

Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association

Early Childhood

(3-7-23)

An Early Childhood standalone program as defined for MNSAA accreditation is an educational program that is separate from an elementary program and/or includes infants and/or toddlers.

STANDARD I. Mission and Philosophy

The mission statement is a clear, concise expression that references the identity and purpose of the center, its commitment to a quality education, and unique elements and special features of the center.

The philosophy is a statement of beliefs and values that provides direction for the entire educational effort of the center.

Membership Indicators

- 1A The center has written mission and philosophy statements that are clear, concise expressions reflecting the shared understanding of the center community.
- 1B The policies, procedures and actions of the center community are consistent with the written mission statement and philosophy of the center.
- 1C The mission statement and philosophy are consistent with sound educational and psychological principles reflecting how all children learn, grow, and develop.
- 1D The philosophy reflects family participation in educational planning for all students.
- 1E Formation and annual review of the mission statement and philosophy of the center involve families, staff, center board members, and other stakeholders.
- 1F Current staff and families are educated annually on the mission statement and philosophy of the center.

STANDARD II. Climate

The Center maintains a climate that is productive, peaceful, respectful, safe, orderly, and conducive to the processes of effective learning and teaching.

Membership Indicators

- 2A The center provides programs that promote respect and tolerance for diversity.

- 2B The center has an established written discipline policy that positively reinforces accepted behavior and promotes self-discipline.
- 2C The center handbook includes a statement that requires school personnel to report to the Missouri Division of Family Services, if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a student known to them in their professional capacity may be abused or neglected.
- 2D Programs and activities are in place that support families in their role as the primary educator of their children and encourage home-center relationships (i.e., home and center organizations, family nights, and newsletters).
- 2E The educational program enables students to take an active part in their learning process by offering programs such as decision making, problem solving, and conflict management.
- 2F The center climate includes exploration, experimentation, movement, activity, and time for play.
- 2G Center handbooks outline guidelines that facilitate communication and interaction among teachers, parents, and children including directives for the use of social media.
- 2H The center cooperates with other programs within the religious and civic communities.
- 2I The center has implemented harassment/bullying prevention policies and programs for students and personnel.
- 2J New students and parents are given orientation into the educational program when they enroll in the center, as they move from early childhood to the elementary level.
- 2K The administration fosters communication with the receiving center regarding the needs of students transferring from their present center to another educational program.

STANDARD III. Leadership

The governing authority of the center provides leadership in setting policy. A qualified administrator insures the successful functioning of the center in all phases of the program.

Membership Indicators

- 3A The center has a local governing authority/board/committee that is responsible for formulating the policies of the center.
- 3B Members of the local governing authority/board/committee are oriented to their roles and responsibilities.
- 3C The local governing authority/board/committee operates out of written constitution / guidelines.
- 3D Written minutes are kept for meetings of the local governing authority / board / committee.

- 3E The local governing authority/board/committee has a policy manual.
- 3F A process is in place to evaluate the administrator at least every three years.
- 3G The administrator is responsible for carrying out the day-to-day policies.
- 3H The administrator possesses a baccalaureate degree and:
- Has at least 34 credit-bearing hours of specialized college-level course work in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, or early childhood special education that encompasses child development and children's learning from birth through kindergarten; family and community relationships; the practices of observing, documenting, and assessing young children; teaching and learning processes; and professional practices and development.
 - Has at least 9 credit-bearing hours, or content hours of specialized course work in administration, business management (which can be in school administration, business management, communication, technology, early childhood management or administration, or some combination of these areas.)
- or
- The administrator documents that a plan is in place to meet the above indicators within five years.
- 3I The administrator understands and is committed to the mission and philosophy of the center.
- 3J The necessary qualifications and the job description of the administrator are clearly stated and met.
- 3K The administrator is involved in the selection, assessment, evaluation, retention, and dismissal of professional and support personnel for the center.
- 3L The administrator provides training for professional and support staff in regard to the laws pertaining to the reporting of child abuse.
- 3M A professional code of ethical conduct is followed by administrator and staff.
- 3N The local governing authority/board/committee annually evaluates the effectiveness of its roles and responsibilities.
- 3O The administrator provides the spiritual (if appropriate), instructional, and managerial leadership for an effective educational program.
- 3P The administrator has an ongoing personal plan for professional and spiritual (of at least 12 clock hours annually) development with evidence of a commitment to life-long learning.

