



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

2013-2014

# Head Start and Early Head Start Program of Excellence Guidelines

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Head

# Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section Title	Page #
Vision/Mission/Core Values	6
Head Start Introduction	7
Key Components	7
Hours of Operation	7
Qualified Staff/Child Ratios	8
Staffing	8
Roles and Responsibilities of Teaching Staff The Head Start VPK Teacher and Associate Educators	8
Early Head Start Caregivers	9
Head Start Assistant	10
Role of the Office of Early Childhood Programs	10
Role of the Regional Center	10
Role of the School	11
Head Start and School Readiness	11
Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework	11
Description of a Comprehensive Curriculum and Pedagogy	12
Access to the Curriculum	12
Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)	13
M-DCPS Early Head Start Curricula	13
M-DCPS Head Start Prekindergarten Curricula	14
Literacy Curricula “Growing Readers”	16
Additional Curricula Resource “Wright Skills Literacy”	16
Mathematics Curricula “Numbers Plus”	16
Screening/Assessments	17
VPK Assessment (State Mandated)	18
Oral Language Proficiency Scale-Revised (OLPS-R)...Mandatory	19
Anecdotal Notes/Observations....As needed	19
Head Start Computer-Assisted Instruction	20
Field Trips	20
Typical Behaviors of Prekindergarten Students	21
Intervention Strategies for Positive Behavior Management	21
Preventing Problems and Conflicts	22
Steps for Solving Problems and Resolving Conflicts	22
Child Management Checklist	23
Pyramid Model (Social Emotional)	25
Early Interventions	26
Response to Intervention (RtI) Models and Referrals	27
Response to Intervention (RtI)	27
M-DCPS Early Head Start Early Steps Referral Process	27
M-DCPS Head Start Referral Process	28
Parent Engagement	29
Parent/Family Support	33
Staff Development and Instructional Support	34
Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program	36
Alignment with Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011)	36



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section Title	Page #
Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2100)	37
VPK Attendance and Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Monitoring	39
School Board Policies	41
Head Start Program Staff/Office of Early Childhood Programs	42
Appendices	43-79
Forms	80-101
M-DCPS Anti-Discrimination Policy	102
Acknowledgement Form	103

### Program of Excellence Guidelines Appendices

Appendix	Title	Text Reference Page #	Document Page #
A	M-DCPS/UTD Letter of Understanding	8	43-45
B	High/Scope Preschool Wheel of Learning	14	46
C	Sample Classroom Design	15	47
D	Sample Materials List for a High/Scope Prekindergarten Classroom	15	48-52
E	Daily Schedules	15	53-59
F	Head Start/Early Head Start At-A-Glance	17	60-73
G	Resources to Support High Quality Early Learning Programs	35	74-75
H	VPK Sample Learning Lessons	36	76-78
I	Instructional Staff Survey of Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Classrooms	40	79

### Program of Excellence Guidelines Forms

<b>Form Number</b>	<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Text Reference Page #</b>	<b>Document Page #</b>
2431	09-12	Field Trip Request Packet	21	80-88
MDC	7/6/10	Early Steps Referral Passport	28	89-91
2128	11-03	Consent Form for Mutual Exchange of Information	28	92-94
7496	01-13	Head Start Pre-Kindergarten Request for Assistance	28	95-96
6279	01-08	Notice of Intent and Parental/Guardian Consent to Conduct a Screening/Assessment	29	97-99
OEL-VPK 03L	2-14-09	VPK Child Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate (Long Form)	40	100
		Instructions for Printing Mandatory Monthly Student Attendance Records	40	101

# **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **Office of Early Childhood Programs**

### **VISION**

The Office of Early Childhood Programs is committed to providing high-quality comprehensive services and programs to prepare young children for life-long learning.

### **MISSION**

The mission of the Office of Early Childhood Programs is to provide curriculum leadership and instructional support that enables young children and their families to participate in high-quality, developmentally effective programs.

### **CORE VALUES**

- ◇ Respect the worth and dignity of children as members of the family, the school, neighborhood, and global community.
- ◇ Recognize that all children are capable and competent learners.
- ◇ Assist parent(s)/guardian(s) in understanding their role(s) as the child's first teacher.
- ◇ Advocate for developmentally appropriate and instructionally effective programs to meet the needs of all children.
- ◇ Recognize the value of children's diverse cultures and their physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs.
- ◇ Provide research-based, high-quality, comprehensive and continuous professional development to educators of young children.

## Head Start Introduction

Head Start (HS) is a Federal program for preschool children from low-income families. The HS program is operated by local non-profit organizations in almost every county in the nation. Children who attend HS participate in a variety of educational activities. They also receive free medical and dental care; have healthy meals and snacks; and enjoy playing indoors and outdoors in a safe learning environment. Children attending HS programs are between the ages of 3 and 5.

Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant woman. The EHS program supports the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of each child. EHS services are available for infants and toddlers from birth to age three.

## Key Components

The following four components serve as cornerstones for the HS and EHS programs:

- Education – The HS and EHS’ educational program is designed to meet the needs of each child, the community served, and its ethnic and cultural characteristics. Every child receives a variety of learning experiences to foster intellectual, social, and emotional growth.
- Health – HS and EHS emphasize the importance of early identification of health concerns. Every child is involved in a comprehensive health program, which includes immunizations; and medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional services.
- Parent Involvement - An essential part of the HS and EHS programs is the involvement of parents in parent education, program planning, and operating activities. Many parents serve as members of policy councils and committees and have a voice in programmatic decisions. Required parent participation in classes and workshops on child development and home visits by school staff allow parents to learn about the needs of their children and educational activities that can take place at home.
- Social Services - Specific services are offered to each family based on a needs assessment. They may include: community outreach; referrals; additional family needs assessments; recruitment and enrollment of children; and emergency assistance and/or crisis intervention.

## Hours of Operation

The HS and EHS programs operate Monday through Friday. Hours of operation are as follows:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Hours of Operation</b>
<b>HS</b>	8:15 a.m.-3:05 p.m.
<b>EHS</b>	7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

HS students adhere to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Elementary and Secondary Calendar for the 2013-2014 school year. EHS students begin August 19, 2013 and will end July 31, 2014.

\* Staff assigned to HS and EHS programs are required to work an extended work day. Compensation for time beyond the regular work day as well as specific program requirements were established through a Letter of Understanding with the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) and M-DDCPS.

### Qualified Staff/Child Ratios

Age Group	Qualified Staff to Child Ratio
EHS - Birth to Three	1 adult / 4 children
HS Three-Year-Old	2 adults / 17 children
HS Three/Four-Year-Old Combination	2 adults/20 children (9 age 3/11 age 4)
HS Four-Year-Old	2 adults / 20 children

### Staffing

Teamwork is an interactive process that is crucial in creating a supportive climate for young learners. When adults work together to establish and maintain active learning environments for children the effects are far-reaching. The team shares responsibilities throughout the daily routine. The Head Start/ Early Head Start Assistant is to be in the classroom throughout the day and provide support during all components of the day as mandated by the *Florida Department of Education and Head Start Program Performance Standards*. It is important to remember that the adult to student ratio must be maintained at all times.

