



OUR HOUSE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROGRAM EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010-2011

Our House Child Development Center has always been committed to providing a quality program to our children and families. As we begin the process of our annual Program Evaluation to determine areas that need improvement, it seems only fitting to mention our achievements. We are proud to remind our families and staff that we have recently received reaccreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We extend our heart-felt thanks to everyone involved in helping our facility maintain this elite distinction.

ASSESSMENTS

Children Assessments

Ages & Stages Questionnaires:

We will continue to use Ages & Stages Questionnaires as our developmental screening tool. Ages & Stages Questionnaires are norm-referenced tests that assign numerical scores to a list of developmental activities and a base line score for each area of development. All areas of development are included in this screening. Inability of a child to accomplish activities and meet the cutoff score for one or more area of development sends up a “red flag” for concern and may indicate possible development delay or the need for further evaluation to determine the need for special services. An age appropriate Questionnaire will be administered to every child new to our facility and will be completed within the first two months of enrollment. Children continuing with us have screenings that were done in prior years. Babies in our youngest infant room will receive screening when they reach two months of age, as this is the earliest Questionnaire available. If a child scores above the cutoff figures, no further Ages & Stages will be administered unless deemed necessary at a future time by the teacher or Executive Director, or if requested by the family. If a child scores below the cutoff figure in one or more area, the child will be closely monitored and a follow-up Questionnaire will be administered three months later. Children often need more time to transition, and scores frequently improve after children have the opportunity to engage in new learning experiences and practice emerging skills. If scores continue to fall below the cutoff figure after the subsequent assessment, we will then link families with appropriate referral resources.

As discussed in last year’s Improvement Plan, we have begun including a second Ages & Stages Questionnaire that specifically addresses social/emotional behavior. This assessment is administered whenever a child is identified as having a challenging behavior. Families are also requested to complete their own Questionnaire for comparison. This Questionnaire has proven to be a valuable tool not only to pinpoint specific problem areas, but also to provide documentation essential for referral services for behavioral therapy. Moving forward we will continue to use this assessment.





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Developmental Checklists:

Periodic assessments on our children will continue to be administered using age appropriate developmental checklists. More specifically, these assessments will be completed on every child three times a year. The first assessment will be done in September after the children have had time to settle into the classroom routine and feel comfortable with their teacher/teachers and surroundings. The second assessment will occur in January, and the final will take place in May. This will allow ample time between assessments so that growth can be seen. These checklists are comprehensive, based on widely accepted standards for age appropriate development, and are aligned with state standards.

Additional ongoing assessments will continue to be documented with relevant developmental observation notes, parent/family notes, and work samples. Observation notes are objective documentations of what a teacher hears a child say or sees a child do. Across time, observation notes will be comprehensive to include all areas of development and will highlight children's achievements or identify areas of weakness that need to be addressed between checklist assessments. Parent/Family notes are brief documentations made by primary teachers of conversations with parents/family throughout the year that may be deemed important or relevant in considering future goals, plans, and activities for their child or for the classroom as a whole. Work samples are visuals that represent exactly what a child has done or what a child is able to do. Samples can be original work, photocopies of work, or photographs of children at work or play. Samples taken over time can reflect the development of a concept or skill, or simply document any unique or unusual work. Any work of which a child is particularly proud is also included in the work sample portfolio.

In September, 2010, the Florida Department of Education introduced the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Assessment. This is a very specific tool that resembles tests administered to students during the first month of Kindergarten. Results of these tests generate scores that determine our facility School Readiness Rate. At the present time, use of the VPK Assessment tool is optional. While our School Readiness Rates have always been extremely respectable, we have determined that this assessment can only serve to increase our children's chances for a successful Kindergarten experience and will be incorporated in our VPK assessment process (See Improvement Plan).

All screenings and assessments will remain confidential and will be maintained in individual Child Files in the classroom. The Executive Director of Our House Child Development Center has always been committed to maintaining confidentiality of facility records, and this includes information in children's files. All staff will continue to be





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required to sign an acknowledgement attesting individual responsibility for maintaining this confidentiality.

Teachers will continue to give letters to parents/families to communicate the results of Ages & Stages screenings and offer the opportunity for a conference, if desired. This will also be the procedure for sharing results of the developmental checklist assessments. We will continue to distribute these letters from the Administrative Office (rather than put in child's take-home folder) if teachers do not have the opportunity to give them to parents personally.