- 3Q The administrator has appropriate non-teaching time to carry out administrative responsibilities. The administrator devotes 25% of the time to administrative duties per fifty full-time equivalent students.
- 3R Administrator is a member of at least one professional Early Childhood organization.
- 3S Administrator is registered with OPEN. (Missouri's Professional Development Initiative for Early Childhood and School-Age/After-School Professionals www.openinitiative.org)

STANDARD IV. Personnel

Personnel are committed, qualified individuals who support the mission and philosophy of the school. The staff is adequate in number and diversity to provide for the educational needs of all students with focus on the whole child.

Membership Indicators

- 4A Seventy-five percent of the teaching staff has a BA in Early Childhood, Child Development, Elementary Education or Early Childhood Special Education.
- 4B All remaining teachers have a minimum of:
- an AA in Early Childhood.
or
 - a BA in another field with a minimum of 12 credits in Early Childhood.
or
 - Ten years of experience in an Early Childhood or Education Setting
or
 - a written plan for obtaining BA in ten years.
- 4C All full-time assistant teachers/teacher's aides have either:
- a Child Development Associate (CDA) or 12 credit hours in Early Childhood Education.
or
 - Five years of experience in an Early Childhood or Education Setting
or
 - a written plan toward certification in five years.
- 4D For sectarian centers, teachers of religion/theology fulfill the requirements and/or certification, either:
- as designated by the local authority or sponsoring agency
or
 - have a written plan in place as to how they will fulfill this requirement.

- 4E Background checks and child abuse and neglect screening are completed for all personnel and volunteers who work with students. This screening is done upon initial service and periodically thereafter.
- 4F All personnel have current health records of medical examination and tuberculosis testing upon hire and then annually, as required by the local health department.
- 4G All teaching staff and aides are evaluated annually.
- 4H All staff participate annually in ongoing professional development for a minimum of 12 clock hours (does not include CPR/First Aide training) and in-service opportunities which are developed in light of:
- best practices in professional development.
 - staff identified needs.
 - needs of learners and the center.
- 4I An orientation and mentoring program is in place for new staff.
- 4J All teaching staff has a written plan for ongoing professional development on file with the administrator.
- 4K Non-discriminatory practices in regard to race, ethnic background, or sex are used in hiring of center personnel. In church-affiliated schools, preference may be given to members of that faith.
- 4L Staff has an understanding of, and are committed to, the mission, philosophy, and goals of the center.
- 4M All staff know and use a professional ethical guideline in their conduct as members of the Early Childhood profession.
- 4N A minimum of two staff members are on duty when children are present in program.
- 4O At least one staff member on duty has current certification in first aid and/or CPR.
- 4P All teaching staff are registered with OPEN (Missouri's Professional Development Initiative for Early Childhood and School-Age/After-School Professionals www.openinitiative.org)

STANDARD V. Curriculum

The center provides a research-based curriculum that includes all concepts, skills, and values representative of identified student needs. Curriculum addresses the needs of children at all ages, from infant, to toddler, through PreK.

Membership Indicators

- 5A A written curriculum framework clearly defines the actions, assessment, and educational goals of the center.
- 5B The curriculum guides teachers in incorporating content and concepts that foster social and cognitive development.
- 5C The curriculum directs teachers to incorporate content, concepts, and activities that foster;
- social development
 - emotional development
 - physical development
 - language development
 - cognitive development
 - integration of key areas of content, including religion (where applicable), literacy, mathematics, science, technology, creative expression and the arts, health and safety, music, physical education, and social studies.
- 5D The center regularly conducts formal and informal assessment and gathers data from all facets of the program for annual evaluation.
- 5E The curriculum is regularly evaluated and revised.
- 5F The curriculum drives development of a daily schedule that is predictable yet responsive to individual needs of children. Schedule includes both indoor and outdoor time, time for small and large group and time for children to engage with the environment (play).
- 5G Lesson plans reflect curriculum used by the program as well as the individual needs of children.
- 5H Classroom arrangement and material selection support the learning goals of the curriculum and engage the interest of the children.
- 5I Materials are diverse, ample, and appropriately challenging.
- 5J Use of passive media (TV, video, DVD...) is limited to short amounts of time and to educational programming (developmentally appropriate programming).

- 5K At least one-third of the time children are in program is set aside for child engagement with environment (individual or small group play).
- 5L Materials and equipment used to implement the curriculum for infants and toddlers/twos encourage:
- exploration, experimentation, and discovery.
 - sensory and motor learning.
 - developing physical skills through self-initiated movement.
- 5M Infants and toddlers/twos are provided an environment that allows them to move freely and achieve mastery of their bodies through self-initiated movement (Coordination, movement, balance opportunities, and perceptual-motor integration).

STANDARD VI. Instruction

The center uses instructional methods that deliver the curriculum to facilitate a child's growth and development from infants through pre-kindergarten.

Membership Indicators

- 6A Teaching staff evaluate and change their responses to children based on individual needs, and vary their interactions to be sensitive and responsive to:
- differing abilities.
 - temperaments.
 - activity levels
 - cognitive and social development.
- 6B Teaching staff encourages children's development of friendships and provide opportunities for children to play with and learn from each other.
- 6C Materials and equipment used to implement the curriculum reflect the lives of the children and families. Materials and equipment further:
- provide for children's safety while being appropriately challenging.
 - encourage exploration, experimentation, and discovery.
 - promote action and interaction.
 - are organized to support independent use.
 - are rotated to reflect changing curriculum and accommodate new interests and skill levels of children.
 - are rich in variety.
 - accommodate children's special needs.
- 6D Teaching staff creates and maintains a setting in which children of differing abilities can progress, with guidance, toward increasing levels of:
- autonomy.
 - responsibility.
 - empathy.

- 6E Teaching staff, in a climate of mutual respect, develops individual relationships with children by providing care that is responsive, attentive, consistent, comforting, supportive, and culturally sensitive.
- 6F Teachers organize time and space on a daily basis to allow children to work or play individually and in pairs, allow them to come together in small groups, and to engage as a whole group.
- 6G Teachers use children’s interest in and curiosity about the world to engage them with new content and developmental skills.

In a program with infants, toddlers and two-year-olds:

- 6H Infants and toddlers/twos are provided varied opportunities and materials to:
- use language.
 - develop understanding of concepts such as more and less and big and small.
 - see and touch different shapes, sizes, colors, and patterns.
 - build number awareness, using objects in the environment.
 - read books.
- 6I Teaching staff engages infants in frequent face-to-face social interactions each day. These include both verbal behaviors (e.g., talking, cooing, repeating infant sounds, singing) and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., smiling, touching, holding).
- 6J Teaching staff gives one-to-one attention to infants when engaging in caregiving routines.
- 6K The following steps are taken to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):
- infants, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, are placed on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.
 - pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in cribs or rest equipment for infants younger than eight months.
 - if a blanket is used, the infant is placed at the foot of the crib with a thin blanket tucked around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the infant’s chest.
 - the infant’s head remains uncovered during sleep. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position.
- 6L Teaching staff individualize routine care by incorporating family practices whenever possible and by respecting the home culture and the family’s preferred language.

- 6M Teachers provide opportunities to develop the classroom community through participation in decision making about classroom:
- guidelines
 - plans
 - activities
- 6N For children with persistent and challenging behavior, the teachers, families, and other professionals work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that:
- supports the child’s inclusion and success that:
 - provides for the safety of the child.
 - provides for the safety of others in the classroom.
 - provides a calm and respectful environment
 - provides the child with information on acceptable behavior.

In a program with infants, toddlers and two-year-olds:

- 6O Teaching staff creates a climate of respect for infants by looking for as well as listening and responding to verbal and nonverbal cues.

STANDARD VII. Services

The center provides a variety of quality services to meet the needs of the whole child.

Membership Indicators

- 7A The center maintains and securely stores cumulative records for each child.
- 7B The center has a crisis management plan that is communicated, tested, and updated annually.
- 7C Requirements for safety are met:
- fire, tornado, intruder, and other drills are conducted and recorded.
 - a plan to deal with blood-borne pathogens.
 - CPR and first aid training.
 - training in administration of medication.
- 7D Initial and on-going child abuse and neglect screening is completed for volunteers who work with students on a regular basis.
- 7E Provisions are made for the safety of students when being transported by the center.
- 7F A sign-in/sign-out procedure is in place for children at arrival and dismissal.
- 7G *(In a program with infants, toddler and two’s)* Teaching staff supervises infants and toddler/twos by sight and sound at all times:

- When infants and toddlers/twos are sleeping, mirrors, video, and/or sound monitors may be used to augment supervision in sleeping areas, but such monitors may not be relied on in lieu of direct visual supervision.
 - Sides of cribs are checked to ensure that they are up and locked. Teachers, assistant teachers, or teacher's aides are aware of, and positioned so they can hear and see any sleeping children for whom they are responsible, especially when they are actively engaged with children who are awake.
- 7H Teaching staff supervise children primarily by sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight (e.g. those who can use the toilet independently, who are in a library area, or who are napping).
- 7I (*In a program with infants, toddlers and two's*) Except for human milk, staff serve only formula and infant food that comes to the facility in factory-sealed containers (e.g., ready-to-feed powder or concentrate formulas and baby food jars) prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice.
 - Staff discard after one hour any formula or human milk that is served, but not completely consumed, or is not refrigerated.
 - If staff warm formula or human milk, the milk is warmed in water at no more than 120° F for no more than five minutes.
 - No milk, including human milk, and no other infant foods are warmed in a microwave oven.
- 7J If a food program is provided, adequate and qualified personnel are available to plan and serve a variety of well-balanced, wholesome meals in full accordance with appropriate local, state, and federal regulations.
- 7K Technology "Acceptable Use" policies for children and staff have been developed, communicated, and implemented.
- 7L The center maintains up-to-date health records in a safe and secure location.
- 7M The center adheres to communicable disease, immunization, and screening requirements from the state and local health departments.
- 7N The center follows established policies for the administration of medication.
- 7O Cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces in the facility are routinely done including:
- Written procedures guide staff in cleaning and sanitizing. Program follows Sanitation guidelines of local sanitarian or consults Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, 2nd Edition (<http://nrckids.org/CFOC/index.html>)
 - Soap and water is used to clean, followed by a sanitation solution of ¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water to sanitize equipment, material, tables, shelves, etc.

- Surfaces that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of material that can be sanitized.
- Staff use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids which reduces the spread of infectious disease.
- Staff cleans rugs and carpeting by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning.
- Staff disposes of contaminated material and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container.
- Any toy that a child has placed in his or her mouth or that is otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion is either to be (a) washed by using water and detergent, and then rinsed, sanitized, and air dried or (b) washed and dried in a mechanical dishwasher before it can be used by another child.
- Ventilation and sanitation rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers, should control odors in inhabited areas of the facility and in custodial closets.
- (In a program with infants, toddlers and two's) Before walking on surfaces that infants use specifically for play, adults and children should remove, replace, or cover with clean foot coverings any shoes they have worn outside that play area. If children or staff are barefoot in such areas, their feet should be visibly clean.
- (In a program with infants, toddlers and two's) Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-up are wet or contain feces:
 - At least every 2 hours when children are awake and when children awaken.
 - Diapers are changed when wet or soiled.
 - Staff changes children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility.
 - At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child when the child is being changed on an elevated surface.
 - In the changing area, staff post and follow changing procedures.
 - Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding.
 - Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly. Containers are kept closed and are not accessible to children.

7P The program follows these practices regarding hand-washing:

- Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored.
- Hand-washing is required by all staff, volunteers, and children to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others.
- Staff assists children with hand-washing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash hands either independently or with staff assistance.
- Children and adults wash their hands
 - On arrival for the day.
 - After diapering or using toilet (use of wipes is acceptable for infants).

- After handling bodily fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit).
- Before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after handling any raw food that requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, and poultry).
- After playing in water that is shared by two or more people
- After handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals.
- When moving from one group to another (e.g., visiting) that involves contact with infants and toddlers/twos.
- Adults also wash their hands:
 - Before and after feeding a child.
 - Before and after administering medication.
 - After assisting a child with toileting.
 - After handling garbage or cleaning.
- Proper hand-washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include:
 - Using liquid soap and running water.
 - Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 10 seconds, including the back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails; rinsing well.
 - Drying hands with a paper towel, a single –use towel, or a dryer.
 - Care should be taken to avoid touching the faucet with just-washed hands (e.g. by using a paper towel to turn off water).

STANDARD VIII. Facilities

The facilities are adequate and well-maintained to achieve the purposes of the center.

Membership Indicators

- 8A The location, center grounds, and physical plant support an adequate instructional program that is consistent with the center’s mission, philosophy, purposes, and needs of the students.
- 8B Housekeeping provides a safe, sanitary, and attractive environment for learning.
- 8C The physical plant and grounds are in good repair and meet the local and federal regulations for heating, ventilation, illumination, room size and capacity, etc.
- 8D Supervisors must meet adult-child and group size ratios.
- Adult-child ratio:
 - weeks-2 years, 1:4
 - 2 years, 1:8
 - 3 years-5 years, 1:10
 - Group size:
 - 6 weeks-2 years, 8 maximum
 - 2 years, 16 maximum
 - 3 years-5 years, 20 maximum

- 8E State standards are met for classroom square footage, a minimum of 45sq feet/per child for infants and 35sq feet/per child for all others.
- 8F The center is in compliance with asbestos regulations.
- 8G Regularly inspected fire extinguishers are placed throughout the building as required by local regulations.
- 8H Exit routes are described and copies posted in each room.
- 8I A warning system is maintained for fire, tornado, earthquake, etc.
- 8J The center's building is locked and access is controlled during the school day.
- 8K The kitchen and dining areas used by the center meet health and safety regulations.
- 8L The center is in compliance with insurance regulations.
- 8M Inspection of the physical plant and grounds to identify safety hazards is made regularly, with the center taking steps to remedy any identified deficiencies.
- 8N The center takes steps for the safety of students on playgrounds/athletic fields.
- 8O Playground needs:
- Is fully fenced.
 - A minimum of 75 sq. ft. per child.
 - Appropriate fall zones and a 6" deep resilient surface.
 - Regular safety inspections to insure good repair.
 - Safety inspection reports kept on file.
- 8P Toilets and sinks are appropriate for student use (added steps, lowered sinks, or child-sized bathroom fixtures).
- 8Q Furniture is child-sized and adequate for the number of children served.
- 8R Administrator regularly checks Consumer Product Safety Commission recall list and takes action.
- 8S A plan is in place to enhance the center's facilities in order to meet emerging instructional needs and the overall needs of the center's community, including accessibility for children or adults with special needs.
- 8T The center's facilities plan is annually reviewed.
- 8U Technological equipment, internet access, and bandwidth are made available to Administrator and teaching staff to meet the needs of the 21st century.

STANDARD IX. Finance and Planning

The center employs effective financial management and accountability in the use of its resources. Strategic planning is in place to insure the viability of the center.

Membership Indicators

- 9A The center operates by means of a carefully planned and regularly monitored annual budget.
- 9B The center's mission, philosophy, and priorities are reviewed as a part of the budget process.
- 9C The budget is planned through collaboration of boards/committees, director, and pastor (in sectarian center).
- 9D Resources are available to implement a quality instructional program and maintain financial viability.
- 9E The center engages in short-term and long-term planning as a part of the improvement process.
- 9F The annual plan for improvement is formulated and updated by appropriate constituencies.
- 9G Annual funding is allocated for staff development activities/programs.
- 9H The center has strategies and resources to assure its ongoing operation.
- 9I Development activities, marketing, and advancement activities are in place and evaluated yearly which include future capital and technology needs.
- 9J A public relations program provides local and wider communities with information and news about the center's program, activities, and operations.

Supplemental Program Standards and Indicators

STANDARD X. Exceptional Learning Needs Programs

Exceptional learning needs centers and/or programs serve children with learning needs that require the services of teachers who have specialized degrees in exceptional learning.

Membership Indicators

- 10A Administrators who work with students that have exceptional learning needs are trained and prepared to work with those students.
- 10B Teachers who work with students that have exceptional learning needs teachers are certified (or working toward) certification in exceptional learning needs.

- 10C Teachers are trained in developing a service plan/strategic plan to meet the needs of each student.
- 10D Curriculum is adapted to allow students to progress at their individual learning rate and to facilitate transition from level to level.
- 10E Least-restrictive environment provisions are made to allow students to attend regular classes, and plans for transition are in place.
- 10F Service plans/strategic plans are available in each student's file.
- 10G Interdisciplinary services (physical therapy, speech, occupational therapy, counseling, etc.) related to physical conditions are either provided or referral resources are communicated to the families.
- 10H Reasonable accommodations are made in the physical plant for accessibility.