



# A Guide to **Rule 11**



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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is defined as the period of a child's life from birth through age 8. All programs that serve children in this age range should include elements of both care and education. The younger the child, the more the elements of care and education are intertwined. The extent of a child's development and learning in any program is related to the quality of the program, regardless of the sponsorship or name of the program.

High quality early childhood care and education programs support families as they carry out their critical role as children's earliest role models and teachers. Families access early childhood programs and services depending on their needs and those of their children for a variety of reasons.

This guide is written as a resource for any public school district (hereafter referred to as district) or educational service unit (ESU) developing and implementing high-quality center-based early childhood education programs serving children from birth to kindergarten entrance age. It is designed to provide strategies and resources to assist districts, ESUs, Head Starts, and community-based organizations in working together to ensure that all young children and their families have equity of access to high quality early learning experiences in their communities. NDE resources used in writing this document include, but are not limited to:

- *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Education Grants*
- *Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards*
- *Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*
- *A Kindergarten for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Districts and ESUs can choose to offer one or more center-based early childhood care and education programs in their local community or to partner with existing agencies that provide early childhood care and education services.

A **center-based program** for children ages birth to kindergarten entrance age is a program operated for a group of children in a classroom on a part-day (less than 6 hours) or full-day (6 hours or more) basis. The program provides a stimulating, rich learning environment that promotes learning across all domains and promotes instructional and interactional strategies that are individualized, family centered, and identify goals related to learning and child outcomes. Programs may be funded with a variety of local, state and/or federal sources, including but not limited to, an Early Childhood Education Program grant, an Early Childhood Education Endowment Program (Sixpence) grant, IDEA Part B or C, or Head Start.

## ENSURING HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

In partnership with families and communities, quality center-based early childhood education programs provide a foundation for learning and development in the areas of language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, approaches to learning, social-emotional development, physical-motor development, and creative arts. A comprehensive approach is the key to positive outcomes for young children in being prepared for a successful experience in school and on the path for acquiring the skills needed to be productive citizens of the future. It is essential for center-based early childhood education programs to 1) provide inclusive learning environments that maximize the participation of all children, and 2) ensure that participating children and families have access to comprehensive, high-quality services.

Effective center-based early childhood education programs are designed to meet the unique needs of each young child and their family. Knowledge of child development and best practice provides the foundation for implementing high-quality, inclusive programs for all children. The *Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards* identify the following guiding principles:

- 1) ***Children are learning every moment.*** The environment and the interactions have a direct impact on children's learning and development. Working together to provide the best possible learning opportunities is the responsibility of all adults. Secure relationships help children feel emotionally safe and confident as a learner.
- 2) ***Children are active learners.*** Children learn through experiences with people, objects and things in their world. The foundation for all future learning is formed as children experience the world through play.
- 3) ***Children develop in predictable steps, but at their own pace.*** All children go through a sequence of development which builds upon previous experience and understanding, from simple to complex. The rate of development and learning varies for individual children based on genetics, temperament, interests, the environment and experiences.
- 4) ***Learning is most meaningful when it is integrated across all areas of development.*** Each area of learning influences other areas and cannot be taught in isolation. The child's achievements in language and learning are influenced by the social and emotional aspects of their understanding. All aspects of learning and development must be considered when engaging children in activities.
- 5) ***Development and learning are rooted in culture and supported by the family.*** The child's language, knowledge, traditions, and family expectations are the primary influences on development. Learning is enriched by stable, nurturing relationships within the family and community.

**Note:** *Rule 11 requires that early childhood education programs include all of the following quality elements:*

- A strong family involvement/education component recognizing the central role of parents in their children's development and learning;
- Well-trained staff and optimum staff to child ratios in programs providing direct services to children;
- Developmentally and linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum and practices;
- Child assessment that is based on observation and documentation that aligns to Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards;
- A sound program evaluation component that is linked to the curriculum;
- Sensitivity to the economic and logistical needs and circumstances of families in the provision of services;
- Integration of children of diverse social and economic characteristics;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities;
- Continuity with programs serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners and elementary grade students;
- Procedures to ensure participating children and families have access to comprehensive nutrition (including at least one meal or snack per day) and comprehensive health and social services;
- A parent/community advisory group which provides substantive ongoing direction to the program, and
- A plan for continuous program improvement.

## REGULATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

All center-based early childhood education programs serving children birth to kindergarten entrance age that are operated by districts or ESUs are required to meet all of the criteria in *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants*. *Rule 11* has been written to reflect research- and evidence-based elements of quality intended to produce strong outcomes for children keeping other state and federal regulations in mind.

In addition to *Rule 11*, districts and ESUs also need to meet the requirements of *Rule 51: Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs*.

In addition to *Rule 11*, districts with a Sixpence grant must meet additional quality criteria as established by the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund Board of Trustees.

Formal partnerships with additional community-based programs such as Head Start may require additional quality measures to address comprehensive services and related regulations

## DETERMINING COMMUNITY NEED

Each district or ESU should determine the current and long term needs of the community and the long-term viability and sustainability of a center-based early childhood program. Using current data from partners and other community organizations is recommended, as long as early childhood needs have been assessed as part of the organization's needs assessment. For example, Head Start grantees are required to conduct an annual needs assessment, which can assist in determining the status of early childhood education services in the community.

Community can be defined in many ways, including the county, town, subdivision, school building boundary, or other locally recognized population area. The **community needs** assessment should include, but is not limited to:

- The total number of children birth to kindergarten entrance age in the community;
- The number of children from families with risk factors such as low income, English language learners, children of teen parents, and children who were born at a low birth weight;
- The number and enrollment capacity of currently licensed family child care homes, child care centers, preschools, and Head Start programs in the community;
- The number of children birth to kindergarten entrance age who are not currently receiving early childhood education services; and
- Barriers to accessing services for children not enrolled in other programs.

A critical part of program planning is identifying the current demographic information of the community. Major changes impacting the need for early childhood education programs and services may have occurred within the community. **Demographic information** might include:

- Any population changes in the community
- Any language or cultural issues that arise
- The need for bilingual staff
- The number of low-income families with young children living in the community or within district boundaries
- Data needed to develop a sliding fee scale
- The changes in demographics that the community or area has experienced
- The projected number of children in each age group in the birth to five age range
- The availability of transportation services
- The availability of programs and services, including the cost/affordability, location, hours of current early childhood programs and services
- The number of children with a special need or disability

## PARTNERSHIPS

It is the intent of NDE to help districts and ESUs move away from categorical service delivery models that segregate children based on funding source. Districts and ESUs must make every attempt to serve otherwise unserved children and to partner with community programs to provide the best experiences for each individual child and family. For example, when a district or ESU partners with Head Start, it is possible for a child to attend the district or ESU program and still receive Head Start home-based or part-day services as long as this results in additional programming (i.e., full-day, full-year) that the child would not have otherwise received.

District and ESU center-based early childhood education programs should meet the highest standards of best practice when providing services and supports to young children and their families. Within partnerships, programs must meet the highest standards and regulations of each of the partners.

Districts and ESUs are required to work cooperatively with programs that exist within the community. Potential community partners may include, but are not limited to:

- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Private preschools
- Public and private child care centers
- Family child care homes
- Family resource centers
- Human service agencies

**Note:** *Rule 11, 004.04, requires districts and ESUs to provide evidence that the early childhood program is coordinated or contracted with existing programs and funding sources.*

## PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strong, formal partnerships between school districts and ESUs and other early care and education providers provide benefits to partner organizations individually, and to children, families, and the community collectively. Broadly, these benefits include aligning shared goals for early care and education, expanding innovation, streamlining services, maximizing funding and resources, and most importantly, increasing comprehensive supports for a greater number of children and families, all of which translate to increased school readiness and success for all. Additionally, the following benefits in communities are often realized because of strong partnerships amongst school districts and ESUs and other early care and education providers:

- Added value to and increased emphasis on the important role early care and education programs and providers play in the community.
- Improved unity and inclusion of all early care and education programs providing services in the community.
- Decreased stakeholder confusion and unhealthy perceived competition between school districts/ESUs and other early care and education providers.
- Stability to the work of all partners, even when key staff transition and leadership changes occur.

The development of strong partnerships within communities takes considerable time. Over time, partnerships should strengthen and expand to include new partners. The intensity of partnerships is represented along a continuum.





At the first level, **acknowledgement**, the partnership consists of sharing information. At the level of **cooperation**, there is typically a low intensity, short term, informal relationship where partners share information, yet keep resources separate. The third level is **coordination**. While there is still a division of roles, and authority still rests with individual organizations, there is a longer term, formalized relationship. At this level the intensity is moderate. The most in-depth level of partnership is **collaboration** with an invested risk and high intensity. This durable relationship is characterized by well-defined communication, comprehensive planning, a full commitment to a common mission, and a blended or new structure for early childhood programs and services.

As partnerships are being developed, it is important to remember a few basic assumptions that will help the process develop more smoothly.

- Each partnership is unique, reflecting the service area, school district, and community, available resources, and presenting needs of children and families.
- An early key to success is making sure that, from the beginning, all partners share the same vision and mission and agree to the anticipated results. This mission can be used as a focal point to remind partners of the value and importance of the work ahead.
- To ensure families and children receive what they need from a partnership, partners need to come to collaboration with a sincere interest in working together and contributing their strengths. This is the attitude that will enable the partners to successfully negotiate the features of the partnership and their role within the group. Program leaders must clearly articulate what they can bring to the partnership, as well as understand what their partners can offer.
- Developing partnerships takes time and involves trust, relationship-building, careful planning, ongoing assessment, and periodic evaluation.

Maintaining successful partnerships requires constant attention, communication, and evaluation. It also often requires frequent modifications to be responsive to changing needs. In addition, successful sustained partnerships:

- Ensure communication occurs regularly, openly, honestly, and transparently
- Have a shared purpose and clear goals that drive collaboration
- Build trust as the foundation of effective relationships that drives engagement and leads to results
- Aim to achieve positive results and regularly measure their progress
- Engage families as equal partners and include them when developing programs and services
- Are broad-based and fully include a diverse group of key stakeholders from the beginning

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Written agreements with partners are created to clarify, both programmatically and fiscally, the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Written agreements define the commitment to the early childhood education program and should be kept on file by the district or ESU. Collaborating partners should write a formal partnership agreement that is reviewed and signed annually by each partner. Communities find that working through a collaborative planning process supports agencies and organizations to move toward efficient utilization of resources among all partners. This process includes:

- Identification of the regulations of each agency and organization
- Identification of the activities of each agency/organization
- Determination of area(s) of duplication and gap(s) in services
- Prioritization of needs
- Development of goals or expectations
- Development of strategies or activities
- Determination of criteria to measure success
- Recruitment and training of staff

A collaborative partnership agreement is defined as a formal written document that highlights the common vision, goals, purpose, and objectives of the partners for providing early childhood services. It also clarifies the separate and joint responsibilities of each party.