EHS Infants and Toddlers (Birth-Three) classrooms are staffed with one (1) 10-month plus full-time Associate Educator and one (1) 10-month plus full-time Early Head Start Assistant.

HS Three-Year-Old classrooms are staffed with one (1) 10-month full-time Associate Educator and one (1) 10-month full-time Head Start Assistant.

HS Four-Year-Old classrooms are staffed with one (1) 10-month teacher certified in Early Childhood and one (1) 10-month full-time Head Start Assistant.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Teaching Staff

#### The Head Start VPK Teacher and Associate Educators

- Create and employ a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and meets the needs of children from diverse backgrounds.
- Monitor and supervise the children during their daily activities.
- Observe children daily and record their outcomes.
- Record observations on assessment on all children in the Galileo software.

- Use child outcome data reports to strengthen teaching techniques, input child outcome data in Galileo software.
- Assist children during breakfast, lunch and snack in order to model appropriate health and nutrition habits.
- Ensure children's portfolios include all eleven child outcomes.
- Plan as a team on a daily basis in planning curricula and adding the necessary parental contribution.
- Create and maintain a relationship with every child and family and assess their needs.
- Evaluate the progress on an on-going basis and implement the necessary modifications.
- The Head Start teacher makes sure the standards set by the National Head Start Program are performed.
- Plan and conduct parent-teacher conferences and home visits to meet the performance standards.
- Participate in staff meetings.
- Plan and schedule developmentally appropriate field trips.
- Maintain accurate attendance and meal records.
- Recruit and supervise volunteers.

#### **Early Head Start Caregivers**

- Closely monitor children during their daily activities.
- Assist in food service for children during breakfast, lunch and snack fostering appropriate health and nutrition habits.
- Supervise and care for infant and toddler age children.
- Plan and implement daily lesson plans adhering to the state approved curriculum.
- Observe child daily and record the child outcome data.
- Provide written documentation of students' progress for parents.
- Prepare materials for learning centers and maintain teaching materials, equipment and classroom supplies.
- Assist children with bathroom procedures; perform diapering duties as necessary.
- She/he is responsible for the implementation of health, emergency procedures and first aid.
- Plan and conduct parent-teacher conferences and home visits.
- Participate in trainings, meetings and conferences.
- Input child outcomes data in Galileo software on all children.
- Provide individual instruction to all children.
- Maintain accurate attendance and meal records.
- Participate in monthly fire drills.
- Recruit and supervise volunteers.

## **Head Start Assistant**

- Assist the center caregivers and teachers in all aspects of classroom management and curriculum implementation.
- Work with Infants and Toddlers and small groups of students under the supervision of the center director and caregivers.
- Assist the center director with the organization and maintenance of the classroom materials, equipment and supplies.
- Complete timely, neat, accurate documentation of screenings, assessments, individualized plans, attendance, daily health checklists, daily activity logs for parents, home visits, inventories and other documentation deemed necessary for providing quality services.
- Work with all school personnel to meet the needs of the infants and toddler students in the center/school.
- Perform related duties of an instructional or clerical nature as assigned.
- Assist in toilet training, feeding and attention to medical and physical problems with infants and toddlers.
- Maintain an open, friendly, and cooperative relationship with each child's family.
- Encourage each child's family to be actively involved in the Early Head Start Program.
- Ensure that: each infant and toddler is warmly greeted upon arrival; each infant is held; and each child is gradually assisted to become a part of the small group of four.
- Talk, sing, and read frequently.
- Respond quickly in a smooth and tender manner to infants' cries or calls of distress.
- Protect all children from physical punishment or verbal abuse by anyone in any program activity, and immediately report any incident to the center director/administrator or person in charge.
- Attend all training opportunities and staff meeting as provided and scheduled.

## **Role of the Office of Early Childhood Programs**

The role of the Office of Early Childhood Programs (OEC) is to monitor the implementation of the HS and EHS Programs across M-DCPS, including fiscal management and professional development. In addition, OEC will collaborate with Regional Centers and other M-DCPS departments regarding transportation, facilities, wrap around services, and other resources as appropriate, to ensure information exchange relating to educational and non-educational services of children enrolled in HS and EHS Programs.

## **Role of the Regional Center**

The role of the Regional Center is to support the implementation of the HS and EHS Programs across M-DCPS and their adherence to HS and EHS Program Performance Standards (45 CFR Chapter XIII) as stated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. Additionally, Regional Centers assist OEC with the implementation of district directives, Weekly Briefings, State and Federal HS and EHS Program mandates, and the review of annual State and Federal reviews as well as assist in addressing corrective measures.

## **Role of the School**

The role of the school is to provide a safe educational setting that meets the high standards of quality embodied in the HS and EHS Program Performance Standards. Principals and Assistant Principals will conduct classroom visits and observations to ascertain compliance with HS and EHS Performance Standards. Principals and Assistant Principals of HS and EHS sites will be required to attend scheduled meetings and/or webinars to receive program updates.

### **Head Start and School Readiness**

Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. *The Head Start Approach to School Readiness* means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start is a leader in the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development, including physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development, all of which are essential to children getting ready for school.

### **Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Assessment/Child%20Outcomes/revise-child-outcomes.html>

The *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* provide Head Start and other early childhood programs with a description of the developmental building blocks that are most important for a child's school and long-term success. Head Start children, 3 to 5 years old, are expected to progress in all the areas of child development and early learning outlined by the Framework. Head Start Programs also are expected to develop and implement a program that ensures such progress is made. The Framework is not appropriate for programs serving infants and toddlers.

The Framework outlines the essential areas of development and learning that are to be used by Head Start Programs to establish school readiness goals for their children, monitor children's progress, align curricula, and conduct program planning. It does not provide specific benchmarks or levels of accomplishment for children to achieve during their time in Head Start. The Framework reflects the legislative mandates of the *Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007* and current research in child development and learning. The Framework also reflects the Head Start Program's core value to promote all aspects of child development and learning in early childhood programs.

The Framework is organized into 11 Domains, 37 Domain Elements, and over 100 examples. The 11 Domains represent the overarching areas of child development and early learning essential for school and long-term success. The domains are:

- Physical Development and Health
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Language Development
- Literacy Knowledge and Skills
- Mathematics Knowledge and Skills
- Science Knowledge and Skills

- Creative Arts Expression
- Logic and Reasoning
- Social Studies Knowledge and Skills
- English Language Development

### Description of a Comprehensive Curriculum and Pedagogy

A comprehensive curriculum is one that contains a mix of instruction and practice activities to build strong skills in each of the eleven domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. The curriculum must provide explicit, systematic instruction, assessment and intervention that leads to children’s growing proficiency at each stage of skill development. Activities should include options for children of disparate abilities and backgrounds, providing instructors with alternatives to teach all children the required skills and content.

