact between teachers and families is conducted through home visits and parent/teacher conferences, as well as at meetings requested by either the family or the teacher for any concerns. There is a minimum of two home visits and two parent conferences annually. As part of these visits, teachers share the assessment results with each child's family.

As information is shared with families, teaching staff remain sensitive to family values, culture, identity, and home language. All assessment results are kept confidential, in either a password protected online assessment system (Online COR) or in each child's Education File.

### Education Files

Teachers and Home Visitors maintain a file on each child that includes a representative sampling of the child's progress such as anecdotal records, teacher entries, lesson plans, and assessments.

Education files also include family history information, parent conference and home visit reports, nutritional information, special needs documentation, and any other information that is useful to the teachers in providing high quality care for infants and toddlers.

Contents are shared with parents upon request and at home visits and parent conferences. Education files are maintained in a confidential manner and are kept in locked cabinets within the center.

### Children with Special Needs

All children are welcomed into the program, including those with special needs. Teachers and Home Visitors will work closely with family members as well as agencies providing specialized therapeutic services to provide an educational experience that meets the child's needs. The Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) includes goals developed by the family with the help of specialized therapists and will be used as a basis for planning for the child.

## Children's Experiences in EHS

Daily experiences are designed to allow infants and toddlers predictable routines based on individual temperaments, schedules, and family values. These experiences are carried out with trusted adults who have developed a secure relationship with the child and family.

CEHS staff prepare learning experiences for children that address all areas of development, as well as provide for individual goal achievement, cultural diversity, and adaptations as needed for children with special needs.

Adults working with infants and toddlers aim to facilitate learning by setting up appropriate environments, equipment, and experiences. Teachers nurture and support children as they learn new concepts and encourage language development by questioning and extending conversations.

Daily schedules are based on individual children's needs in each group and include:

- Arrival and welcoming
- Diapering, toileting, and washing hands
- Feeding
- Dental Hygiene
- Free Choice Play
- Indoor/Outdoor
- Quiet/Active
- Individual and Small Group Activities
- Large/Small Muscle Activities
- Departure/Good-bye

Routines such as diapering, feeding, sleeping, and dressing are used as important opportunities for one-on-one time between teacher and child.

## Classroom Materials

Equipment and materials are appropriately sized for infants and toddlers and there are enough materials to keep children engaged in their play.

### Materials and equipment

- Are complete, clean, and in good repair
- Do not pose a choking hazard
- Reflect the cultures and families in which the children live
- Are displayed on low shelves and accessible for children to select and return easily
- Are sufficient to sustain play in the group but not so many as to make children's choices difficult
- Are kept in an orderly and uncluttered atmosphere
- Allow for experiencing the environment through all five senses
- Encourage social interaction and movement
- Are rotated regularly as children show lessening interest

Examples of toys and equipment for each age group are as follows:

### Young infants/Young toddlers (0-18 months)

- Simple, lightweight, open-ended easily washable toys such as containers, balls, pop-beads, nesting cups
- Rattles, squeak toys, action/reaction toys
- Soft cuddly toys

- Pictures of real objects/people
- 1-3 piece puzzles
- Children's music/classical music
- Plastic picture books, board books
- Push/pull toys
- Housekeeping materials – spoons, bowls, and other daily living items
- Sensory materials
- Paper, crayons, paint, play dough
- Water and sand play
- Sturdy, stable furniture/equipment to pull up
- Eating and feeding equipment and supplies
- Sleeping equipment and supplies

#### Older Toddlers (18-35 months)

- Push/Pull toys
- Stacking toys, large beads, blocks
- Dump and pour toys
- Sturdy picture books, big books, flannel boards
- Musical instruments/children's classical music
- Pounding toys, simple puzzles
- Pretend toys/dress-up clothes, doll props
- Housekeeping materials
- Pictures of real people doing activities
- Paper, crayons, glue, scissors, paint, play dough, markers, chalk, and tape as well as other materials that support children's drawing, writing, and fine motor development.
- Sturdy furniture to hold on to while walking
- Climbing structures
- Riding bikes, group games
- Sand/water play materials
- Eating and feeding equipment and supplies
- Sleeping equipment and supplies

*No worksheets are used, as they are not appropriate for infants and toddlers.*

# Roles of Staff and Parents

## Staff Roles

- Build trusting relationships with children and their families
  - Work in collaboration with families to establish effective two-way and on-going communication
  - Be respectful of each child and the family's values and culture and be aware of personal biases
  - Be sensitive to the individual differences in infants and toddler's cues that indicate their needs
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities and experiences
  - Develop intimate settings so interesting objects can be explored
  - Use positive language and have age appropriate expectations
  - Allow children to have uninterrupted time for discovery
  - Offer children choices and allow them to direct their own play
  - Use routine care times to provided one-on-one time with every child
  - Provide appropriate transitions during the day so children do not have to wait for long periods between activities, nor have too many transitions each day
- Carefully observe and document children's behaviors and growth
- Continue in professional growth opportunities

## Parent Roles

- Provide the program with information about their child to assist the staff in providing quality care that meets the child's individual needs
- Communicate with the program staff on a routine basis during drop-off/pick-up times, home visits, parent conferences, telephone calls and other means as appropriate for each family
- Maintain involvement in programs events such as attendance at socializations, parties, home visits, parent meetings, and family nights
- Provide a consistent schedule of school attendance for the infant/toddler

# Role of Community

CEHS staff understand that children and their families are part of the larger community in which they live. Staff use their knowledge of the community in which our families live as a basis for planning learning experiences for each child.

In order to provide a variety of community-based experiences, CEHS staff connect with resources to provide enrichment activities for children and their families. Resources such as local libraries, businesses, visual and dramatic artists, storytellers, and public service organizations (such as Fire and Police services) may be used to enhance the curriculum and appreciation of each family's culture.

Staff also share information on a regular basis about community events that are intended for children, as well as working with other community groups to provide events for children and families. CEHS plans a minimum of three special events annually, so that family members may engage with their children and other families in a casual, fun environment.

## Evaluation of Our Program

TTU Early Head Start participates in ongoing program evaluation to ensure that we are providing the highest quality education for each child and continually working to improve all services for children and families.

### **Teaching Staff Assessment**

All teaching staff are observed working with children multiple times each year to assure best practices are being used with children. Supervisory staff use the High Scope Program Quality Assessment (PQA) in each classroom to evaluate the learning environment, schedules and routines, adult-child interaction, curriculum planning and fidelity, and child observation. The PQA Assessment is completed twice each year.

Supervisory staff also conduct a monthly Classroom Observation to assess the environment for health, safety, and appropriate materials, and the teachers for use of high quality teaching practices in a language-rich environment. Home Visitors are observed during home visits at least twice per year using the Home Visitor Observation Rating Scale (HOVRS).

## **National Accreditation**

The center-based component of Texas Tech University Center for Early Head Start is nationally accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We are one of four currently accredited programs in Lubbock and the only program that exclusively serves infants and toddlers.

NAEYC evaluates 10 components of quality, including curriculum, teaching practices, teacher education and experience, and child assessment. The rigorous accreditation process also includes a self-assessment and program evaluations by both teaching staff and families.

## **Early Head Start Monitoring Visits**

Texas Tech University Center for Early Head Start is monitored annually for compliance with Head Start Performance Standards and the Head Start Act. Our performance is evaluated through on-site reviews and reviews of our documentation in the following areas:

Environmental Health and Safety  
Comprehensive Services and School Readiness  
Leadership, Governance, and Management  
Fiscal Integrity and Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance