



OUR HOUSE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
PROGRAM EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2008 - 2009

ASSESSMENTS

As a facility accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, we continue to strive for excellence in all areas of our program, including the assessment of our children. Our goal has always been to develop an effective assessment plan- one that helps us better serve both the children and their families. Information generated from assessments enables us to identify individual children's interests and needs; track individual strengths and weaknesses according to developmental area; modify teaching practices or learning environment; adapt curriculum activities and experiences; initiate informed communication with families; and plan program improvement. Over the past few years, the National Association for the Education of Young Children's criteria for the assessment of young children have become more comprehensive and better defined. These revisions, in turn, have provided the necessary guidelines for us to implement changes in the tools we use to assess as well as the format for assessment itself.

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 four 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.

While Ages & Stages Questionnaires are comprehensive, a second Questionnaire that specifically addresses social/emotional behaviors is available. Moving forward, we will include this tool in our screening process (see Improvement Plan).





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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.

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

We 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.





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The Program Curriculum Administrator will continue to provide a written reminder to all primary teachers when periodic developmental checklists are scheduled to be completed. Lead teachers will be responsible for ensuring that assessments have been completed in a timely manner and that letters have been distributed to parents. Any questions or concerns will be directed to the Program Curriculum Administrator.

Improvement Plan:

We will add the Social/Emotional Ages & Stages Questionnaires to our screening process. Because the 2009-2010 school year was well under way at the time this document was written and because we have not yet had the opportunity to introduce this screening tool to our teachers, our target date for implementation will be the 2010-2011 school year.

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 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.

In regard to classroom environment and maintenance, it is interesting to note the wide range of differences in what individuals perceive as acceptable. Results of annual Classroom Observations indicate that, for the most part, teachers feel they are meeting all indicators; in other words, they are doing everything they should be doing. At the same time, others observing the classrooms see room for improvement. Perhaps it is simply the fact that everyone's standards differ by degree. That is to say, what looks acceptable to one person may look questionable to another. Yet this dichotomy is not in keeping with our commitment to quality. We are not prepared to accept standards that fall short by degrees and believe that more specific guidelines will clarify expectations and assist all teachers in achieving a quality environment (See Improvement Plan).

Lead Teachers will 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.





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Improvement Plan:

- Last year's Improvement Plan suggested developing a classroom environment checklist that would assist Lead Teachers in targeting problem areas and provide classroom teachers with very specific recommendations. Environment checklists for shared common areas would also be considered. The Executive Director already has a checklist for preparing classrooms for open house that would provide a solid basis for an environment checklist. This environment checklist continues to be a work in progress.
- Because we are preparing for NAEYC re-accreditation in 2010, the Executive Director will personally conduct Classroom Observations this year during the months of January, February, and March to ensure that all classrooms meet/exceed criteria expectations.

Organizational Climate Assessment

Results of our 2009 survey were slightly less encouraging than last year. Out of 38 assessments returned, 76% rated all statements 3, 4, or 5, indicating average and above average performance. This compares with 80% last year. Poor staff morale continues to be our downfall with 35% of the surveys rating this item below average. 13% of the staff felt we did not all share a common vision for our facility. This is a 7% improvement over last year. Meeting new criteria of the National Association for the Education of Young Children continues to present a challenge for some staff members. We continue to hope that as teachers become more comfortable with addressing these criteria they will have a more positive feeling regarding our quest for re-accreditation.

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, will improve morale, teamwork, and communication. With that in mind, we will continue with our Staff Orientation Program. It has proven to be extremely successful in providing important information to prepare new employees for their roles in the facility. We have recently revised and expanded this Orientation Program (see Improvement Plan). The Parent Handbook revision has been completed and all employees have signed an acknowledgement that they have read this document. The Parent Handbook is another source of valuable information for staff, particularly regarding responsibilities to our families. Our Executive Director has also finished revising the Employee Handbook. It is considerably more detailed and inclusive and has been distributed to all staff members who have signed an acknowledgement that they have read this material. Again, this handbook is yet another source of information to clarify facility responsibilities to employees and employee responsibilities to our facility.





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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.

Our Policies and Procedures Manual has been revised to include any changes or additions that have been identified as necessary to improve the original document. Policies and procedures that address new criteria from the National Association for the Education of Young Children were an important part of this update. Employees have been required to read this manual and sign-off that they have done so. The Policies and Procedures Manual provides detailed information regarding protocol for dealing with young children in all situations that may arise during the course of a day or in the case of an emergency. This information will help staff understand and be more comfortable with their responsibilities, reinforce facility expectations, and ultimately improve job performance.

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.

Improvement Plan:

- The updated Staff Orientation Program that includes any new information from the revised Employee Handbook, Parent Handbook, and Policies and Procedure Manual will be introduced to all staff members. Consideration will be given to using a monthly staff meeting as the venue for presentation.
- To improve efficiency in implementing the Staff Orientation Program to new employees, the Executive Director and Program Curriculum Administrator will





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assist the Orientation Administrator in presenting orientation information. The Executive Director will present an overview of the orientation program and the Program Curriculum Director will cover any material relating specifically to curriculum.

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 curriculum has proved successful in addressing State Standards set for preschool instruction. Voluntary Prekindergarten State Standards for mathematics have been recently revised. It has been determined that the DLM curriculum fully meets or exceeds expectations for addressing the new criteria.

For a number of years, we have taught letter recognition to our children by introducing letters in alphabetical order. Beginning with the upcoming 2009-2010 school year, we will be using the Zaner-Bloser method of letter introduction for our three and four year old classrooms (see Improvement Plan). To avoid confusing our younger children, alphabetical order will continue to be used in the one and two year old classrooms.

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. The Complete Resource Book for Infants as well as Active Learning for Infants will continue to be used in our infant classrooms.

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. The Program Curriculum Director will continue to be available as a resource 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.





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The shared common areas of our facility are intended to provide activities that enhance our curriculum. During the school year when our school age children are not with us during the day, the Media Center has a block of time in which there is no class scheduled to be in that area. Our goal is to encourage teachers to use the Media Center during this time to give their children the opportunity to use a wider variety of Media materials (See Improvement Plan).

Improvement Plan:

- In order to better utilize our Media Center during that block of time in the morning when no classes are scheduled, the Media teacher will focus on developing a calendar of activities as well as a rotating schedule for our two, three, and four year old classrooms. This would give our children additional opportunity to explore/use the various literacy (flannel boards, puppets, books) and technology based materials (listening center, overhead projector, recorders) found in this center. This improvement is another work in progress from last year.
- We will begin using the Zaner-Bloser method of letter introduction for our preschool children. While there is no research that documents that any one way of introduction is more successful than others, it has been identified that certain letters are easier than others for children to form. Because manuscript writing of letters partners learning those letters, we will introduce letters in the sequence that is easiest for children to print: litoadcefgjqusbhprnmvywkxz.

CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Teachers will continue to be available for both informal and formal conferences with parents as needed. Because developmental checklist assessments are now completed three times each school year, parents will now be formally offered two additional conference opportunities. We will continue to distribute assessment letters from the Administrative Office if teachers are unable to give them directly to parents.

The Program Curriculum Administrator will continue to provide a written reminder to all primary teachers when periodic developmental checklists are scheduled to be completed. Lead teachers will be responsible for ensuring that assessments have been completed in a timely manner and that letters have been distributed to parents. Any questions or concerns will be directed to the Program Curriculum Administrator.





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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 at the end of the 2008-2009 school 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. Of the 72 questions on the survey, 68 showed a compliance rate of 90% - 100%. The only areas of exception concerned community involvement and relationships. Of the 35 staff members returning the survey, 14% indicated that they were not involved in the community outside the workplace. This was our same area of weakness last year; however, the noncompliance at that time was 35%. We have improved.

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:

Consideration will be given to offering staff the opportunity to participate in community events by becoming involved as a facility- for example, the annual Relay for Life.

Program Evaluation Family Questionnaires

Family Questionnaire response was slightly improved over last year with a 52% return. While a more timely distribution of questionnaires (with reenrollment forms) proved to be somewhat successful, we find ourselves in a different situation this year. Because our NAEYC accreditation is up for renewal this year, we must have results of Family Questionnaires tallied by no later than March 31, 2010. This means that Questionnaires must be distributed at the beginning of February with the deadline for return as February 26, 2010. We understand that many families are new to us this year and may not, as yet, have all the information they need to accurately answer all the questions. We also realize that even veteran families may not be aware of new additions to our Parent Handbook that address many of the questions. In January, we will offer parents the opportunity to become as familiar with our facility as possible so they may comfortably and accurately respond to all questions (see Improvement Plan). We want them to know their importance in our journey for re-accreditation. Looking forward, we will also





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consider a more efficient way to provide pertinent information to families at the beginning of the school year (see Improvement Plan).