The overall instructional design should include the following:

- A clear roadmap or blueprint for instructors to get an overall picture of the program (i.e. a scope and sequence).
- Clearly stated goals and objectives.
- Resources to help the instructor understand the rationale for the instructional approach and strategies utilized in the program (i.e. explanations in the instructor manuals, references, articles, and reliable websites).
- A coherent instructional design.
- Explicit instruction in the particular skill area.
- Consistently systematic and intentional instruction.
- A logical organization to the materials so that it is clear as to how the curriculum proceeds over the course of the program (day, week, month, year).
- Consistent “instructor friendly” instructional routines.
- Student materials aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- Examples of constructive feedback.
- Scaffolding with specific instructions.
- Differentiated instruction.
- Guidelines and materials for flexible grouping.
- Enrichment activities for advanced children.
- Guidelines for use with diverse populations such as English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.
- Components that foster intrinsic motivation in children (Approaches to Learning Domain).
- Ample opportunities for practice.

### Access to the Curriculum

It is important to note the great diversity of preschool students residing in Florida, including children with special developmental, behavioral, or physical needs, who are English Language Learners, or who may be at-risk of future learning or school difficulties for a variety of reasons. Accommodations implemented to foster access to the program do not lessen achievement expectations; they should, however, provide a wide range of techniques and support systems to help children work around areas

of special need. Frequently, accommodations that may be required to ensure meaningful participation by a given child are found to benefit many other children in the classroom. Accommodations include changes in instructional methods and materials, learning activities and assessments, time demands and scheduling, the learning environment, and the use of special communication systems.

Source: Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program: Curriculum Approval Specifications 2010; Florida Department of Education Office of Early Learning

### **Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)**

Section 1002.69, Florida Statutes, describes the Department of Education's responsibilities related to statewide kindergarten screening and the calculation of VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rates. The law requires that the statewide kindergarten screening be administered to all kindergarten students in the school district within the first 30 days of each school year. Children who participated in VPK are screened on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener. The FLKRS includes a subset of the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS) and the Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading-Kindergarten (FAIR-K) which includes Letter Naming and Phonemic Awareness tasks.

Readiness for kindergarten on ECHOS is Demonstrating or Emerging/Progressing, and on FAIR-K it is a probability of reading success of .67 percent or above. A school that has been identified as a Provider on Probation (POP) is one that does not achieve a minimum readiness rate of demonstrating the Provider's satisfactory delivery of the VPK program. If the readiness rate of a provider falls below the minimum rate, the school district requires the school to submit an improvement plan for approval and to implement the plan. To demonstrate satisfactory delivery of the VPK program, a minimum of seventy (70) percent of the children enrolled in the VPK program in each classroom from the previous year, must test ready for kindergarten.

The purpose of the FLKRS is:

- To inform instruction;
- To gather information on a child's overall development;
- To specifically address, the readiness of each student for kindergarten based on the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards or Four-Year-Olds (2011) ; and
- To calculate the VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate that measures how well a VPK provider prepares four-year-olds for kindergarten based upon the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011).

### **M-DCPS Early Head Start Curricula**

M-DCPS Early Head Start Programs use The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos which has helped teachers understand developmentally appropriate practice and how to create daily routines and meaningful experiences that respond to children's strengths, interests, and needs.

The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos includes three comprehensive volumes that reflect 38 research-based objectives for development and learning that are predictors of school success. They are aligned with state learning standards and two objectives are dedicated to English-language acquisition. This new edition helps teachers to plan and implement every aspect of caring for and teaching children from birth to age 3 effectively.

The description of this Curriculum is as follows:

**Volume 1: The Foundation**, which outlines the research behind the curriculum and discusses the five central components of nurturing care and teaching.

**Volume 2: Routines and Experiences**, which discusses the five routines and eight experiences that are essential to the development and learning of children birth to age 3, explaining how to plan intentionally while maintaining the flexibility to respond to the changing interests and abilities of young children.

**Volume 3: Objectives to Development and Learning: Birth Through Kindergarten**, which explains the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that matter most to the continuing development and learning of very young children.

### **M-DCPS Head Start Prekindergarten Curricula**

M-DCPS Head Start Prekindergarten Programs use the High/Scope Approach, a research based and child focused curriculum that uses a carefully designed process called — "active participatory learning" — to achieve powerful, positive outcomes. The power of learning comes from personal initiative. Young children act on their innate desire to explore; they ask and search for answers to questions about people, materials, events, and ideas that arouse their curiosity; they solve problems that stand in the way of their goals; and they generate new strategies to try. The five basic principles that form the framework of the High/Scope Approach are active learning, positive adult-child interactions, a child-friendly learning environment, a consistent daily routine, and team based daily assessment.

#### *Active Learning*

A high quality, developmentally appropriate learning environment provides children an opportunity to engage in active learning. Young children learn by doing. In High/Scope classrooms, children are active agents who construct their own knowledge of the world as they transform their ideas and interactions into logical and intuitive sequences of thought and action, work with diverse materials to create personally meaningful experiences and outcomes, and talk about their experiences in their own words. Five ingredients of active learning provide a framework for adults in implementing the program. These ingredients are as follows:

1. **Materials** – There are abundant, age appropriate materials that the child can use in a variety of ways. Learning grows out of the child's direct actions on the materials.
2. **Manipulation** –The child has opportunities to explore, manipulate, combine, and transform the materials chosen.
3. **Choice** -The child chooses what to do. Since learning results from the child's attempts to pursue personal interests and goals, the opportunity to choose activities and materials is essential.
4. **Language from the Child** - The child describes what he or she is doing. Through language, the child reflects on his or her actions, integrates new experiences into an existing knowledge base, and seeks the cooperation of others in his or her activities.

5. **Adult Support** - Adults recognize and encourage the child’s reasoning, problem solving, and creativity.

### *Adult-Child Interaction*

Active learning depends on positive adult-child interactions. Mindful of providing a psychologically safe climate for young learners, adults using the High/Scope preschool approach strive to be supportive as they converse and play with children. Throughout the day, guided by an understanding of how preschool children think and reason, adults practice positive interaction strategies. These strategies include sharing control with children, focusing on children’s strengths, forming authentic relationships with children, supporting children’s play, and adopting a problem solving approach to social conflict.

### *Learning Environment*

Planning the layout of a prekindergarten class and selecting appropriate materials have a strong impact on the behavior of children and adults. An active learning environment provides children with ongoing opportunities to make choices and decisions. Adults organize play space into specific interest areas such as pretending and role playing, drawing and painting, “reading” and “writing”, counting, sorting, singing and dancing, sand and water play and building block structures. The interest areas contain a wide and plentiful assortment of easily accessible materials children can choose and carry out their intentions and ideas for play. Natural, found, commercial, and teacher-made materials provide many opportunities each day for children to engage in the VPK educational standards in creative and purposeful ways. Adults arrange storage for materials using low shelves, clear boxes, and picture labels children can “read”, so all children can independently find, use and return the items they need.