Prior to this year, our procedure had been for the Program Curriculum Administrator to provide a written reminder to all primary teachers when periodic assessments are scheduled to be completed. Because the vast majority of those teachers have been with us for many years, only verbal reminders at meetings and through Lead Teachers were given this year. As discussed later in this piece, a large percentage of families completing the Family Questionnaire were not aware that assessments were completed. The Program Curriculum Administrator accepts at least partial responsibility for this and will reinstate written reminders. Additional procedures will be added to ensure that teachers are accountable for completion of assessments and notifying parents of results (See Improvement Plan).

Improvement Plan:

- Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Assessment will be given to all of the children in our VPK classrooms. These will be administered along with the developmental checklists completed in September, January, and May.
- Written reminders to teachers when periodic assessments are due will be reinstated and given to teachers at the beginning of September, January, and May.
- Notices will be placed on every classroom door to remind parents that developmental checklists will be completed that month and to follow-up with teachers if they do not receive notification of completion.
- Teachers will be instructed to turn in all developmental checklists by the end of September, January, and May to the Program Curriculum Administrator.

Classroom Environment Assessments

We continue to encourage teachers to maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to optimal learning and successful behavior management. Room arrangement, organization, toys, materials, schedules, and cleanliness are only a few considerations when evaluating classroom environment. We will continue with the current procedure that requires teachers to have the approval of Administration to change room arrangement or classroom schedule. Teachers will continue to be responsible for monitoring the





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inventory and condition of toys and materials in their classrooms and submitting requests on the standardized Supply List form introduced this past year. Formal invitations to classroom teachers via Lead Teachers and during staff meetings in July and January to reevaluate the need for additional developmentally appropriate materials will continue.

On an ongoing basis, Lead Teachers will continue to be responsible for monitoring the classroom environments of their pod. For the most part, they are already members of the Curriculum Committee. They are also the individuals most familiar with the classrooms and teachers in their particular pod. Any questions or unresolved concerns will be directed to the Program Curriculum Administrator, and, in turn, to the Executive Director. Teachers will continue to use our existing checklist to prepare their classrooms for Open House and the new school year and as a reference to maintaining their classrooms throughout the year.

During the National Association of the Education of Young Children reaccreditation visit, a few areas of weakness were identified with respect to certain kinds of materials lacking in some classrooms. This will be addressed prior to the start of the new school year (See Improvement Plan).

Improvement Plan:

In August, the Executive Director and Program Curriculum Administrator will conduct classroom observations using guidelines and criteria provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children to identify any materials/improvements needed in classrooms.

Organizational Climate Assessment

Results of our 2010 survey were not quite as encouraging as in some previous years. Out of 30 assessments returned, only 50% rated the majority of criteria 3, 4, or 5, indicating average and above average performance. This compares with 83% last year. Poor staff morale continues to be our downfall with 43% of the surveys rating this item below average. Concerns about salary rates, benefits, and communication between staff are reflected in 30% of the surveys.

It is always difficult to determine what motivates individuals to respond to certain questions in negative ways. Opinions are very personal and not always unbiased. We understand that some days are more stressful for staff than others. Enrollment is not at capacity and staff additions cannot be justified economically. For the same reason, yearly raises are not automatic; they must be earned. When staff members are absent, schedules must be adjusted and sometimes classes are combined. Teachers must adapt to these challenges without compromising quality care. Teachers are only human and moods and attitudes are too often affected by personal problems. The list of reasons for





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discontent can go on and on. Unfortunately we have no magical cure and can only hope that tides will turn with time. What we can do and what we will do is continue with certain practices we deem professionally valuable.

Our goal continues to be increasing professional pride and commitment as well as an understanding of quality care and early childhood education. We firmly believe that staff who understand and are comfortable with the responsibilities of their positions and the expectations of the facility will have improved job performance. This, in turn, might eventually improve morale, teamwork, and communication. With that in mind, we will continue with our Staff Orientation Program to impart essential information from our Employee Handbook, Parent Handbook, and Policies and Procedures Manual. The Orientation Program has proven to be beneficial in preparing employees for their roles in the facility.

The Executive Director, Program Curriculum Administrator, and Lead Teachers will continue to be available as mentors for new employees. The assignment of Afternoon Lead Teachers has been successful will continue to provide continuity in the areas of child care, communication, and closing procedures.