While the documents themselves are essential to satisfy federal and state requirements and a key context of the process, **building relationships among the partners is at the heart of the collaborative process.** A significant amount of time should be dedicated to developing meaningful relationships and maintaining open communication. See Appendix C for example templates for partnership agreements.

If partners initiate discussion regarding the dissolution of a partnership agreement, all partners must consider the implications for funding from state and federal sources, the continuity of services for children, and the ongoing viability of the individual entities to provide high quality early childhood education programs.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of an advisory committee is to broaden the scope of information that impacts the decision-making process. The advisory committee is recognized as a vehicle for coordinating and conveying community interests and concerns related to the early childhood program. An advisory committee, therefore, plays the very important role of enabling a community to participate more directly in the decision-making process. Advisory committees do not all function in the same way and their responsibilities may vary. In order to meet these varied responsibilities, the advisory committee should meet at least quarterly. The role of an advisory committee is to:

- Advise and recommend
- Provide knowledge and expertise
- Facilitate the work of the organizing body by ensuring open and honest representation; creating a climate of consensus; and maintaining the integrity of the committee
- Be sensitive to the community which it represents
- Promote good will and trust within the community of interest and the community at large
- Act as a liaison between politicians, organizational staff, members of the public, and other stakeholders

**Note:** *Rule 11, 004.03 requires a local Early Childhood Advisory Committee with membership representing families and community members.*

An existing early childhood committee such as an Early Childhood Planning Region Team, a Head Start Policy Council, or a Title 1 Advisory Committee, may serve this purpose if the representation includes all partners, and the mission of the group is expanded to encompass the early childhood program.

Advisory committees should not be confused with governing boards which are the legal entity and decision-making authority for an organization. Advisory committees must understand the limitations placed on them so that they do not undertake activities that are the prerogative of a governing body, such as a local school board or ESU board.

It is important to include all potential community partners in the Early Childhood Advisory Committee. Membership includes, but is not limited to, existing child care centers, family child care providers, preschools, Head Start programs, providers of early intervention and early childhood special education services, resource and referral agencies where they exist, parents, health and social service personnel, and school personnel representing existing district programs for children in the birth through age eight range. This will ensure that the program, once established, will continue to address the needs of the community, and will stay abreast of current best practices in the field.

## OPEN MEETINGS ACT

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee falls under the Open Meetings Act and is subject to the requirements of the Act which include:

- Provide advance publicized notice of each meeting and advance availability of the agenda.
- Minutes must be taken and made available after the meeting.
- Action must be taken by roll call vote (recorded in the minutes).
- A public comment period must be scheduled at some of the meetings.
- The meeting must be open to the public unless the members vote to go into closed session for a purpose permitted by the Act. Discussion in closed session must be limited to the stated purpose. No action may be taken in the closed session.
- Some meetings may be held by videoconferencing (specific requirements apply).
- Meetings may NOT be held by telephone except in the case of a true emergency (a circumstance that was not reasonably foreseeable and that requires immediate committee action).
- A copy of the Open Meetings Act must be posted in the meeting room and its location announced at the beginning of the meeting.

For the specific requirements of the Open Meetings Act, refer to Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1407 to 84-1414

## PROGRAM DESIGN

### LENGTH OF PROGRAM DAY AND YEAR

Districts and ESUs may choose to operate a **half day** program that operates for less than six (6) hours each day or a **full day** program that operates for six (6) or more hours each day. Regardless of the length of the program day, **each** early childhood program and classroom group must meet the minimum weekly and/or yearly instructional hour requirement. Districts and ESUs can choose to operate the program only during the school year or continuously throughout the calendar year based upon the need in the community and/or the commitment of partners.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.01, requires early childhood programs serving children from birth to kindergarten eligibility age to operate a minimum of twelve (12) instructional hours per week during the year. When districts receive state grant funds or State Aid (TEOSA), they are required to operate a minimum of 450 instructional hours per year.*

An instructional hour in the early childhood classroom means a period of time, at least sixty (60) minutes, that is used for teaching, facilitation and provision of experiences in the following areas of children's growth and learning:

- social-emotional development
- cognitive learning in the areas of language and literacy
- mathematics, science and problem solving
- creative arts
- health and nutrition
- physical and motor development

Unlike the K-12 classroom, in the early childhood classroom meal time and outdoor time are counted as part of the instructional time. A certificated teacher must be with the children at these times to facilitate language, vocabulary, and cognitive growth in learning moments naturally occurring during these daily routines.

### CHILDREN SERVED

Participation of children in any district or ESU early childhood education program is voluntary. Programs must be inclusive, must identify and offer services to children who represent a range of abilities and disabilities and must reflect the peer groups children will be with in kindergarten and beyond.

**According to state law, 79-1101(3)(b), center-based early childhood education programs cannot enroll children who are age-eligible to attend kindergarten.** The only exception is for a child with a disability whose Individual Education Program (IEP) team determines that the child's needs cannot be met in kindergarten with appropriate supports and accommodations. If the child is of mandatory attendance age (age 6 by January 1 of the current school year), the child cannot be enrolled in the early childhood education program even if the child has an IEP.

## ENROLLMENT PRIORITIES

Districts and ESUs determine the enrollment priorities for the early childhood education program. Enrollment priorities give first enrollment rights to children who are most at-risk and most in need of early childhood education programs and services. These include:

- Children whose family income qualifies them for participation in the federal free or reduced lunch program;
- Children who reside in a home where a language other than spoken English is used as the primary means of communication;
- Children whose parents are younger than eighteen or who have not completed high school; and
- Children who were born prematurely or at low birth weight as verified by a physician.

Once children who meet one or more of the enrollment priorities have a secured spot in the early childhood program, enrollment can be open to other children within the community.

***Note: Children served through a Sixpence grant must meet one or more of the at-risk criteria.***

The district or ESU is expected to develop a coordinated enrollment plan with other early childhood education programs operating within the community. It is possible for a child to be dual-enrolled (enrolled in more than one program) if it expands the child's services. Coordinated enrollment is necessary to ensure that the local early childhood infrastructure is strengthened rather than placed at risk. Caution must be taken to ensure that community programs remain fully enrolled and there is no loss of early childhood services in the community.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

In 2009, the [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\)](#) and the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) issued a [Joint Position Statement](#) that provides a definition to the term Early Childhood Inclusion.

- 1) "Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society."
- 2) The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families should include a *sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.*
- 3) The defining features of inclusion that are used to identify high-quality early childhood programs and services are:
  - Access – creating accessible learning environments
  - Participation – encouraging play, learning, and membership
  - Support – helping parents and providers find information and assistance

Inclusive programming means that each child has the right to the supports, resources, and services needed to participate actively and meaningfully in a regular early childhood education program. All early childhood education programs must be prepared to:

- Work together with families
- Engage families in setting goals
- Make referrals when appropriate
- Collaborate with a child's IFSP or IEP team, as appropriate
- Modify or adapt program activities and routines as needed to meet the needs of the child and family, and
- Implement appropriate interventions within the context of the early childhood education program.

## THE CLASSROOM

The early childhood education classroom can be located in a school or ESU building, a Head Start building, local early childhood education program, or community building. The location of the classroom(s) is determined by the partners during the planning process.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.07, provides the following requirements for the classroom space:*

- *Classrooms must provide at least thirty-five (35) square feet per child of indoor space usable by the children.*
- *An outdoor play area with a fence or physical barrier that provides at least seventy-five (75) square feet per child of play space.*
- *Each classroom and outdoor play area must be equipped with safe, durable, age-appropriate equipment and materials for indoor and outdoor activities.*
- *If needed, modifications of the equipment, materials, and activities must be made to assure maximum participation in the ongoing activities of the program for children with disabilities attending the program.*
- *Equipment and materials must be organized into clearly defined areas of interest which are arranged to encourage independent choice; cooperative activity; and alternation between quiet and active exploration and teacher- and child-initiated activities.*
- *Each prekindergarten program must maintain safe, healthful, and sanitary conditions within the facilities used for the program and on the outdoor playground, and meet applicable fire, safety, and health codes.*

## THE INDOOR CLASSROOM

The indoor learning environment should be organized into distinct areas that correspond to the kinds of activities that are available for children. Child-initiated and teacher-supported play in centers fosters language and social development and, when used appropriately, helps children develop a greater understanding of academic concepts. Activity spaces are necessary for all children birth to kindergarten entrance age and are shown to promote cognitive and social development for even the youngest of learners. Programs should include the following spaces within the classroom:

- A space to do messy, creative art activities;
- A soft, comfortable space with reading materials;
- A space just big enough for one or two children to play;
- At least two areas large enough for a group of children to play together (such as a block area and a dramatic play area)
- A space for each child to store personal belongings, and
- Access to an outdoor play area.

Activity areas within the classroom should be placed to account for noise, light, heat, traffic patterns; which activities should be adjacent to each other, and which should not; and how many children each area can accommodate. Quiet activities, like reading, should be separate from noisy ones, like dramatic play. The block-building area needs to be protected from traffic so that children's structures will not be disturbed and large enough for multiple children to use it at the same time. The location of light sources helps determine where to put areas that require more light, such as reading, writing, and painting. An area where children will be reading or sitting still should be away from a cold or drafty place and the pathways of other children.

Order and organization in the classroom and daily schedule help create a sense of familiarity, belonging and security that makes the space welcoming and enjoyable to children and adults. Flexibility in the arrangement of equipment and materials in the space is important. Adding new materials (or rotating familiar ones) or rearranging the furniture to support different activities can add variety and spark new interest for children. Broken toys should be removed and repaired or replaced with new. Materials and equipment within each center or area should be carefully displayed so that they are accessible to every child. An attractive display of these items invites children's use. Picture labels on shelves, containers, and hangers tell children where to



return materials. Word labels are often used in addition to the pictures to help children make the connection to literacy.

Because infants and toddlers are taking in information all the time, environments need to be safe and secure while at the same time challenging the child's motor skills and stimulating the senses. When infants and toddlers are left in swings, play pens, exersaucers or other restrictive equipment, they are unable to learn about the world around them. The classroom space should include opportunities for infants and toddlers to explore, discover, experiment with, imitate and manipulate age-appropriate materials and engage with their environment.

Facilities that are designed especially for the young child also include child-sized sinks, water fountains, and restrooms and changing areas in the classroom. Areas for eating and napping should be present as required by the age of the children and the hours of operation of the program.

### THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The outdoor setting is a very important learning space for young children, including infants and toddlers. Children need space outdoors for play, exploration, and social interaction. Seventy-five square feet per child is required for the outside play area. Specific times during the day should be set aside for outdoor activities. This time can be used for physical movement, climbing, playing on playground equipment, digging, planting, and individual play. Teachers should provide supplemental portable materials for children (balls, tricycles, hula hoops, jump ropes, etc.) that engage them in large motor activities during the outdoor time. Time spent outdoors is instructional time in the early childhood classroom and teachers should be engaged in interactions with children and encouraging active play during this time rather than simply providing supervision.

The quality of the outdoor settings is a critical factor in ensuring a healthy, age and developmentally appropriate environment. The outdoor environment provides a special stage for action and stimulates play, learning, and physical activity, and should be designed specifically for young children. The outdoor setting should help children connect to nature, which has been shown to have multiple benefits for academic learning and overall health throughout life. Children learn by exploration, by being challenged, and by taking risks in a safe environment. The physical surroundings should:

- Engage children's sense of inquiry
- Stimulate the child's imagination
- Invite exploration
- Communicate a sense of belonging and cultural identity
- Support developing competencies of each child
- Incorporate elements of nature

## CLASS SIZE AND TEACHER–CHILD RATIO

The anticipated number and ages of children to be served will determine the number of staff needed for the program. Early childhood programs must maintain appropriate teacher child ratios at all times. One of the adults in the classroom must be a certificated teacher with an endorsement in early childhood education.

	Rule 11		Sixpence	
	Maximum Group Size	Adults	Maximum Group Size	Adults
Infants (age 6 weeks to 18 months)	8	1:4	8	1:3
Toddlers (age 18 months to 3 years)	12	1:6	8	1:4
Preschoolers (age 3 to kindergarten entrance)	20	1:10		

**Note:** *When a district or ESU is in partnership with Head Start and operates both a morning and afternoon session each day, Head Start Performance Standards require classrooms to have no more than 17 children per session if the majority of the children are age 4. If the majority of the children are age 3, no more than 15 children can be enrolled in each session.*

## MEALS AND SNACKS

Early childhood education programs have an opportunity to help children develop healthful food habits that will benefit them throughout their lifetime. Nutritious foods help to ensure that children are getting the food they need for healthy growth and development. When offered a variety of foods, children become used to trying new foods and eating foods that might not be available at home and that they would not choose on their own. Districts can participate in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program to meet the nutritional needs of the children. Programs licensed by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services have the option to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Both provide reimbursement to the district for meals and/or snacks served.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.08, requires each early childhood program to provide at least one meal and/or snack that meets the USDA Child Nutrition Program guidelines during each program session each day.*

Mealtimes provides opportunities for learning and social development as the teaching staff sit with children and engage in conversation with them during meal and snack times. Staff who are pleasant and polite act as good role models for social interactions. Children watch, listen, and learn how they are supposed to act when eating with others. Mealtimes is also a time for staff to encourage children to use vocabulary and help to extend language. During this time children also develop self-help skills such as setting the table, serving themselves, clearing their place and hand washing before and after eating.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 002.20, states that meal and snack time is part of the program curriculum and provides opportunities for learning social development, as well as nutrition, and therefore is included as part of the instructional time.*

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hand washing with soap and running water by both children and staff is the most effective way to reduce the spread of diseases. Children and adults should wash their hands upon entering the classroom, before and after messy play, after toileting, and before and after meals.

The food service equipment, food preparation and eating surfaces, and the foods themselves must be kept clean to avoid the spread of disease. Tables should be washed with soap and water to remove soil and then sanitized with an EPA approved sanitizing product, which may be a bleach-water solution, **before and after** being used for meals and snacks.

Indoor and outdoor spaces should be kept free of hazards that might cause serious injury to children. Many dangers are not clear to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers because they are too young to understand how things work in the world. For example, most public school playgrounds are built for use by children who are kindergarten age and older, and the equipment is generally not appropriate for use by children from birth to age 5.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.07G, requires that at least one staff member per classroom who is trained in first aid and CPR specifically for children, including infants, must be on duty in the classroom at all times.*

It is not enough to have someone within the building who is certified. The certified person must be in the classroom with the children while they are in session. Written verification of current training must be kept on file and available for review.

## REST/QUIET TIME

Much of a child's day is spent being active with other children. In a full-day classroom, a regularly scheduled time for children to rest or slow down with a quiet activity is beneficial. Children will not necessarily fall asleep, but a time to be still and rest quietly will allow time for reflection and relaxation. A cot or mat that is covered with a sheet should be available for each child, along with a blanket and/or pillow that children may choose to bring from home. During this time staff may play soft music, read a relaxing story, rub children's backs, or talk quietly with children. The length of rest time will depend on the individual needs of the children.

## CLASSROOM STAFF

In classrooms serving infants, toddlers, or preschoolers the role of the adult is to provide a responsive and supportive environment, support the child's growth and learning through discovery, promote and stimulate children's development and facilitate their learning. The adult guides learning experiences through strategies that encourage children to think creatively, problem-solve, make decisions, and expand their thinking skills. The adult:

- Makes maximum use of space and integrates a variety of materials and equipment that stimulate active learning.
- Provides encouragement, support, guidance, and appropriate challenges to help children achieve goals.
- Models respect for others, the materials and equipment in the environment.
- Partners with other professionals and the children to plan, create, and sustain a safe climate and healthy environment in which children may grow, play and work harmoniously, creatively and productively.
- Structures opportunities for children to work individually and with other children, other adults, in groups of different sizes, and groupings formed for different purposes.
- Focuses on the ongoing learning of each individual child using developmentally appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures.
- Uses a range of teaching methods and strategies and supports or increases the child's participation in existing or desired learning activities.
- Exchanges information about the child with the child and family on an ongoing basis.
- Models and demonstrates enthusiasm for learning, and helps children to enjoy learning as meaningful, relevant, and personally satisfying.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS

Any teacher in a district or ESU early childhood education program must hold a current Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, or Early Childhood Education Inclusive. **The teacher's endorsement must match the ages of the children to be served in the program.** Teachers with an endorsement with a different title should contact NDE for clarification.

Teachers with a current Nebraska teaching certificate, but without an Early Childhood endorsement may qualify for a provisional Early Childhood endorsement. If a certificated teacher has taken early childhood coursework toward an endorsement, the teacher should contact the institution of higher education to determine eligibility for a provisional endorsement.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.05A, allows a teacher without an Early Childhood endorsement to file a plan with NDE to complete the endorsement.*

If the school district or ESU is unable to fill a teaching position with an applicant meeting the requirements, a waiver may be requested. The district or ESU administration should work with the NDE Office of Early Childhood to assure that all required information is provided to the Commissioner who will then submit the waiver request to the State Board of Education to seek approval."

In the event that the school district or ESU is unable to fill a teaching position with an applicant meeting the requirements, a waiver may be requested. The district or ESU administration should contact the NDE Office of Early Childhood to verify if a waiver could be requested and assure that all required information is provided to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education to seek approval. The following documentation is required and must be submitted within 30 days of the hire date of each staff:

- A copy of each advertised job posting including starting salary;
- A list of all other applicants;
- The resume and /or application for each of the other applicants;
- The resume of the person hired;
- A copy of an approved course of study from a cooperating college/university showing the staff member will be able to complete a teaching certificate with early childhood endorsement within 4 years; and
- A copy of the staff member's current transcript(s) that shows: 12 graduate hours in early childhood education; or a bachelor's degree or higher including 12 undergraduate hours in early childhood education; or an associate degree in early childhood education.

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR PARAEDUCATORS

Paraeducators must have 12 credit hours of undergraduate or graduate courses in child development, early childhood education, or the equivalent. A web link to information regarding approved equivalencies for paraeducators working in an early childhood education program can be found in the Web Resources section of this document.

**Sixpence Program Note:** *Paraeducators are required to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or higher.*

Paraeducators and other program staff who have contact with children but are not required to hold a Nebraska Teaching Certificate must be checked by program administration against the Nebraska Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Nebraska Adult Protective Services Registry before being hired.

**Sixpence Program Note:** *All teaching staff are required to be checked against the Nebraska Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Nebraska Adult Protective Services Registry before being hired.*

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR HOME VISITING SPECIALISTS**

Home Visiting Specialists must have a bachelor's degree or higher in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Child Development, or Human Services, Nursing, Social Work Sociology or Psychology including at least 12 credit hours of undergraduate or graduate credit in any area of family centered practices or child and youth development.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR HOME VISITORS**

Home Visitors must have 12 credit hours of undergraduate or graduate credit in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Child Development, Human Services, Nursing, Social Work, Sociology, or Psychology, including coursework in the area of family centered practices or child and youth development, or the equivalent. A web link to information regarding approved equivalencies for home visitors working in an early childhood education program can be found in the Web Resources section of this document

## CURRICULUM

In developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs, decisions about curriculum content take into consideration the age and experience of the learners, social or cultural values, and parental input. The curriculum in a high-quality early childhood program should be evidence-based and aligned with the Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Learning and Development Standards. It should not be a simplification nor a pushed-down version of the kindergarten curriculum.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.03, requires that prekindergarten programs must provide a play-oriented learning environment, which facilitates the optimal growth and development of children, with opportunities for age-appropriate learning experiences through active involvement with people and materials.*

## PROGRAM PLAN

Districts and ESUs must have a written plan that explains the program and includes a description of how the program curriculum and practices are clearly linked to both child and programmatic assessment. The plan must provide a description of a variety of developmentally appropriate, experiential activities that will:

- Promote a positive self-concept in each child;
- Foster attachments for all children by ensuring they have consistent teachers and paraeducators daily;
- Develop social skills in each child;
- Encourage each child to think, reason, question, and experiment;
- Foster both receptive and expressive language development and provide early literacy/pre-reading experiences;
- Incorporate family literacy experiences;
- Develop an understanding of mathematical concepts including quantities of things, of time, and of space;
- Enhance each child's physical development and skills;
- Encourage sound safety, health, and nutritional practices, including avoidance of controlled substances;
- Stimulate each child in creative expression and appreciation of the arts;
- Include exploratory play in a language and literacy-rich environment during a majority of the daily schedule;
- Reflect and respect the diversity of races, national origins, gender, and physical and mental abilities in the larger society and with particular emphasis on the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children enrolled through planned activities, use of materials, and use of equipment;
- Use positive, age-appropriate techniques of child guidance including redirection, anticipation and elimination of potential problems, encouragement;
- Use child assessment (evaluation) practices based on documentation gathered through an established system of ongoing observation and assessment to provide objective measures of each child's performance and progress in development and learning to meet the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines;
- Link the prekindergarten to the district's kindergarten/primary program through a written transition plan insuring continuity, identification, and implementation of processed necessary to facilitate the transition of children. The prekindergarten program will be included in the district school improvement plan.
- Include a well-defined language development and early literacy emphasis, including the involvement of parents in the family literacy activities; and
- Provide at least one outdoor play period (weather permitting) daily.

Children are active learners, using their physical and social experience to learn about and understand the world around them. Throughout the day, children should be actively engaged in constructing their own understandings from their experiences and learning from observing and participating with other children and adults. As children engage in activities that interest them, they have a natural motivation to learn. All types of learning (physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and language development) are integrated into learning centers located throughout the classroom and are supported by the classroom staff. As a result, children develop concepts and skills, such as problem solving, counting, sorting, sequencing, predicting, hypothesizing, all within the context of meaningful and playful experiences.

## PLAY AND LEARNING

Play in the classroom supports children's learning. Purposeful play is physically and mentally active, enjoyable, flexible and changing, and focused on the process not the product or the result. For an action to qualify as play, children must have some ability to decide what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

Two kinds of play are useful – free play initiated by children and teacher-initiated learning experiences guided by an adult. Play provides children with opportunities to choose their own level of challenge and to be stretched by others in a low-stress opportunity. This is truly differentiation in action.

Although play experiences are led by children, the teacher and other adults play a major role in the learning that occurs within the children's center time explorations. The teacher sets up the environment to provide structure to the play experiences such as setting out new materials in interest areas that will help children further explore academic concepts. Through intentional interactions, the teacher and paraprofessional(s) interact with children during their play experiences and infuse vocabulary into children's play and peer conversations. Adults also support and foster problem-solving skills during play activities.

Providing time for play does not mean that "anything goes" in the classroom nor does it mean that the teacher prescribes how children will play. Classrooms that are disproportionately teacher directed have been shown to be counterproductive to the development of self-regulation because children change rapidly from one task to another, often at the direction of the teacher, and are not allowed to engage deeply with one material for a long period of time.

Within the framework of appropriate curriculum and instruction are opportunities for children to manipulate materials and gain deeper understanding of concepts through play experiences and interactions. Play opportunities in classrooms are often called center time, choice time, or work time. Regardless of the name, it is a time reserved for child-initiated play activities.

To ensure that children's growth and development is maximized, children need sufficient access to the learning centers in the classroom. In preschool classrooms, the teacher must ensure that at least 1/3 of the scheduled program time is spent in exploratory play and learning in child-selected learning centers. For example:

Length of Program Day	Minimum Center Time
3 hours	1 hour
3.5 hours	1 hour and 10 minutes
4 hours	1 hour and 20 minutes
6 hours	2 hours

In infant and toddler classrooms, the majority of the child's waking hours should be spent in exploratory play.



## SELECTING A CURRICULUM

The curriculum includes the goals for the knowledge and skills to be acquired by children and the plans for the provision of learning experiences through which the knowledge and skills will be achieved. A curriculum also helps ensure that the teacher is intentional in planning a daily schedule that 1) maximizes children's acquisition of desired knowledge and skills through the effective use of time and materials throughout each part of the daily routine and 2) offers opportunities for children to learn through play and structured activities, individually and in groups, according to their developmental needs and interests.

Decisions about curriculum should consider the ages of the children, the role of the teacher and the child in the learning process, and the areas of learning. Questions to ask when selecting curricula include:

- How does the curriculum define the roles of the teacher and the child in the learning process?
- What domains of learning are addressed? Are they aligned with Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines? Are they integrated?
- Does the curriculum provide guidance for differentiating instruction to accommodate children's abilities and learning styles?
- Is there research and evidence to support the effectiveness of the curriculum?
- What kind of professional development is available for teachers to learn the curriculum?
- Are specific materials required to implement the curriculum?
- Does the curriculum provide guidance for parent involvement and transition to kindergarten?

## DEVELOPMENTALLY & CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM

For the curriculum to be developmentally appropriate, it must be culturally appropriate for each child. Some children may speak a home language, or first language, other than English, thus calling upon teachers to extend the child's learning of a new language while supporting and strengthening the home language. Linguistic and cultural diversity must be integrated into all aspects of the program. Children and families have stories, songs, dances, traditions, celebrations, beliefs, and values that are unique to their cultures and experiences. Teachers must use opportunities to integrate the cultural uniqueness of each child and family into the curriculum and weave it into the fabric of everyday learning experiences. By being mindful of each child's culture, teachers can achieve the goals of empathy, respect, and understanding that characterize a nurturing and effective classroom.

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Program administrators and teachers must carefully consider if the use of technology or interactive media provides a benefit to the children that could not be provided in another manner and how the use of technology enhances the curriculum. The staff must also assure that any technology or electronic media is interactive, non-violent, and used in a way that is appropriate for the age, developmental level, needs, linguistic background and abilities of each child.

The use of technology and interactive media is not appropriate for children under the age of 2 in early childhood programs. Caring for Our Children (National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs) recommends children ages 2 to 5 years are limited to no more than 1 hour of total exposure to digital media per day, which includes any time at home.

## TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE DAILY SCHEDULE

Having a daily schedule that creates routines for young children is an integral part of an early childhood classroom. Evaluating the daily schedule on a regular basis is essential to maintaining a quality program that meets the needs of both the children and adults who 'live' in the classroom each day. Teachers should look, with a critical eye, at the daily schedule several times during the year to determine whether it works for the group of children currently enrolled in the classroom. One of the most important things to consider when reviewing the schedule is the number of transitions that occur throughout the day.

Transitions tend to be some of the most difficult and stressful moments in an early childhood classroom. Therefore, the number of transitions children experience should be kept to a minimum. During transitions teachers often find themselves dealing with challenging behavior. If teachers are feeling uncomfortable or frustrated during transition times, there are numerous strategies for effectively managing transitions. Examples include:

- Teaching children the expectations of transitions
- Revising the schedule
- Clearly defining the responsibilities of each staff person
- Providing close supervision
- Giving children advance notice
- Preparing materials in advance for the next activity
- Reducing the number and length of transitions

## NEBRASKA EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

The *Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards* are Nebraska's response to the national call for state created early learning standards. They provide research-based benchmarks for what children in each age range can typically be expected to know and do, as well as what adults can do to provide experiences and environments that support learning across domains. They are designed as a resource to assist adults in planning meaningful learning experiences for young children. The document is not intended to be a curriculum or a checklist.

*Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines* are built around seven domains of growth and learning. All domains address areas of learning that teachers need to focus on to ensure that children's growth and development is maximized. The seven domains are:

- 1) Social and Emotional Development
- 2) Approaches to Learning
- 3) Health and Physical Development
- 4) Language and Literacy Development
- 5) Mathematics
- 6) Science
- 7) Creative Arts

The Approaches to Learning domain specifically addresses the essential skills upon which other development is built. For young children, growing and learning begins with each child's personal experiences and understanding of the relationship of self to home and family. Their understanding gradually expands to include the people they meet through activities such as early childhood education programs, their neighborhood, the community, and the larger world.

Adults need to identify children's current knowledge and understanding of their world and use it as a basis for making new experiences, ideas, and concepts meaningful. The learning experiences for young children need to focus on concepts that are related to the child's everyday life and provide encouragement for the child to successfully try new things. Adults need to allow children to learn how to solve problems with their support, rather than solve their problems for them. With just the right amount of support and information, adults guide children into their own discovery and sense of accomplishment. This gives them confidence as learners, and critical thinking skills to draw upon in future situations. When adults nurture children's natural sense of initiative and curiosity, and encourage their reasoning and problem-solving skills, they set them up for school success.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Districts and ESUs must develop a written plan detailing ongoing professional development opportunities for all staff working with the early childhood education program who have regular contact with children and their families. This includes the teacher, paraeducator, volunteers, foster grandparents, and bus driver. If a therapist or cook spends time in the classroom daily, that person must be included in the ongoing professional development plan. The professional development plan should:

- Be based on needs identified through staff evaluation and from other information gathered from program evaluation processes
- Be written together with staff, with copies given to all
- Include mentoring, coaching, and other professional development opportunities for all staff
- Include discussions of ethical issues
- Include training in the policies and procedures of the program
- Include training in skills for building positive relationships; all aspects of the curriculum; teaching practices; skills for partnering with families and communities; and skills for collaborating and participating as a member of a team, and
- Link with the district's K-12 professional development plan, and when applicable, with the local Head Start planning process.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.05G, requires that teachers, paraeducators, and home visitors who have regular contact with children in prekindergarten programs participate in at least fifteen (15) clock hours of Early Childhood Training Center approved staff development. All staff development will relate to prekindergarten or child development.*

**These 15 clock hours are separate from the 12 credit hours needed to meet the paraeducator qualifications.**

The document *Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* provides information about the knowledge, competencies, and skills that adults need to effectively work with children ages birth to five years. It is a resource to assist teachers program administrators in assessing staff skills and identifying professional development goals. Professional development plans should include training in the following core knowledge areas:

- Child Growth and Development
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Learning Environments
- Planning, Learning Experiences, and Curriculum
- Relationships and Social-Emotional Guidance
- Observation, Documentation, and Assessment
- Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Professionalism and Leadership
- Administration, Program Planning, and Development

See Appendix A for an optional Professional Development Plan/Record template.

## ACCESSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nebraska's early childhood professional development system – *Early Learning Connection* – is facilitated through the NDE Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC) in coordination with a regional system of state and local partners. All areas of Nebraska are served by the regional system working to support professional development for early childhood programs. These partnerships build collaborative networks to achieve high quality, affordable, accessible training for all those who work with young children and their families in inclusive, high-quality environments. A link to a map can be found in the Web Resources section of this document.

The NDE Early Childhood Training Center links experts across the state with programs or agencies requesting training on a wide variety of topics related to early childhood care and education and family development. Trainers are current practitioners with demonstrated expertise—teachers/caregivers, teacher educators, program administrators, health professionals, psychologists, social workers, and therapists—who bring their skills and knowledge to local communities to share with those working directly with children and families. Training is developed and tailored to meet the needs of each audience. Professional development opportunities may be found by searching on the NDE Early Childhood Training Calendar. A link to this calendar is provided in the Web Resources section of this document.

## FAMILY DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT

Early childhood programs play a vital role in setting the stage for building family and school relationships. Research demonstrates that families who have regular and direct contact with their child's educational setting and experience few barriers to their involvement will have children who have positive engagement with peers, teachers, and learning. School personnel should approach family involvement as a continuum, with a variety of opportunities for families. These should include but are not limited to family events, home visits, and parent-teacher conferences.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.02, requires each early childhood program to provide a strong family development and support component which recognizes the central role of parents in their children's development and establishes a working partnership with each parent.*

The availability of family supports and resources can potentially enhance parenting skills and the ability to gain access to and benefit from other community resources. Providing multiple avenues to support and promote the family helps children and families feel more connected to the school. In addition, parents who are involved in these activities have increased positive attitudes towards education. Examples of family development and support activities include, but are not limited to:

- Home visits
- Orientation and open house(s) to set the stage for discussing family involvement options
- Training that support parenting practices
- Partnering with community agencies to provide non-credit adult programs on-site
- Parent participation on field trips
- Information notebooks between home and school
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Family support specialists to assist families during crisis
- Home literacy backpacks
- Activities for parents to play with their child at home
- Family literacy activities which involve children and their families
- Workshops for parents about ways to increase their children's learning in everyday activities and routines

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.02 A-E, specifies that the family development and support component should include, at a minimum:*

- *written information for parents about the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures;*
- *an orientation to the program for children and families;*
- *at least two home visits per year between the parent(s) and the teacher to discuss the child's development and learning;*
- *specified opportunities for program staff to dialogue with parents through such activities as parent conferences, participation on advisory committees, needs assessments, participation as classroom volunteers, and flexible scheduling of meetings and event;*  
*and*
- *family development supports and services based on the family's needs and interests, including but not limited to their economic and social needs.*

**Sixpence Program Note:** *A parent education activity is required monthly.*

Many districts and ESUs schedule parent-teacher conferences for children enrolled in programs below kindergarten. Activities during these conferences may include but are not limited to: 1) sharing assessment information about the child's growth and development and 2) sharing some of the child's favorite artwork, building creations, or other activities.

**Sixpence Program Note:** *At least two parent-teacher conferences are required annually.*

## HOME VISITS FOR CENTER-BASED PROGRAMS

The overriding purpose of home visits should be to promote the home-school relationship and to engage families in their child's learning and development. Parents are a child's first and most important teacher, so it is important to partner with families to communicate information about their child's development in order to bridge the gap between home and school and create a more effective early learning experience. Programs must make all attempts to conduct the home visit in the child's home. Parent-teacher conferences, although important, do not take the place of home visits.

**Note:** *Rule 11, 005.02C, requires that districts and ESUs conduct at least two home visits per year for each child enrolled in the center-based early childhood program. Requirements of Rule 51 and Sixpence for itinerant home-based services or home visitation programs do not apply to center-based early childhood programs.*

## STRATEGIES FOR HOME VISITS

The first home visit is an opportunity to initiate a relationship with parents by setting the stage for a partnership. The way in which information is shared with families is as important as the information itself. An active relationship with parents is facilitated by:

- Respecting the family context, including the resources and demands unique to each family;
- Acknowledging the parent's view of their child's interests, strengths, and needs; and
- Explaining the role of the teacher as coach/consultant/resource in the collaborative relationship.

The first home visit is generally prior to the beginning of school. When preparing for this visit, the teacher should contact the family and explain that the visit is an introduction and orientation with the family/parent about the program (goals, schedule, activities, etc.). In addition, the parent should be encouraged to think about any questions she/he might have, or things he/she might want to share about his/her child. This first home visit will likely be 30-45 minutes. Some key activities to include are:

- First, engage in social conversation which can help both the teacher and the parent feel comfortable;
- Ask the parent to help the teacher get to know the child, i.e., what does he/she like to do, what is he/she good at, what does the parent feel is important for the teacher to know about how the child learns, what concerns does the parent have;
- Review the program expectations. Be prepared with written materials about the program to share and answer any questions. Let the parent know about ways to communicate with the teacher during the school year, and how information about the child's participation and progress will be shared;
- Provide the parent with a range of options for how he/she might wish to be involved in the program, letting the parent feel welcome to choose what fits their family the best;
- As a closing to this visit, make sure the parent feels welcome to share pertinent information about their child as frequently as they might wish, review any previous questions the parent may have raised and determine if they were answered, thank the parent for their time and encourage ongoing communication.

Once the child is established in the program, the agenda for the second home visit is often developed collaboratively between parents and program staff. This visit usually takes place during the second semester, or later in the spring if the program is year-round and will likely last longer than the initial visit (45-60 minutes). Some key activities to include are:

- When scheduling this home visit, ask if the parent has anything they want to discuss or know more about.
- At the visit, re-establish the relationship by learning what is current in the life of the family.
- Provide an opportunity for the parent to share information about their child's interests and new abilities at home, and/or any concerns.
- Clarify the items previously discussed by phone (if any), any new ones which may have arisen, and how program staff can be a support/resource, i.e. sharing information, demonstration, brainstorming, etc., as well as what information the preschool staff wants to share at this home visit.
- Address the topics requested by the parent.
- Share a simple activity that supports the child's development and promotes parent-child interaction.
- Share information related to the child's participation, including important points or priorities the parent needs to know.
- For children who will enter preschool or kindergarten, create a plan to transition to the new program.
- Ask parent for feedback related to their child's participation and relative to strengths, interests, and priorities/needs.
- If necessary, develop a joint plan with the parent related to what happened during the home visit, i.e. something new to try at school or home, additional written information to be provided, other resources from school or the community to be identified, opportunities for parent participation in the program.
- As a closing, reiterate the benefits of the partnership with the parent and the information they have shared, and thank them for their input.

See Appendix B for an optional Home Visit Plan/Record Template.



## TRANSITION PLAN

Learning is a continuous process. It is important to carefully consider the transition procedures and communication strategies as children move from one program to another or from one classroom to another throughout the day and year, and at the end of a program year.

There are four critical elements to the successful transition of young children and their families. Staff in all settings can facilitate transition by:

- 1) Providing program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula
- 2) Maintaining ongoing communication and cooperation between programs
- 3) Preparing children for the transition, and
- 4) Involving families in the transition.

Transitions are easier if each program is focused on the individual developmental needs of the children. Programs may be operating in different types of settings with children who are different ages. However, the commonalities between the children in an age range and the range of developmental levels represented in each program call for similar learning environments and teaching strategies.

Administrators in all programs can set the stage for successful transition activities by supporting the ongoing communication and cooperation among early childhood teachers. Program staff can increase program continuity by getting to know each other, sharing information about the programs and planning an effective transition system. Opportunities for communication and cooperation should occur throughout the program year.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that Children need to know what is expected of them by the adults in each program and should have several opportunities to become familiar with any new environment. Transition activities for young children should be like those which prepare them for anything new and can include discussions, stories, games, dramatic play, and field trips to visit the new program.

Continuity is important for families as well as the children. Families can promote confidence in their children by conveying a positive attitude about each program. By visiting the other programs to learn about the similarities and differences between programs and classrooms, families will be able to positively affect the education of their children.

ESSA requires districts receiving Title I funds to develop written agreements with Head Start programs to increase coordination of transitions into kindergarten and between programs. Districts are also required to develop transition agreements with other early childhood programs if feasible. A link to the Nebraska Department of Education Title 1, Part A Preschool Information page, which provides more details regarding the transition agreement requirements, is provided in the Web Resources section of this document.

## ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

*Results Matter in Nebraska* is the child, program, and family outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to kindergarten entrance age served by districts, ESUs and their community partners.

Results Matter is responsive to NDE *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants* and *Rule 51 Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs* and the federal mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (birth to age three) and Part B (three- to five-year-olds). School districts and ESUs with an early childhood program are required to participate in program evaluation to assure program quality and positive child outcomes.

For detailed information necessary to fully implement and understand the Results Matter process, please refer to the document, *Results Matter Nebraska Technical Assistance Document*. A link to the document can be found in the Web Resources section of this document.

### CHILD OUTCOMES

Each district is required to subscribe to the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ online assessment system to report child assessment data for Results Matter. All children birth to kindergarten entrance age enrolled in a district must be included in the online system.

Teaching Strategies GOLD™ is an observation-based assessment tool. It involves the ongoing collection of information through the observation and documentation of young children as they learn. As the educator gathers and organizes documentation, moments of learning can be linked to research-based progressions of knowledge and skill development. The educator's reflection leads to the planning of experiences, environments, and activities to further children's learning.

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Each district and ESU are required to participate in the program outcomes system. Selected district and ESU classrooms will receive an onsite assessment for early childhood program quality conducted by an observer contracted by NDE using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and/or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Districts and ESUs scheduled to be observed will receive an email notification stating the observation tool to be used.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observational tool designed to measure the interactions between teachers and students and how the interactions impact student learning. The scale is based on research that validates how teachers support quality early childhood programs including how they interact with children, how materials and time are used and how teachers facilitate child engagement and stimulation. The CLASS can be utilized to assist teachers to improve the quality of teaching and the quality of learning in the classroom. The CLASS is grouped into three domains to measure the interactions between teachers and students. Each domain is further defined by dimensions.

The Environment Rating Scale measures the child's experience in the classroom with the primary intent to measure global quality of learning environments. Indicators in the scale build on widespread usage, research, and program improvement efforts within the field. The scale covers the broad range of developmental needs of children – language, cognitive, social-emotional, physical, as well as health and safety with a focus on the productive use of time.

## **DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

*Rule 11, 005.04*, requires Districts and ESUs to create a written plan for local dissemination of program quality and child outcomes. The dissemination plan may include, but is not limited to, sharing data with local school board, in the local newspaper, at a community meeting, with advisory committees, on the district website and other social media and other presentations. Districts and ESUs will disseminate the results of the program evaluation annually, according to the plan.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

All early childhood education programs, birth to age 5, operated by districts and ESUs are required to comply with *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants*.

### THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE

Learning what developmentally appropriate practice looks like can be a challenge for any district or ESU administrator, but especially for those who come from secondary backgrounds. Preschool should not be viewed as a “mini kindergarten” but rather should be viewed as an environment that promotes learning and development of young children in ways supported by best practice and research. It is important for administrators to not just champion appropriate practices to happen in the classroom, but also to promote the school’s mission to engage families and community programs. Young children benefit when school administrators:

- demonstrate thorough knowledge of early child development and learning;
- take action to ensure that young children’s development and ways of learning are supported by program practices and policies;
- communicate to others the importance of young children’s development and learning needs; and
- resist pressure to create or maintain programs that ignore or run counter to how young children develop and learn.

**Note:** *Rule 10: Accreditation of Schools requires the early childhood program coordinator/administrator to hold a current Nebraska Teaching Certificate with at least 9 college credit hours in early childhood education. In addition, Rule 11, 004.06, requires that prekindergarten programs shall be coordinated by a staff member who holds a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with at least 9 college credit hours in early childhood education.*

### PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

A clear operation and governance structure for the early childhood education program must be in place. This enables staff and families to understand how the program is connected to the school, and to whom the program staff report. High quality programming requires effective governance structures, competent and knowledgeable leadership, as well as comprehensive and well-functioning administrative policies, procedures, and systems. Effective leadership and management create the environment for high-quality care and education by:

- having knowledge of early childhood;
- developing and maintaining effective school/community partnerships;
- ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines including data collection and reporting;
- promoting fiscal soundness, program accountability, effective communication, helpful consultative services, positive community relations; and comfortable and supportive workplaces;
- recruiting, supporting and retaining staff who meet the required qualifications;
- instituting ongoing program planning and career development opportunities for staff as well as continuous program improvement; and
- ensuring that families and the community are engaged in the program.

## TEACHER EVALUATION

It is the responsibility of the administrator to be a knowledgeable evaluator of early childhood teachers in order to be an advocate for early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practices. Administrators should attend training that would increase their knowledge of both the early childhood program and child outcomes. Training could include Environment Rating Scales and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to help them understand the quality indicators of early childhood environments and teaching staff, and Teaching Strategies Administrator GOLD to understand the child assessment procedures for early childhood.

Administrators will find that evaluation of early childhood staff is different from evaluating K – 12 staff. For clarification contact the NDE Office of Early Childhood.

The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards (NTPPS) are a framework providing common language for expectations of an effective teacher or principal in Nebraska. They offer an enhanced focus on equitable opportunities for students, a foundation for the knowledge and skills of effective teachers and principals, a foundation for the establishment of a system of support and development for educators, and a foundation for the expectations of family and community involvement. The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards-Aligned Evaluation Tool and additional resources can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education Educator Effectiveness home page, and a link is provided in the Web Resources section of this document.

## THE BUDGET

Districts and ESUs must plan to coordinate and use a combination of funding sources to maximize the participation of a diverse group of children. Each program must provide budget evidence to show that the program is coordinated or contracted with existing programs and funding sources. This evidence could include, but is not limited to:

- A copy of the budget detailing each funding source;
- Copies of Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding that are in place, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each partner; and
- Other financial or partnership documents detailing fiscal responsibilities.

## OPERATING COSTS

Districts and ESUs need to identify all expected operating costs which include, but are not limited, to:

- Personnel (salaries and benefits)
- Professional development
- Classroom equipment and supplies
- Family and partnership support
- Evaluation
- Transportation
- Meals
- Facilities (rent, utilities and technology)

Once all expected costs have been identified, the district, ESU and their partners will be able to determine the appropriate funding source for each item.

## FUNDING SOURCES

Existing programs and funding sources include, but are not limited to:

- Early Childhood Education Grant Program—Ages 3 to 5
- Early Childhood Education Endowment Program—Ages Birth to 3 (Sixpence)
- Special Education Act, the Early Intervention Act, and funds available through the flexible funding provisions under the Special Education Act
- Federal Head Start program
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act and subsequent reauthorizations or other appropriate federal legislation, including Title 1 dollars
- Local district funds, including TEEOSA
- Child care assistance through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
- Contracts with other districts, such as contracts to provide services to children below age five with disabilities pursuant to Rule 51
- Private grants and gifts
- Nonpublic early childhood education programs which meet the requirements of Rule 11
- Parent fees as determined by a locally determined sliding scale formula

## STATE GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**Early Childhood Education Grant Program – Ages 3 to 5** is intended to support the development of children in the birth to kindergarten entrance age range through the provision of comprehensive center- based programs. Competitive grant funds are awarded by NDE to public districts or educational service units, subject to the availability of funds, for new or expanded early childhood programs. Grant funds require at least a 100% match and must be combined with other local, state and/or federal funds through local partnership agreements.

**Early Childhood Education Endowment Program – Ages Birth to 3 (Sixpence)** is intended to promote community level partnerships that focus on meeting the developmental needs of very young children. Services for children birth to age three years are offered through comprehensive home visitation, center-based programs and child care partnership opportunities that will promote the young child’s success in school and later life.

## SLIDING FEE SCALE

Rule 11 requires that if programs charge parents a fee, then a sliding fee formula should be utilized in order to maximize the participation of economically and categorically diverse groups of children and to ensure that participating children and families have access to comprehensive services.

The sliding fee formula should be determined by the needs of the local community. Using a sliding fee scale, the cost for attending the program is determined by the family’s income; families who have a lower income would pay a lower fee to attend the program than a family with a higher income. Children with an IEP or IFSP receive services at no cost.

See Appendix D for examples of sliding fee scales.

## DATA & REPORTING

### NDE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT IDENTIFIER (ID)

Each child enrolled in a district must be assigned an NDE Individual Student Identifier through the Nebraska UniqID System. The NDE Student ID applies to **all** children, regardless of where services are received (home-based as well as center-based).

### NSSRS

Each PK staff person in the program must be reported in NSSRS, including teachers, paraeducators, home visiting specialists and home visitors. The following data categories and NSSRS templates must be completed:

- Staff Demographics
- Staff Assignment

### ADVISER

Each child enrolled in the early childhood program must be reported in ADVISER. The following data categories must be completed:

- Student
- Enrollment
- Courses
- Attendance
- Programs - Early Childhood
- Special Education Program (if applicable)

### CONSOLIDATED DATA COLLECTION (CDC)

The following information must be reported:

- PK Instructional Program Hours/K Program (planned hours)
- Days In Session/Instructional Program Hours (actual hours)

### RULE 11 PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM REPORT

The Rule 11 Prekindergarten Program Report is the district or ESU official report on the status of meeting the requirements of *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants*.

- All early childhood programs operated by districts and ESUs must comply with *Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants*.
- All districts and ESUs must complete the Rule 11 Prekindergarten Program Report **whether or not** the district serves children in an early childhood program.
- The report is due by October 15 of each year.
- It is located on the NDE Portal.

## RULE 11 PROGRAM APPROVAL

Districts receive program approval based on meeting the requirements of *Rule 11* in the prior year. If an ESU operates an early childhood education classroom for the district, that classroom must meet *Rule 11* requirements. Districts receive program approval, not ESUs. For a district to receive program approval, the following documentation must be submitted and is reviewed by staff of the NDE Office of Early Childhood:

- NDE Portal: Rule 11 Prekindergarten Program Report (may be submitted by an ESU)
- NSSRS: Staff Position Assignment **and** Staff Demographics (may be reported by an ESU)
- ADVISER: Student Template **and** Student Snapshot **and** Early Childhood Program Fact Template **and** Special Education Template, if appropriate, **and** Special Education Snapshot, if appropriate
- CDC: Instructional Program Hours (Fall = planned hours; Spring = actual hours)

If the Rule 11 Prekindergarten Program Report, or NSSRS information, or CDC information reflects failure to comply with the requirements of *Rule 11*, a written plan for correcting the violation(s) must be submitted to NDE. Failure to operate in compliance with *Rule 11* may result in loss of approval and the authority to operate an early childhood program.

## STATE AID (TEEOSA)

For districts meeting the eligibility requirements, the 4-year-old children who are age eligible to attend kindergarten in the following year will be included in the membership count for the district State Aid calculation. To be eligible, districts must have either:

- received an early childhood education grant for 3 or more years, and/or
- received program approval for 3 or more consecutive years.

State Aid is calculated beginning in year 3, and each year beyond, of program approval and received collected by the district in the following year of program approval.



## **EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM MONITORING**

Districts and ESUs operating an Early Childhood Program serving children ages birth to 5 are part of the Rule 11 System of Support. This system includes three plans detailing assistance, support and monitoring provided to those districts and ESUs: Advanced, Focused and Standard Supports.

### **Districts and ESUs operating an Early Childhood Education Program – Ages Birth to 5**

- Districts and ESUs eligible for the Standard Support Plan are provided with online publications and resources, NDE sponsored professional development, professional development webinars, community partnerships resources, and 10% of these districts will receive a fall program observation.
- Districts and ESUs eligible for the Focused Support Plan are provided with all resources in the standard support plan plus a fall and a spring technical assistance visit with an Education Specialist from the NDE Office of Early Childhood and a spring program observation.
- Districts and ESUs eligible for the Advanced Support Plan are provided with all resources in the standard and focused support plans plus quarterly technical assistance visits with an Education Specialist from the NDE Office of Early Childhood, a fall program observation, and a spring program observation.

More details and information regarding the Rule 11 System of Support can be found on the NDE Office of Early Childhood website. See the Technical Assistance section of this document for the web address.