### *Daily Routine*

The daily schedule in a prekindergarten classroom revolves around a variety of learning opportunities and experiences, provided through various contexts, such as small group time, large group time and interest area (center) time. These learning groupings provide opportunities for active learning, purposeful play, and teacher lead activities. The M-DCPS Head Start daily schedule provides consistent routines and a framework with a flexible structure that supports the curriculum and children’s interest. The daily routine enables young children to anticipate what happens next and gives them a great deal of control over what they do during each part of the day. The plan-do-review process enables children to express their intentions, carry them out, and reflect on what they have done in the interest areas/centers. Small-group time consists of Literacy and Math lessons that are generated from the High/ Scope curriculum. During large-group time, students are introduced to phonological and phonemic awareness, music and movement activities, story re-enactments, group discussions, cooperative play and projects.

### **Literacy Curricula “Growing Readers”**

M-DCPS Head Start Prekindergarten Programs use *Growing Readers Early Literacy Curriculum* which engages young children in four key areas of early literacy learning: comprehension, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and concepts about print. The program focuses on these four aspects of early literacy because of the strong evidence that young children’s knowledge of these concepts is a

solid predictor of their reading achievement in later years.

Growing Readers is structured around three basic elements:

1. Small-group literacy activities at three levels of development.
2. New and classic children's books.
3. Common classroom materials.

### **Additional Curricula Resource "Wright Skills Literacy"**

For literacy to emerge, children need to be exposed to a language rich environment. This environment needs to provide opportunities for the children to directly participate in literacy activities which are risk free and stimulating. Children's experiences with speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the preschool years lay the groundwork for reading success in elementary school.

#### *Shared Reading*

In Shared Reading time, children enjoy material they cannot yet read for themselves. Once they hear the story, they often remember much of it. Through repeated readings, the children will be able to "read" the book by themselves. This story sharing process provides an opportunity to share, learn new vocabulary, and learn about books (front and back of the book, author, illustrator, spine, etc.) in a supportive atmosphere.

#### *Phonological Awareness*

Phonological Awareness time provides an understanding of the sounds of language including words, rhyme, blending, segmenting, syllables and initial consonant sounds. Phonological awareness activities enable children to acquire phonetic reading skills because it helps them recognize the number, identify and order of the sounds in words.

### **Mathematics Curricula "Numbers Plus"**

The *Numbers Plus Preschool Mathematics Curriculum* is a comprehensive set of detailed plans for small and large group early childhood mathematics activities, with ideas for extending learning throughout the program day. What is special about Numbers Plus is that children's mathematical learning is sequenced within activities. Each activity has a built in progression so children of different developmental and ability levels can participate together and have a positive and meaningful learning experience. By actively engaging young children with materials and ideas, Numbers Plus builds on the latest knowledge from research and practice about early mathematics learning and how adults support it.

Aligned with the standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and developed under a grant from the institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, the 120 activities in Numbers Plus are divided into five content areas:

1. Number Sense and Operations
2. Geometry
3. Measurement

4. Algebra
5. Data Analysis

### Screenings/Assessments

Identifying children's area of strengths and growth are essential in providing a quality education that builds on a child's prior knowledge and abilities. Similarly, identifying possible factors that delay a child's ability to develop at a typical rate is crucial for developing and implementing an intervention plan tailored to the specific needs of a child. During the first 45 days of enrollment, children are screened for the following areas:

- Sensory (visual and auditory)
- Behavioral
- Motor
- Language
- Social
- Cognitive
- Perceptual
- Emotional

M-DCPS Head Start Program uses the following screenings to gather information on children's development:

- ACUSCREEN (Areas screened: Motor, Cognitive, Perceptual, Language, and Social)
- eDECA2 (Areas screened: Behavioral and Emotional)
- Locally designed Articulation Screening: (Area screened: Language)
- Medical Exam (Areas screened: visual and auditory)

When a delay in development is identified, appropriate strategies and referrals are utilized to determine if and what type of in-depth evaluation is required for proper intervention/treatment.

### *Galileo*

M-DCPS Early Head Start/Head Start Program utilizes a research-based online assessment tool known as Galileo. Galileo provides early childhood educators and other stakeholders a complete and fully integrated assessment, curriculum, and reporting system that links assessment, planning, individualization and program progress.

M-DCPS Head Start Program uses the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) Assessment. Voluntary Prekindergarten classroom students are assessed both formally and informally. Developmentally appropriate assessment at the classroom level is crucial to the implementation process of a high quality early childhood program. It is highly recommended that each classroom teacher maintain a data binder containing the results of all assessments specifically the VPK Assessment Class Summary Sheet, Anecdotal Records (as needed), as well as Waterford classroom summary reports. These reports will provide detailed analysis of student performance that may be analyzed and used to plan instruction.

This data may also be used in the referral process. They are to be accessible to district personnel and administration. Miami-Dade County Public Schools utilizes the following assessment practices.

### **VPK Assessment (State Mandated)**

The Florida Center for Reading Research has developed the Florida VPK Assessment in collaboration with the Department of Education. The purpose of this assessment is to provide teachers with valid and reliable feedback regarding children's progress in attaining the skills in the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011)*. Teachers may use this information to inform instructional decisions in the VPK classroom.

The content for the three early literacy measures was decided by identifying the best predictors of later reading success. Print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language/vocabulary are the best predictors for conventional early reading ability. The content for the early mathematics measure was decided by identifying the best predictors of later mathematics success. Number sense is one of the best known informal predictors of formal mathematics ability. In addition, research demonstrates that all four skill areas (e.g. print knowledge, phonological awareness, mathematics, oral language/vocabulary) can benefit from targeted instruction during the preschool year.

Plan to administer the assessments as outlined below:

Assessment Period 1 (AP1): September 3-30, 2013

Assessment Period 2 (AP2): January 7-February 4, 2014

Assessment Period 3 (AP3): April 22-May 16, 2014

The Florida VPK Assessment Online Reporting System provides teachers with a user friendly tool to track children's progress in attaining the skills in the VPK Education Standards. Teachers may use this information to guide instructional decisions in the VPK classroom. The Florida VPK Assessment Online Reporting System is available to all registered providers free of charge. This system allows VPK teachers to enter each child's assessment results and then analyze children's data in order to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of all children.

The VPK Assessment Online Reporting System has the capacity to:

- Create individual, classroom, and center level reports to track progress.
- Link the assessment data to instructional strategies and resources that are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds.
- Create a letter to parents about their child's performance on each assessment.