In an effort to increase professional commitment and improve staff credentials and competencies, the Executive Director will continue the process of developing/updating annual individualized Staff Professional Development Plans for every staff member in our facility. This plan covers professional development opportunities based on the following categories: Department of Children and Families and the National Association for the Education of Young Children Staff requirements, Department of Children and Families Credentialed Staff requirements, Director Credential requirements, Voluntary Prekindergarten Instructor requirements, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children Teacher requirements. An employee's initial Professional Development Plan will be discussed at the time of his/her next annual evaluation with the Executive Director. The employee will see what requirements in various areas have already been met, what requirements need to be met immediately, and what requirements will be set as goals for the upcoming year. Subsequent annual reviews will discuss progress relating to goals established for the preceding year as well as goals to be established for the next year. The intent of the Professional Development Plan is to provide direction for all staff to improve their qualifications and take personal responsibility for their career development.

Curriculum/Theme Assessment

The DLM Early Childhood Express curriculum will continue to be used for our Voluntary Prekindergarten program as well as for our three year old classrooms. This





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curriculum has proved successful in addressing State Standards set for preschool instruction. We will continue to use the Zaner-Bloser method of letter introduction.

The Complete Resource Book for Toddlers and Twos will continue to be the curriculum used in all of our one and two year old classrooms. The afternoon curriculum will continue to be concept-based. Letter introduction for toddlers and twos will continue to be in alphabetical order. The Complete Resource Book for Infants as well as Active Learning for Infants will continue to be used in our infant classrooms.

We found ourselves in a unique position this past year. Toward the end of the 2010-2011 school year, many of the infants in our N2 classroom celebrated their first birthday. We determined that those children would benefit being introduced to the curriculum of the Complete Resource Book for Toddlers and Twos. This would ensure a developmentally appropriate curriculum and assist in easing the children's transition to a one year old room in August. We will continue to do this moving forward.

We have been using the above curricula for a number of years and are confident that our teachers are well versed and comfortable with content and implementation. We have examined a number of alternative curricula over the summer and have decided to retain what we presently use as the foundation of instruction, using other curricula as a resource for additional material. The Program Curriculum Director will continue to be available as a mentor for teachers as they work to personalize their curriculum to maximize learning for the individual interests and needs of the children in their classroom.

Both the SPARK and Doors to Discovery curricula will continue to be incorporated in our school age program and Imagination, respectively.

The Program Curriculum Administrator will continue to meet with each of the classroom at the beginning and midpoint of the school year to address any concerns or questions regarding the curriculum.

Heterogeneous classrooms (mixed age) for our Voluntary Prekindergarten children have proved successful, and we will continue this structure moving forward.

CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Teachers will continue to be available for both informal and formal conferences with parents as needed. Parents will be formally offered conference opportunities three times a year after developmental checklists are completed. We will continue to distribute





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assessment letters from the Administrative Office if teachers are unable to give them directly to parents. This past year we also drafted a Conference Request Letter to advise parents when teachers deem a meeting between assessments beneficial or when particular circumstances warrant parent involvement.

Director Conferences

The Executive Director will continue to be available for both informal and formal conferences as needed.

QUESTIONNAIRES

Teaching-Staff Questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by teachers in March of this year. The questionnaire that we use is a tool that the National Association for the Education of Young Children uses to determine if certain criteria are met. Questions relate to teacher's responsibilities to children, families, facility, and community, as well as facility responsibilities to staff. Results of the questionnaire were encouraging. We had a return rate of 88%, an increase compared to 82% last year. Of the 72 questions on the survey, 66 showed a compliance rate of 90% - 100%. Like last year, the main area of exception was community involvement. The one additional area of exception was completion of child assessments. It is interesting to note, however, that in every assessment exception the response was "Don't Know." It can only be inferred that these responses came from staff members who are not primary teachers and therefore not formally involved in the assessment process. This raises a concern because assistant teachers should certainly provide assessment support through interaction with and observation of the children (See Improvement Plan).

The Executive Director will continue to discuss opportunities for community involvement at staff meetings as well incorporate community involvement in individual Staff Professional Development Plans.

Improvement Plan:

At curriculum meetings held prior to the 2010-2011 school year, the Program Curriculum Administrator will stress the importance of team work in the assessment process.