Over the years, we have taken a number of steps to rectify program weaknesses identified by responses in Family Questionnaires. Some steps have proven more successful than others, but all have been positive and implemented with a view toward meeting family needs with improved communication and parent involvement. The following is a recap of improvement commitments:

- We will continue to distribute Family Questionnaires with annual Applications for Enrollment. This year will be an exception with distribution in January. Those families not returning will also be given a Questionnaire at this time. Deadline for return of Questionnaires will correspond with deadline for Application of Enrollment.
- We will continue to include with our Application for Enrollment a Family Needs Assessment to assist our facility and teachers in being more responsive to individual family needs. This assessment is also a tool to help us discover how we can improve family involvement.
- Letters regarding assessment not given directly to families will continue be distributed from the Administrative Office.
- We will continue to include a cover letter with the Family Questionnaire inviting families to visit our website to review the Parent Handbook before completing the form.
- We will continue to distribute comprehensive Orientation Packets to all families at Open House or upon enrollment.
- We will continue to include in our Orientation Packets a welcome letter and classroom behavior letter to make our children and families as comfortable as possible with their classroom before the first day.
- We will continue to include in our Orientation Packets an Infant and Child Interests and Needs Form to enable teachers to better understand individual children's interests and needs in relation to curriculum planning.
- The revised Parent Handbook will continue to be available on our website for families to review. It is intended to be a resource for families for any and all information they may need regarding our facility, including an overlap of Employee Handbook information that may be valuable in responding to Family Questionnaire items.
- Our vision of a small parent lounge in the Common Area has begun to take shape. We now have a designated space with seating that houses

- resource materials for families as well as brochures announcing upcoming





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- facility and community events. An audio/visual presentation remains to be completed (See Improvement Plan).
- We will continue to provide families with monthly Classroom Newsletters. These newsletters are intended to keep families connected to our curriculum and include vocabulary, songs, stories, finger plays, and classroom activities. We hope this will encourage families to have conversations with their children about what they are learning and perhaps reinforce concepts at home.
- We will continue to encourage parents to become involved in our program curriculum by inviting them to help us during our themes on Music and Community Workers. Parents who are able to find time in their busy schedules may speak to our children about their work in the community or share their musical talents and knowledge of instruments. These opportunities are communicated to parents personally, through postings on classroom doors, and an invitation in the monthly Classroom Newsletters.
- To reinforce the value of family input, copies of our Program Evaluation and Improvement Plan will continue to be available on our website, in the Administrative Office, and in the Parent Lounge. We will remind families with messages on their check-in screens that this document is available for review.

This year we had only one main area in the Family Questionnaire that generated a negative response of more than 35%. Of the 77 Questionnaires returned, 36% 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. We are considering an alternative way to encourage family connections (see Improvement Plan).

Improvement Plan:

- We will continue to work on an audio/visual presentation for our parent lounge highlighting policies and procedures, facility news, parent reminders, upcoming events, etc.
- We will continue to explore other ways to increase parent involvement within our facility. Parents have indicated on the Family Needs Assessment ways they would like to be involved. We will use this information as a starting point.
- Our NAEYC re-accreditation process mandates that Family Questionnaire results be available by March, 2010. Questionnaires, therefore, must be completed in February. We will offer parents the opportunity to participate in a forum with





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staff members and Administration. At this time, we will field questions and concerns of parents as well as present information that will help parents complete the Questionnaire comfortably and accurately.

- We will also assist parents in completing the Questionnaire by attaching a “guide” that will direct them where to find information regarding specific questions. It is important that families understand that a DK (don’t know) answer is equivalent to N (no) and will negatively affect our Questionnaire results.
- Moving forward, we will consider revamping the format of our annual Open House which is held prior to the beginning of each new school year. In the past, Open House has always had an informal agenda with parents, families, and children coming and going at will, talking briefly to the teacher(s) and becoming familiar with the classroom. This scenario makes it difficult for teachers to be certain that they have given families all the time and all the information they need and deserve. We will consider having families come together for a formal teacher presentation followed by a meet-and-greet time where children and families can become acquainted with one another as they explore the classroom.

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).





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We continue to enjoy success with special family events. Our annual Tree Trimming Party, Valentine Party, Fall Festival, and Children's Day will remain on the calendar to extend the opportunity for parent involvement and family fun.

We will continue to communicate to parents training opportunities/meetings available through the Early Learning Coalition of Lake County's "Parents and Providers Coming Together." The Early Learning Coalition also offers training sessions for parents and early childhood educators regarding Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales. Child Care's Choice Services 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:

- During the January forum intended to encourage family involvement in our re-accreditation process, we will consider suggestions regarding PTO development and parent participation.
- As we move forward with preparing an audio-visual presentation to be shown in our new parent lounge, priority will be given to including a segment inviting parents to offer ideas or suggestions on ways they can become more involved (including PTO meetings) in our program.
- As we consider options for PTO meetings, we may explore alternatives to regularly scheduled meetings. One idea would be to hold periodic meetings that would target special topics, events, or interests of parents and staff.