Instructions for access to assessment results are posted in the Office of Early Childhood Programs website and will be distributed during the VPK Assessment training sessions. Schools must keep all VPK Assessment scoring booklets on file for five years. Parents can be given a copy of the scoring booklet. Schools must keep the originals for reporting purposes to the Florida Department of Education.

### **Oral Language Proficiency Scale Revised (OLPS-R)... Mandatory**

Prekindergarten students will be assessed in the OLPS-R at the end of the school year by trained school staff. Prekindergarten teachers are to read the Home Language Survey (HLS) of each student to ascertain which language a student speaks or is exposed to at home. Additional strategies are provided by the Office of Early Childhood Programs on how to meet the educational needs of ELL students.

### Instructions

Pre-K students need to be assessed with the M-DCOLPS-R by May 30, 2014. The following information must be entered in the ISIS - "J" Screen by June 6, 2014.

Score of 20 – Proficient	Score less than 20 – ESOL level I-IV
Assessment Date	Assessment Date
Aural/Oral results	Aural/Oral results
LEP: N	LEP: Y
	ESOL level

\* ESOL Program **Entry Date** will be entered at the beginning of the school year when the student enters Kindergarten (2014-2015)

### **Anecdotal Notes/Observations....As needed**

Assessment includes a range of tasks adults use to ensure that observing children, interacting with children, and planning for children receive full adult energy and attention. The teachers are active observers and listeners in a VPK classroom. Teamwork built on supportive adult relationships form a solid base for adults doing this work together. While observing and interacting, the teaching team may gather accurate information about children. These anecdotal notes are based on what the teaching team sees and hears from the students. Observations/anecdotes may target students which may need remediation, enrichment, or behavioral interventions. The teaching team is to engage in planning sessions in which they share their observations of children, identify activities that may interest their students, analyze the observations in terms of the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds*, and make plans for the day/next day.

Examples of anecdotal notes are as follows:

<b>Mathematical and Scientific Thinking</b>	10/12/12 SG At small group time, Maria made identical patterns of red/blue, red/blue with linking cubes.
<b>Emergent Literacy</b>	10/27/12 WT During work time in the book area, Maria sat on the beanbag chair and looked at all the pictures in "Brown Bear, Brown Bear," turning the pages from left to right.
<b>Language and Communication</b>	11/2/12 ST At storytime, Maria listened to Ms. Hanlon read "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." When Ms. Hanlon read "and on Tuesday he ate through two _____," Maria said, Pears!

SG-Small Group

WT-Work Time

ST-Story Time

### **Head Start Computer-Assisted Instruction**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) incorporates interactive computer-assisted instruction in the prekindergarten program to provide students opportunities to engage in practice activities and tutorials. Every student should have access to work on computer-assisted instructional programs for a maximum of 20 minutes daily. The following programs are utilized in the Head Start/VPK Program.

- **Waterford Reading, Math and Science** program provides software and support materials to broaden children's exposure to targeted math and science concepts. Technical Support (888) 977-7100.

- **Riverdeep Learning Village** includes a prekindergarten section which offers engaging, interactive components in math, language arts, science, and social studies. This program can be accessed through the district website.

### Field Trips

In accordance with School Board Policy 2340 Field and Other District-Sponsored Trips, field trips should supplement and enrich classroom procedures by providing learning experiences in an environment outside the schools, arouse new interests among students, help students relate school experiences to the reality of the world outside of school, bring the resources of the community – natural, artistic, industrial, commercial, governmental, educational – within the student’s learning experience, and afford students the opportunity to study real things and processes in their actual environment.

Three and four-year-old HS children may go on one educational field trip per year paid by the grant, however transportation of HS children must comply with *HS Program Performance Standards 45 CFR 1310.3 and 45 CFR 1306.3(c)*. Field trip sponsors must contact Estela Rivero by phone at 305.995.2947 or via e-mail at [erivero@dadeschools.net](mailto:erivero@dadeschools.net) at least four weeks prior to the scheduled date of the field trip. Ms. Rivero will check availability of funds and secure a Miami-Dade County bus for the transportation of HS students. Field trip sponsors shall review and follow the guidelines provided in the M-DCPS Field Trip Handbook.

### Approval Chain for In-County Field Trip



### Sponsor’s Responsibilities

As specified in the M-DCPS Field Trip Handbook, the field trip sponsor must:

1. Request permission from the Office of Early Childhood Programs and the school principal to conduct a field trip before initiating the planning stages.
2. Review all rules and regulations.
  - a. School Board Policy 2340.
  - b. Required documentation – Field Trip Request Packet (FM-2431), letter of invitation and complete itinerary.
3. Ensure adequate funding is procured to fund the trip.
4. Ensure proper transportation is secured for the trip.
5. Secure completed and signed parent permission form (which includes transportation information) from each student who will participate in the field trip. Emphasis should be placed on complete medical information.

6. Ensure all chaperones/volunteers are cleared at either Level I or II, as appropriate for the trip.
7. Complete the Field Trip Request Packet attaching the following information and submit to the school principal or designee for approval:
  - a. Complete itinerary.
  - b. Written justification for the trip.
8. Upon approval of trip:
  - a. Ensure that all chaperones have available and accessible to them during the trip:
    - i. A copy of the field trip roster page from the Field Trip Request Packet.
    - ii. A copy of all parent permission forms with emergency contact information.
    - iii. Evacuation/Fire Protection information.
    - iv. Any other information that will assist them with their responsibilities for students during the trip.
  - b. Forward one copy of the Field Trip Request Packet to the school cafeteria manager and the school attendance clerk.
9. Remind chaperones that special preferential treatment is not to be given to any particular child, unless special accommodations need to be made for a child with special conditions.

### **Typical Behaviors of Prekindergarten Students**

In an active learning environment, behaviors typical and natural for preschoolers are expected and planned for. The process of growth moves young children along a continuum. Behavior that occurs along this continuum is developmentally important. At every age, some behavior which may look like misbehavior is a sound and healthy part of growing. The professional's job is to have an understanding of child development in order to facilitate interventions. The first month of school is a social-emotional adjustment period for students and adults, therefore, teachers should use intervention strategies before referring a student for evaluation.

### **Intervention Strategies for Positive Behavior Management**

The use of a consistent, well balanced daily routine provides security for children, reduces stress on them, and contributes to positive behavior. In a classroom using developmentally appropriate practices, management techniques include specific attention to prevention. Events in the daily routine should be scheduled to provide a variety of active and passive activities with a minimum of waiting time. Young children's short attention span should be taken into consideration when planning any activity. Rules need to be clear since they help children control their behavior. Rules should also be simple, few in number and reasonable according to the children's age. As the foundation of establishing a balanced learning environment, children should learn one basic rule: Take care of yourself, others and things. Any other established rule should reflect this rule.

Appropriate intervention strategies for prekindergarten children include redirection or distracting children from potential problems, reminding children of rules, ignoring inappropriate behavior (as long as it is not unsafe), noticing appropriate behavior (i.e., positive reinforcement), helping children solve their own problems and make appropriate choices, and helping children see consequences of their actions.