Program Evaluation Family Questionnaires

Family Questionnaire response was extremely low with a 51% return rate compared to 67% last year. Although the Questionnaires were distributed with reenrollment forms, we did not have a significant response. We admit that we did not post repeated reminders





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for parents as we have in previous years. Apparently this is necessary and something on which we must continue to focus (See Improvement Plan). Once again, we offered parents the opportunity to participate in a Program Evaluation Forum, but not one individual expressed an interest.

This year we had three main areas in the Family Questionnaire that generated a negative response of more than 30%. Of the 52 Questionnaires returned, 47% felt our program did not help families get to know other families in the program or encourage them to support each other. This particular concern poses a challenge to teachers and Administration when parents often drop off and pick up in a rush or at a time when no other parents are doing the same. Additionally, many parents choose not to participate in facility events. As discussed in our Improvement Plan last year, we revamped the format of our annual Open House to include a meet-and-greet time where children and families could become acquainted. Although it seemed like a good idea at the time, it apparently did nothing to help us realize our goal. Consideration will be given to appealing directly to parents for possible solutions (See Improvement Plan).

The second main area of concern was assessments. 32% of parents indicated they did not receive notification assessment results. This weakness was also addressed earlier in the assessment segment. Moving forward we will take steps to ensure that assessments are completed and parents are notified in a timely fashion (See Improvement Plan).

The third area that generated a large percentage of negative responses has not been a concern in a number of years and actually involves the Program Evaluation and Improvement Plan itself. In spite of our cover letter for the Family Questionnaire that emphasizes the role of parents and families as they complete the survey, 35% responded they did not know they were included in the Program Evaluation process; 44% said they did not receive notification of results. This may also need to be addressed with repeated reminders to families (See Improvement Plan).

Improvement Plan:

- We will focus on an improved return rate of Family Questionnaires by giving repeated reminders in a variety of ways- computer message, sign next to computer, and signs on classroom and facility doors.
- Written reminders to teachers that assessments are due will be reinstated.
- Notices will be posted on all classroom doors to remind parents that assessments will be completed and to follow-up with teachers if they are not notified.
- Teachers will be instructed to turn in all completed assessments to the Program Curriculum Administrator.





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- Following completion of the Program Evaluation and Improvement Plan, we will issue repeated reminders- computer message, sign next to computer, and signs on classroom and facility doors- that this document is available for viewing on our website or by hard copy available in the Administrative Office.
- We will consider sending follow-up letters to our families that Program Evaluation and Improvement Plans are completed and ready to view on our website or by hard copy available in the Administrative Office. We will also include in the letter specific areas of concern resulting from the Questionnaire and ask for their suggestions for implementing improvements.

MEETINGS

Lead Teacher Meetings

Weekly meetings with the Executive Director have proven to be the most effective way to communicate to staff on a regular basis. Lead Teachers communicate topics of discussion with respective pods in a timely and accurate manner.

Staff Meetings

Monthly staff meetings continue to be vital to bringing staff together for fellowship, team building, communication of key issues, and collaboration on facility projects.

Pod Meetings

The Executive Director will continue to hold Pod Meetings as deemed necessary.

Curriculum Meetings

The Program Curriculum Administrator will continue to meet with teachers of each classroom prior to the beginning of each school year and again in January to review curriculum and address any questions or concerns.

PTO Meetings

Although we have been unable to reinstate PTO meetings, we will never lose sight of that goal (See Improvement Plan).

We continue to enjoy success with special family events. Our annual Tree Trimming Party, Fall Festival, and Children's Day will remain on the calendar to extend the opportunity for parent involvement and family fun. We will also continue to offer Parents Time Out where children spend the evening at the facility after closing to allow moms and dads some together time.





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We will continue to communicate to parents training opportunities/meetings available through the Early Learning Coalition of Lake County. The Early Learning Coalition offers Behavior and Inclusion Trainings for parents and providers as well as Voluntary Prekindergarten Roundups for eligible parents. As we receive information throughout the year regarding these training opportunities, information will be available to parents in our Parent Resource Area as well as posted on our Parent Information Board.

We will continue to offer a special annual meeting for parents of prospective Voluntary Prekindergarten children to relay important information about the Roundups, the program in general, and the program as it relates specifically to our facility.

Improvement Plan:

- Although our forum for parents regarding the Family Questionnaire did not materialize this year, we will consider offering the opportunity again next year.
- As we consider a letter to families requesting possible solutions for concerns identified in the Family Questionnaires, we might include ways to increase family involvement and PTO participation.