### **Districts with a grant for an Early Childhood Education Endowment Program – Ages Birth to 3 (Sixpence)**

- All districts that are funded with an Early Childhood Endowment (Sixpence) grant are monitored by staff from the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation at least annually in addition to the NDE.

### **Districts serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children with disabilities – Ages Birth to 5**

- All school districts are required to identify, locate, evaluate and serve children with disabilities who are eligible for Early Intervention or special education services according to the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Nebraska's Special Education Act and NDE Rules 51 and 52. Implementation of these state and federal laws and regulations ensure that all children birth to age 21 in Nebraska are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in natural and least restrictive environments (LRE).
- Monitoring of early intervention (Part C, Ages birth to 3) is the responsibility of NDE Special Education and DHHS. Preschool special education and related services (Part B, Ages 3 to 5) are monitored by NDE Office of Special Education staff.
- The NDE Office of Special Education is responsible for coordinating monitoring meetings with the school district superintendent and director of special education to develop a plan and timeline for completing the district's monitoring process.

An Education Specialist assigned regionally by the NDE Office of Early Childhood or Office of Special Education can be contacted at any time. See the Technical Assistance section of this document for contact information.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### QUESTIONS ABOUT RULES, REGULATIONS & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

#### RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD:

Melody Hobson: 402-860-4055; melody.hobson@nebraska.gov

Kristine Luebbe: 531-510-8101; kristine.luebbe@nebraska.gov

Carol Burk: 402-429-0094; carol.burk@nebraska.gov

Emly Daberkow: 531-207-9789; emly.daberkow@nebraska.gov

Kelly Jones: 531-207-9852; kelly.jones@nebraska.gov

#### RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION:

Heather Ottoson: 531-289-8205; heather.ottoson@nebraska.gov

Ginny Howard: 531-207-9979; ginny.howard@nebraska.gov

#### RELATING TO SIXPENCE:

Stephanni Renn: 402-239-5920; srenn@nebrasakachildren.org

Karen Pinkelman: 402-366-8374; kpinkelman@nebraskachildren.org

Aiesha Rahn: 402-880-5266; arahn@nebraskachildren.org

Deb Reiman: 402-274-8846; dreiman@nebraskachildren.org

Fabiola Dimas: 402-418-4485; fdimas@nebraskachildren.org

### QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAD START & PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Steph Knust: 531-207-9832; steph.knust@nebraska.gov

### QUESTIONS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NDE Early Childhood Training Center: 402-557-6880

### QUESTIONS ABOUT DATA REPORTING

Tammi Hicken: 531-207-8917; tammi.hicken@nebraska.gov

NDE Help Desk: 402-471-3151 or 888-285-0556; helpdesk@nebraska.gov

### QUESTIONS ABOUT TEEOSA (STATE AID)

Bryce Wilson: 402-471-4320; bryce.wilson@nebraska.gov

Jen Utemark: 402-471-4313; jen.utemark@nebraska.gov

### QUESTIONS ABOUT REGIONAL CONTACTS

NDE Early Childhood Program Contacts

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Early-Childhood-Program-Contacts.pdf>

Early Learning Connection Partnership Regions

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-connection/>

Planning Region Teams

<https://edn.ne.gov/cms/prt-contacts>

## WEB RESOURCES

*The following web resources are provided for your information only and do not necessarily reflect the position of NDE or imply endorsement by NDE.*

### RULES & REGULATIONS

Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants

[www.education.ne.gov/LEGAL/webrulespdf/cleanrule112007.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/LEGAL/webrulespdf/cleanrule112007.pdf)

Rule 51: Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs

[www.education.ne.gov/LEGAL/webrulespdf/clean51\\_2010.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/LEGAL/webrulespdf/clean51_2010.pdf)

Sixpence Quality Criteria (center-based and home-based programs)

<https://www.singasongofsixpence.org/resources/resource-library.html>

Nebraska Health and Human Services Licensing Regulations for Child Care Centers, Preschools, and Family Child Care Homes

<https://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Pages/Child-Care-Licensing.aspx>

Head Start Program Performance Standards & Other Regulations

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy>

Title 1, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/non-public-education/files/equitable-services-guidance-100419.pdf>

Title 1, Part A Preschool Information, including transition requirements

<https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/title-i-a-educationally-disadvantaged/#Title-I-Preschool-Information>

Results Matter Nebraska Technical Assistance Document

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RM-TA-Doc-2022-23.pdf>

Approved Equivalency for Paraeducators in Early Childhood Programs Operated by Public School Districts or Educational Service Units

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Para-Equivalencies.pdf>

Approved Equivalency for Home Visitors in Early Childhood Programs Operated by Public School Districts or Educational Service Units

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Home-Visitor-Equivalencies.pdf>

## **POLICY & RESEARCH**

National Center for Children & Families

<https://policyforchildren.org/>

Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

[www.ceelo.org](http://www.ceelo.org)

Center on the Developing Child

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

Child Trends

[www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)

Committee for Economic Development

[www.ced.org](http://www.ced.org)

Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood

[www.dec-sped.org/](http://www.dec-sped.org/)

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

[www.ccссо.org](http://www.ccссо.org)

Early Childhood Collective

<https://earlychildhoodcollective.illinois.edu/>

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

First Five Nebraska

[www.firstfivenebraska.org](http://www.firstfivenebraska.org)

Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

High/Scope

<https://highscope.org/our-research/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

National Center for Children in Poverty

[www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

National Institute for Early Education Research

<https://nieer.org/>

Pre-K Now

[www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org)

The Heckman Equation Project

[www.heckmanequation.org](http://www.heckmanequation.org)

Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

## **DETERMINING COMMUNITY NEED**

Annie E. Casey Foundation-Kids Count

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

United States Census Data

[www.census.gov/](http://www.census.gov/)

Voices for Children-Kids Count in Nebraska

[www.voicesforchildren.com](http://www.voicesforchildren.com)

## **PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

<https://www.sfcpihucos.com/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/administration/partnerships/state/>

Coalition for Community Schools

[www.communityschools.org/](http://www.communityschools.org/)

Nebraska Head Start State Collaboration Office

[www.education.ne.gov/oec/hssco.html](http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/hssco.html)

Pathways and Partnerships

Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/office-of-child-cares-pathways-and-partnerships>

## PROGRAM DESIGN

Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>

Environment Rating Scales

<http://ersi.info>

Infant and Toddler Spaces: Design for a Quality Classroom

Community Playthings

<https://www.wested.org/resources/infant-and-toddler-spaces-design-for-a-quality-classroom/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children, Position Statements

[www.naeyc.org/positionstatements](http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements)

National Program for Playground Safety

<http://playgroundsafety.org>

NDE Nutrition Services

<http://www.education.ne.gov/NS/index.html>

Playground Safety Information

<https://www.ersi.info/PDF/playground%20revised%207-31-18.pdf>

Program for Infant Toddler Care

[www.pitc.org](http://www.pitc.org)

Spaces for Children

<https://www.spacesforchildren.com/early-head-start/>

U.S. Access Board Guidance Documents

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidance.html>

USDA Meal Guidelines for School Lunch and Child and Adult Care Food Program

<http://www.education.ne.gov/NS>

## CURRICULUM

Dimensions Educational Research Foundation

[www.dimensionsfoundation.org](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org)

Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards

English and Spanish versions and Summary poster

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/oec-publications-and-documents/>

High Scope

[www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org)

Reggio Emilia Approach

The Innovative Teacher Project

[www.innovativeteacherproject.org](http://www.innovativeteacherproject.org)

Teaching Strategies® for Early Childhood

[www.teachingstrategies.com](http://www.teachingstrategies.com)

Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 (joint position statement from NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center)

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/technology-and-media/resources>

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework>

The International Montessori Index

[www.montessori.edu](http://www.montessori.edu)

The Project Approach

<http://www.projectapproach.org/>

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Division for Early Childhood

[www.dec-sped.org/](http://www.dec-sped.org/)

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)

<https://ectacenter.org/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

<https://www.naeyc.org/events>

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

<http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu>

NDE Early Childhood Training Center

<http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/ectc.html>

Nebraska Early Childhood Training Calendar

<https://necprs.ne.gov/training-public>

Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System

<https://necprs.ne.gov/home>

Nebraska Early Learning Connections Professional Development Partnerships

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-connection/>

## FAMILY DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, Head Start

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-community>

Office of Early Childhood Development

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/family-engagement>

NDE Office of Early Childhood Online Training Opportunities through the NDE Learning Network

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/online-training-opportunities/#1648490393542-051c5355-7630>

NAEYC for Families

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/for-families>

Nebraska Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit and Resource Guide

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/nebraska-transition-to-kindergarten-toolkit-and-resource-guide/>

Ready for Success: A School Readiness Guide for Nebraska Families

[https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Ready-for-Success-2021\\_Web.pdf](https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Ready-for-Success-2021_Web.pdf)



## ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™)

[www.teachstone.org](http://www.teachstone.org)

Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation (joint position statement from National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education with expanded resources)

<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/CAPEexpand.pdf>

Environment Rating Scales Institute (ECERS-3 and ITERS-3)

[www.ersi.info](http://www.ersi.info)

Results Matter Nebraska Technical Assistance Document

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RM-TA-Doc-2022-23.pdf>

Teaching Strategies® for Early Childhood

<https://teachingstrategies.com/product/gold/>

## ADMINISTRATION

Early Childhood Education Grant Program – Ages 3 to 5

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/birth-to-age-5-programs/#1628175164289-e46d6090-6461>

Early Childhood Education Endowment Grant Program – Ages Birth to 3 (Sixpence)

[www.singasongofsixpence.org](http://www.singasongofsixpence.org)

Leading Learning Communities: A Principal’s Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades (PreK-3rd Grade)

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org/resources/publications/leading-pre-k-3-learning-communities/>

NDE ADVISER Resources and Guidance

<https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/adviser-resources/>

NDE Consolidated Data Collection (CDC) Resources

<https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/consolidated-data-collection-cdc/>

NDE Office of Early Childhood

[www.education.ne.gov/oec/](http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/)

NDE Office of Special Education

[www.education.ne.gov/SPED](http://www.education.ne.gov/SPED)

NDE Staff Reporting Guidance

<https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/staff/>

Nebraska ChildFind

[www.childfind.ne.gov/](http://www.childfind.ne.gov/)