Teachers facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and setting clear limits for the benefit and safety of all children. Young children best learn social behavior when teachers' expectations match and respect children's developing capabilities, not by punishing them.

### **Preventing Problems and Conflicts**

- Think about the principles of child development.
- Establish a consistent daily routine.
- Make the classroom rich in opportunities.
- Design space with areas and materials that are of interest and value to the population of children served.
- Set reasonable limits and agree on the rationale to use to explain these to the children.
- Model ways of interacting with materials and people.
- Plan for transition times.
- Respect and plan for the different abilities, interests, and pacing levels of each child.

### **Steps for Solving Problems and Resolving Conflicts**

Personnel should use these steps when children are engaged in conflict with each other. Just as with any new set of skills, it takes practice to learn to apply the process of conflict resolution. With time and repeated experience, both children and adults will come to rely on this shared process.

- Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
  - Place yourself between the children, on their level.
  - Use a calm voice and gentle touch.
  - Remain neutral rather than take sides.
- Acknowledge feelings.
  - "You look really upset."
  - Let children know you need to hold any object in question.
- Gather information.
  - "What's the problem?"
- Restate the problem.
  - "So the problem is..."
- Ask for ideas for solutions.
  - "What can we do to solve this problem?"
  - Encourage children to think of a solution.
- Summarize the plan and be prepared to give follow-up support.
  - "You solved the problem!"
  - Stay near the children.

### **Child Management Checklist**

#### *Preventive Management Strategies*

- Adults establish and maintain a safe learning environment.
- The learning environment includes work areas in which children have enough space to play and a variety of materials that are of value and interest to them.
- Throughout the day, adults plan for, anticipate, and accept a variety of behaviors in the ways children use space and materials because they realize that children are functioning at various developmental levels.
- Adults establish and maintain a predictable, consistent daily routine with a balance of child-initiated and adult-initiated activities, so that children have a sense of control over what is going to happen next.
- Adults plan for and help children anticipate transitions.
- Adults eliminate long waiting periods and make the short waiting periods as active and concrete as possible (for example, by setting up a chart with children's signs to indicate who will have the next turn to pass out snack items).
- Children initiate their own plans at work time and carry them out with adult support.
- Children make choices throughout the daily routine. Adults support children's choices and interests.
- Adults model care and concern for people and materials throughout the daily routine.
- Adults elicit, value, and listen to children's points of view, ideas, concerns, and feelings.
- Adults attend to, acknowledge, value, and support children's strengths and interests throughout the day.
- All teaching team members discuss and agree on classroom rules, limits, and expectations, and are consistent in following through on them.
- Teaching team members provide children clear and consistent reasons for the expectations, rules, and limits that have been established.
- Teaching team members share and record observations of children and plan for children on a daily basis.
- Team members work together with parents to support children's growth and development.

### *On-the-Spot Management Techniques*

- Adults stop aggressive or destructive behavior (hitting, biting, kicking, throwing things) immediately, give a reason for their action, and suggest a more acceptable way to handle the situation, (i.e., "Stop biting. Biting hurts. Use your words to tell Tony what you want.")
- Adults help children resolve conflicts by:
  - Eliciting, listening to, and acknowledging children's descriptions of problems, including their feelings, observations, and reasoning about the problems;
  - Encouraging children to talk with one another about the difficult situation they are experiencing;
  - Interpreting a less articulate child's needs, feelings, and actions to other children when necessary;
  - Patiently supporting children's efforts to generate appropriate alternatives on their own;
  - Helping children generate appropriate alternatives when necessary; and
  - Using factual, nonjudgmental language throughout this process.
- In conflicts that do not involve hurtful behavior or bullying, adults give children the opportunity to settle differences on their own.

- Adults help children become aware of and take responsibility for the outcomes of their actions. (i.e., repairing toys students break or wiping up spills).
- Adults acknowledge that a problem-solving approach to child management takes time, patience, and consistency.

### *Follow-up Steps for Specific Children*

- Adults document behaviors that are of concern and keep records of any intervention strategies that are being used and the results.
- Parents will be informed and included in choosing intervention strategies.
- In extreme cases, the teacher, the Curriculum Support Specialist, school counselor or school administrator will visit the classroom to observe the child, talk to the parent or guardian and make an assessment as to future steps to take.

### *Character Education*

Character is described as “moral or ethical strength, integrity and fortitude.” In prekindergarten, character education is addressed through the development of pro-social behavior. Teachers foster and facilitate the development of pro-social skills in young children by providing opportunities to develop character building skills in themselves and the children. These activities and experiences should be implemented throughout the day.

### *Conscious Discipline*

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive, social-emotional, intelligence approach based on brain research and its effect on children’s behavior. It is designed to help teachers integrate “Brain Smart Principles” that will enable them to create a positive social-emotional learning environment in their classrooms. Developmentally appropriate techniques are taught to help children learn logical problem solving strategies. Dr. Becky Bailey, Professor at the University of Central Florida, has established ten principles of Conscious Discipline. These principles are built on cogent child development theories which encourage an understanding of and respect for children, their temperaments, their personalities, and unique dispositions. Putting child development knowledge into action, results in quality classroom management. A well planned learning environment is organized and provides adequate space for children to move as they learn and contribute to appropriate behaviors.

Conscious Discipline is a journey requiring an open mind and an open heart. The journey starts by learning the 7 Powers of Self-Control which shift your focus from blame to solutions, from punishment to teaching and from fear to love. The Conscious Discipline approach should be used by those teachers that have been trained. The classroom structures and activities which facilitate these powers and skills include:

- Greeting Apron
- Brain Smart Start
- Activity to Unite

- Activity to Disengage Stress
- Activity to Connect/I Love You Rituals
- Commitments (Gentle Touch, Be a STAR, My Turn, Read a Book with a Friend)
- Safe Keeper Box
- Wish Well Heart
- Safe Place
- Job Board
- Friends and Family Board
- Ways to be Helpful
- Board/Books like "You did it!"
- I Noticed Board
- Good-bye Rituals

HS Program personnel are encouraged to attend Conscious Discipline professional development sessions offered through the M-DCPS Professional Development Menu and Registration System.

### **Pyramid Model (Social Emotional)**

The Pyramid Model has been identified as a tiered intervention model that provides guidance for the design and delivery of evidence-based interventions to promote the social development of young children and provide more intensive intervention for children who have social emotional delays or behavioral challenges. The model describes three tiers of intervention practice.

#### *Tier 1: Universal Promotion*

The first tier involves two levels of practices that are critical to promoting the social development of young children. The first level of practices is the provision of nurturing and responsive caregiving relationships to the child. This includes the family/caregiver and the teacher/paraprofessional within an early childhood program. The second level is the provision of supportive environments. It refers to the provision of predictable and supportive environments and family interactions that will promote the child's social and emotional development.