Nebraska’s NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/nebraskas-naesp-prek-3-leadership-academy/>

Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards

<https://www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness/nebraska-teacher-and-principal-performance-standards-ntpps/>

Step Up to Quality, Nebraska Quality Rating and Improvement System

<https://www.education.ne.gov/stepuptoquality/providers-educators/resources/public-schools/>

## **APPENDIX**

**A: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN/RECORD TEMPLATE**

**B: HOME VISIT PLAN/RECORD TEMPLATE**

**C: TEMPLATES FOR PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS**

**D: EXAMPLES OF SLIDING FEE SCALES**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

(To be completed at beginning of year)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Early Childhood Program/School \_\_\_\_\_ School Year \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Education/Professional Development Needed</b> Based on needs survey or experiences	<b>Plan To Get Training</b> Scheduled trainings/conferences that meet the need

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RECORD**

(To be completed throughout year)

<b>Core Knowledge Area</b>	<b>Clock Hours of Training</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Training Name</b>

**CORE KNOWLEDGE AREAS**

- Child Growth and Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Child Observations, Assessment, or Outcomes
- Families and Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Interactions with Children/Guidance
- Program Planning, Development, and Management
- Ethics, Leadership, and Professionalism
- Inclusive Practices (Natural and Least Restrictive Environments)
- Cultural Competence

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS SURVEY

### Child Growth and Development

- Cognitive development
- Social emotional development
- Language/communication development
- Learning styles

### Learning Environment and Curriculum

- Room design/centers
- Sensory activities
- Outdoor learning/nature education
- Developmentally appropriate environments
- Environment Rating Scale

### Child Observations, Assessments, and Outcomes

- Observing and recording children's behavior
- Portfolio assessment of children's work
- Results Matter: assessing child outcomes
- Results Matter: assessing program outcomes
- Setting goals for children's learning and development
- Using photos and displays to show children's learning
- Collecting notes on children's learning
- Adapting curriculum based upon observation of children's interests
- Assessing children's progress and learning
- Assessing program quality and effectiveness

### Families and Communities

- Building effective family/staff relationships
- Involving parents in the early childhood program
- Parenting education
- Resources to support families
- Home visitation training
- Planning and conducting family conference and/or home visits
- Developing a parent handbook

### Cultural Competence

- Cultural influence on development
- Valuing families and their cultures
- Understanding and respecting cultural differences

### Health, Safety, and Nutrition

- Playground safety
- Child safety
- Child health
- CPR/First Aid
- Child abuse prevention/reporting

### Interactions with Children/Guidance

- Classroom Assessment Score System
- Building positive relationships with children
- Modeling identification and appropriate expression of feelings
- Establishing and communicating consistent limits to children
- Developing prosocial skills in children
- Engaging children in classroom rule making
- Providing guidance to children
- Developing emotional regulation skills
- Addressing challenging behaviors

### Program Planning, Development and Management

- Program assessment and evaluation
- Developing policies and procedures
- NDE Rule 11 regulations
- NDE Rule 51 regulations
- Hiring, supervision and evaluation of staff
- Record keeping in early childhood education programs
- Grant writing
- Budgeting

### Ethics, Leadership and Professionalism

- Current trends and best practice in early childhood education
- NAEYC accreditation
- Recognizing and utilizing team strengths
- Core Competencies-overview training
- Professional development

### Inclusive Practices

- Learning environments
- Working with professional teams on IEP or IFSPs
- Adapting curriculum/activities
- Children with special needs
- Responding to children's special health care needs

## APPENDIX B

### Home Visit Plan/Record TEMPLATE OPTION

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parents' Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Initial Visit Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### ABOUT THE CHILD

1. What does your child like to do?
2. What is he/she good at?
3. What goals do you have for your child this year?
4. What concerns do you have?

#### ABOUT THE FAMILY

1. Who is in your family?
2. What are your interests/hobbies?
3. How would you like to be involved in the program?
4. Are there any areas you would like additional information, i.e., parenting, child development, family education opportunities, etc.?

#### PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS/PARTNER FOR LEARNING

- Share written materials about the program such as schedule, parent handbook and protocol, upcoming activities and answer any questions.
- Provide parents with contact information and how information will be shared throughout the year.
- Share a simple activity that supports the child's development and promotes parent-child interaction that the parent can continue after the home visit.

Second Visit Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **ABOUT THE CHILD**

1. What have you been seeing or hearing from your child about school?
2. How have you seen your child grow?
3. What concerns do you have?
4. Share child outcomes, information on participation, strengths, interests, and priorities/needs and ask for parent feedback.

#### **PARTNER FOR LEARNING**

- Address any parental concerns or questions.
- Share a simple activity that supports the child's development and promotes parent-child interaction that can continue after the home visit.
- Provide information about summer learning opportunities to continue learning through the summer months.
- For children who will enter preschool or kindergarten, create a plan to transition to the new program/classroom with any pertinent information.
- Reiterate the benefits of partnership with the parent and provide information regarding the end of the year activities and ways for them to be involved.

## APPENDIX C

### Partnership Agreement TEMPLATE OPTION 1

#### COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT\* FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS & SERVICES IN NEBRASKA

Location/Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Partnering Entities: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

##### I. Introduction

- A. Purpose
- B. Scope

##### II. Ongoing coordination and planning will address the following elements

1. Educational activities, curricular objectives, and instruction,
2. Public information dissemination and access to programs for families contacting the Head Start program or any of the preschool programs,
3. Selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs,
4. Service areas,
5. Staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development,
6. Program technical assistance,
7. Provision of additional services to meet the needs of working parents,
8. Communications and parent outreach for smooth transitions to kindergarten,
9. Provision and use of facilities, transportation, and other program elements, and
10. Other elements mutually agreed to by the parties to such memorandum.

##### ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Name of Person Responsible	Task/Activity	Timeline/When	Location/Where	Outcome



**TERMS OF AGREEMENT**

This agreement shall be in place for two years from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, unless specified otherwise. The dissolution of this agreement shall require notification within \_\_\_\_\_ days of the signatories of this agreement. In the event of a formal grievance or conflict, the signatories will \_\_\_\_\_ in order to effectively resolve in a timely, efficient, and respectful manner with the intent of no disruption of quality services to children and their families.

**UPDATES AND DISSEMINATION**

\_\_\_\_\_ shall be responsible for ensuring that this agreement is reviewed and updated annually, and the agreement will be in effect to align with the school calendar year. Distribution and dissemination of this agreement shall be the responsibility of \_\_\_\_\_.

**APPENDIX** (considerations)

- Links or copies of current regulations and standards, including children with disabilities or developmental delays, transportation, confidentiality, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements
- Agreed upon forms to address application for enrollment, determining eligibility, informed consent, emergency and/or medical needs, as appropriate
- Scope of Services - including program (i.e., curriculum, assessment, data gathering, parent involvement, health and family support)
- Program Evaluation Plan
- Continuous Improvement Plans (i.e., may integrate district school improvement plan, use of data)
- Community Needs Assessment
- Staff Development/Training Schedule
- Other resources/references/citations as appropriate

**SIGNATORIES:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Signature, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Signature, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Signature, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Signature, Date

\*May also be referred to as Memorandum of Understanding, Memorandum of Agreement, Interagency Agreement (NDE/HSSCO/Partner/1/1-20-11)

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT\* FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN NEBRASKA

Location/Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Partnering Entities: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency/Organization/School</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Phone/Fax</i>	<i>Email</i>

### III. Introduction

- A. Purpose
- B. Scope

### IV. Ongoing coordination and planning will address the following elements:

	<b>Scope/Strategies/Activities</b>	<b>Who/Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
1. Educational activities, curricular & instructional objectives				
2. Public information dissemination & access for eligible families				
3. Eligibility criteria for enrollment				
4. Service areas to be provided				
5. Staff training (joint training regarding content standards, instructional methods, curricula, social-emotional development)				
6. Program technical assistance				
7. Additional services to meet needs of working parents				

8. Communications and parent outreach for smooth transition to kindergarten				
9. Provision and use of facilities, transportation, other program elements				
10. Other mutually agreed upon elements				

#### ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Name of Agency or Organization & Person Responsible	Task/Function/Activity	Timeline/When	Location/Where	Outcome/Result

#### TERMS OF AGREEMENT

This agreement shall be in place for two years from \_to \_\_\_\_\_, unless specified otherwise. The dissolution of this agreement shall require notification within \_\_\_\_\_days of the signatories of this agreement. In the event of a formal grievance or conflict, the signatories will \_\_\_\_\_in order to effectively resolve in a timely, efficient, and respectful manner with the intent of no disruption of quality services to children and their families.

#### UPDATES AND DISSEMINATION

\_\_\_\_\_shall be responsible for ensuring that this agreement is reviewed and updated annually, and the agreement will be in effect to align with the school calendar year. Distribution and dissemination of this agreement shall be the responsibility of \_\_\_\_\_.

**APPENDIX** (considerations)

- Links or copies of current regulations and standards, including children with disabilities or developmental delays, transportation, confidentiality, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements
- Agreed upon forms to address application for enrollment, determining eligibility, informed consent, emergency and/or medical needs, as appropriate
- Scope of Services - including program (i.e., curriculum, assessment, data gathering, parent involvement, health and family support)
- Program Evaluation Plan
- Continuous Improvement Plans (i.e., may integrate district school improvement plan, use of data)
- Community Needs Assessment
- Staff Development/Training Schedule
- Other resources/references/citations as appropriate

**SIGNATORIES:**

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Name/Signature/Date

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Name/Signature/Date

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Name/Signature/Date

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Name/Signature/Date

## APPENDIX D

### EXAMPLES OF A SLIDING FEE SCALE

#### EXAMPLE 1

Family Size	Monthly Income 0 to 200%	Monthly Income 200 to 212.5%	Monthly Income 212.5 to 225%	Monthly Income 225 to 237.5%	Monthly Income 237.5 to 250%	250% and up Annually
	No Fee	20%	40%	60%	80%	Full Rate

#### EXAMPLE 2

Household Size	Yearly Gross Income 150% of Federal Guidelines	Yearly Gross Income 175% of Federal Guidelines	Yearly Gross Income 200% of Federal Guidelines	Yearly Gross Income 250% of Federal Guidelines
	Full Waiver	Pay ¼ of Fee	Pay ½ of Fee	Pay ¾ of Fee