In the early years, children exist within a web of relationships with parents, teachers, other caring adults in their lives and eventually peers. This web supplies the context within which healthy social emotional growth and the capacity to form strong positive relationships with adults and peers develop.

#### *Tier 2: Secondary Prevention*

This tier includes the provision of explicit instruction in social skills and emotional regulation. In early childhood programs, all young children will require adult guidance and instruction to learn, how to express their emotions appropriately, play cooperatively with peers, and use social problem solving strategies. However, for some children it will be necessary to provide more systematic and focused instruction to teach children social emotional skills.

### *Tier 3: Tertiary Interventions*

When children have persistent challenging behavior that is not responsive to interventions at the previous levels, comprehensive interventions are developed to resolve problem behaviors and support the development of new skills. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) provides an approach to address problem behavior that is individually designed and is focused on supporting the child in developing new skills. The process begins with a Functional Assessment of Behavior (FAB) to gain a better understanding of the factors related to the child's challenging behavior. Functional assessment ends with the implementation of the child's support plan.

Implementation of the Pyramid Model builds upon the foundation expectations, language and responsibilities outlined in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

### **Early Interventions**

Prekindergarten children will encounter many new challenges – a new school/classroom atmosphere, unfamiliar adults and children, structured daily routine, large/small group instruction, independent activities, and new rules. Children need approximately 30 days to adjust to these new expectations. Although a prekindergarten program can take many forms, it is important to remember that the program is developmental, not remedial. Developmentally appropriate programs must be age appropriate as well as individually appropriate. A quality prekindergarten program strives to meet the needs of children in the best possible atmosphere for their growth. Adults in a prekindergarten program are in a unique position to do early informal screening of the children as they work with them on a day-to-day basis. As the adult becomes acquainted with each child's abilities, learning style, and level of functioning, he/she may become aware of particular children who seem to need closer scrutiny. The vision, hearing, speech and language screening will supply valuable information. The daily observation notes that have been taken by classroom staff as well as positive parents/teacher interaction are crucial to this process.

In specific cases, concerns may be shared with the school support staff - school counselor, SPED specialist, HS social worker and/or Curriculum Support Specialist. Documentation of behaviors, early intervention strategies that have been implemented, and the results of the strategies need to be recorded and kept as supporting documentation. In turn, the school support staff may observe the child and suggest further strategies. In extreme cases, the school support staff should be informed of the situation and various alternative strategies for working with the child considered. This entire process will take some time.

### **Response to Intervention (Rti) Models and Referrals**

Upon enrollment within the M-DCPS Head Start and Early Head Start Program, children undergo developmental, sensory, and behavioral screenings which assess each child's present level of cognitive, social and emotional development and highlight individual children's strengths and areas of concern. Children may be referred for additional evaluations for support services based on the results of these initial screenings, or per teacher recommendation, parent concern, developmental information included in the physical exam, program application, or prior evaluation results made available to the M-DCPS

Head Start and Early Head Start Program. For infants and toddlers, evaluations are conducted through the Early Steps program (a Part C agency). For preschool children, aged 3-5, evaluations are conducted by the school support team.

### **Response to Intervention (Rtl)**

For children identified as having suspected developmental delays, social emotional delays, or behavioral concerns, a tiered intervention model should be implemented. The Pyramid Model serves as an example of a tiered model that utilizes evidence-based interventions to promote the social development of young children and provide more intensive intervention for children who have social emotional delays or behavioral challenges. For eligibility purposes, only children who will be staffed into a Special Education program in kindergarten, whose 6<sup>th</sup> birthday is on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of their kindergarten year, and are being considered for Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) or Emotional/Behavioral Disability (EBD) require Rtl.

### **M-DCPS Early Head Start Early Steps Referral Process**

Referrals for infants and toddlers under the age of 36 months enrolled in a Miami-Dade County Public School Early Head Start site should proceed as follows.

#### *Center Responsibilities Prior to Early Steps Referral*

- Head Start (HDST) screenings (ACUSCREEN, DECA, Articulation) conducted by teacher identifies concerns.
- Teacher notifies immediate supervisor (Center Director and/or Assistant Principal) of concerns and attaches supporting documentation (i.e. HDST screenings).
- Center Director/Assistant Principal emails the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Head Start and Early Head Start Disabilities Coordinator.
  - The following information is included in the email\*:
    - Child's name
    - Date of Birth
    - Student ID#
    - Teacher's name and contact information
    - Reason for Referral

\*Please indicate on the subject line of the email the Site's Name and "Early Head Start Referral"

- Center Director copies HDST social worker assigned to site.

#### *The Early Steps Referral Process*

1. HDST social worker meets with referring teacher to review concerns and HDST screenings.
2. HDST social worker meets with the parent to obtain background information and assist in filling out the *Miami-Dade County Early Steps Referral Passport*.
3. HDST social worker assists parent in filling out a *Consent Form for Mutual Exchange of Information* (FM-2128) for consent to disclose information between M-DCPS and Early Steps Program.

4. HDST social worker faxes *Early Steps Referral Passport* and the *Consent Form for Mutual Exchange of Information* to M-DCPS Office of Early Childhood Programs.
5. HDST social worker files original copies in the child's file at the site.
6. M-DCPS Head Start Disabilities Coordinator forwards the *Early Steps Referral Passport* and *Consent Form for Mutual Exchange of Information* to the appropriate Early Steps in-take coordinator.
  - For families living North of Flagler Street:
    - Lidia Feliciano, In-Take Coordinator  
Early Steps North Miami-Dade  
University of Miami/Mailman Center for Child Development  
1601 NW 12th Avenue, Miami, FL 33136  
Tel.: (305) 243-6600  
Fax: (305) 243-3501
  - For families living South of Flagler Street:
    - Christina Diaz, In-Take Coordinator  
Early Steps Southernmost Coast  
Miami Children's Hospital  
17615 SW 97th Avenue, Miami, FL 33157  
Tel.: (786) 268-2611  
Fax: (786) 268-1748

## **M-DCPS Head Start Referral Process**

### *Center Responsibilities Prior to Referral*

1. HDST screenings (ACUSCREEN, DECA, Articulation) conducted by teacher identifies concerns.
2. In the case of behavioral concerns, the HDST teacher meets with parent/guardian to discuss and sign the DECA Intervention Plan (DIP) generated by the e-DECA. Progress is monitored weekly. Parent is also asked to complete the DECA rating form. If child does not respond to interventions continue to #3 below.
3. Teacher completes *Head Start Pre-Kindergarten Request for Assistance (FM-7496)*, attaches supporting documentation (HDST screenings) and forwards to SST Coordinator.
- Teacher emails MDCPS Head Start Mental Health Coordinator. The following information is included in the email.
  - Child's name
  - Date of Birth
  - Student ID#
  - Teacher's name and contact information
  - Brief description of concerns
4. SST Coordinator or designee obtains parent permission on the *Notice of Intent and Parental/Guardian Consent to Conduct a Screening/Assessment (FM-6279)*.
5. Established SST procedures and activities prior to the SST meeting are followed.

## **Parent Engagement**

The importance of family involvement to success in school has been validated by research. A key ingredient in this process is to focus on the parents'/family's strengths and formulate strategies that will build success for the parent, as well as the child. To that end, the M-DCPS prekindergarten programs encourage parent/family participation. All volunteers must be cleared by M-DCPS according to the Jessica Lunsford Act.

It is recognized that many parents are not able to participate in the classroom on a regular basis. For this reason, several strategies have been identified and implemented that offer parents various opportunities to involve themselves in their child's educational process. Active participation by parents is enhanced by specific planned events. Some suggested activities are reading to the children, serving as a chaperone for field trips, joining the HS parent committee, providing lunch room assistance, assisting with other class activities, and participating in the parent workshops to name a few.

As a matter of policy, HS teachers and associate educators are required to conduct two home visits and hold two formal parent/teacher conferences per child throughout the year and one end-of-year transition to kindergarten meeting.

### *Home Visits*

Home visits are valuable in building respectful relationships with parents and in developing a broad understanding of every child in the program. Miami-Dade County Public Schools Head Start and Early Head Start personnel will conduct a minimum of two home visits per year. These parent/teacher meetings will provide opportunities to discuss each child's developmental needs and progress.

Home visits must occur in the enrolled child's home unless the parents/guardians request in writing that the visit must be conducted outside of the home due to exceptional circumstances and expressly forbid such visit from happening at the enrolled child's home (45 CFR 1306.32(b)(8)). Every effort must be made to explain the advantages of home visits to the parent.

Home visits requests and reports must be documented. M-DCPS personnel shall follow the following tips for a successful home visit.

### *Parent Communication*

- Maintain good eye contact.
- Get to know the family.
- Focus on the strengths of the family and child.
- Use family friendly language.
- Remember to be sensitive to parents reading and writing abilities.
- Show enthusiasm and acceptance.
- Be on time and keep visit to a reasonable amount of time.
- Find out if there are immediate concerns that might be a barrier to continuing the conference or visit. If so, set a time to get back to parents.
- Share classroom rules and expectations to encourage consistency between home and school.

- Suggest activities that can be done at home to further child's development.

### *Safety*

Home visits should be conducted in pairs, when possible. M-DCPS personnel should take the following precautions.

#### *Prior to Home Visit*

- Prior to leaving the school, call to confirm parent is available for the scheduled visit.
- Based on area, schedule visits in safest part of day.
- Become familiar with a new area before visiting.
- Take a cellular phone with you.
- Be aware of places you can seek help.
- Leave daily schedule of home visits with principal and office staff.
- Leave valuables at home or in the trunk before leaving school.
- Carry driver's license and small change in your pocket.

#### *When Approaching a Home*

- Look and listen for signs of someone at home.
- Do not enter the yard/home when questionable persons are present, violence is in progress, or vicious animals are present.

#### *When Entering the Home*

- Stand to side of door when knocking.
- Do not enter the home until you see parent/guardian. If not, indicate you will call to reschedule.
- If denied entrance, do not attempt to persuade.
- When door opens, quickly observe inside to determine any threats to safety.
- Leave if you feel unsafe.

#### *In the Home*

- Remain alert and observant.
- Proceed with permission and caution when entering any room.
- Do not accept food or beverages.
- Limit amount of personal information you share.
- Leave immediately if you feel unsafe.

#### *When Leaving the Home*

- Have car keys in hand.
- Observe your surroundings.
- Do not linger, leave immediately.

### *In the Case of an Emergency*

- Leave immediately.
- Call 911.
- If children are in danger, call the Abuse Hotline directly at 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).
- Call principal to advise of situation.

### *Parent/Teacher Conferences*

Formal and informal parent conferences and communications must be documented in the Parent Conference and Communication Log. Parent/teacher conferences must also be documented using the Parent/Teacher Conference Report. A minimum of two parent/teacher conferences are required for HS/EHS Programs. M-DCPS personnel shall follow the following tips for a successful parent/teacher conference.

- M-DCPS HS/EHS teaching teams should log parent conferences and communications in the log provided and specify whether such contact was in person, by telephone, or through written correspondence.
- When required parent contact is not achieved, evidence of attempts to contact parents/guardians should be recorded in the log.

### *Teacher Preparation*

#### *Prior to the Conference*

- Send notification of meeting/conference.
- Call to confirm attendance.
- Prepare in advance.
  - Review student work.
  - Prepare thoughts and materials.
  - Create a welcoming environment.
- Allow enough time for the conference.
- Get organized.
- Greet parents at the door.

#### *During the Conference*

- Open on a positive note.
- Be specific.
- Ask for parent suggestions.
- Offer solutions.
- Be aware of behaviors that may sabotage the parent/teacher conference.
  - Don't interrupt.
  - Don't take over the conversation.
  - Don't change the subject.
  - Don't engage in silent combat.
  - Be careful of your body language.
  - Don't get backed up into a corner.
  - Try the art of persuasion, not coercion.

### *After the Conference*

- Keep lines of communication open.
- Encourage parents to become volunteers and participate in classroom activities.

### *Sample Topics for Discussion*

Parent conferences may be convened at any time and for any reason. The topics below are provided as examples and should not be used to limit parent/teacher interactions.

- Language Development
- Literacy Knowledge and Skills
- Logic and Reasoning
- Mathematics Knowledge and Skills
- Science Knowledge and Skills
- Social Studies Knowledge and Skills
- Physical Development and Health
- Creative Arts Expression
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- English Language Development
- Transition to Kindergarten\*

\* Topic must be addressed if child is transitioning to kindergarten.

### *Transition to Kindergarten*

For young children and their parents, moving from prekindergarten to kindergarten is one of the most significant transitions they will experience. They will be faced with:

- Change in Place/Classroom
- New Expectations
- Adjusting to a New Peer Group
- New Authority Figure
- New Role as a Student

Transition is a period of adjustment. Some adjustments can be stressful. When parents, teachers, and school administrators work together, the process of transitioning to kindergarten operates smoothly reducing the amount of stress experienced by the child. Examples of topics that may be discussed and/or activities that may be conducted are as follows.

- Registration
- Skills Useful in Kindergarten
- Five-Year-Old Developmental Stages
- A Book List for Young Children
- Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS)
- A Visit to Kindergarten Classroom
- The Kindergarten Curriculum
- Attendance Policy
- First Day of School Tips
- Homework Expectations

- Parental Involvement
- School Supply List
- School Readiness
- Engaging parents in a Language and Literacy Activity. Visit the Florida Center for Reading Research website at [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org) for ideas for this activity. Click on the link for Instructional Materials for Teachers.

### Parent/Family Support

Head Start Programs must adhere to a set of performance standards regarding what services are to be provided to families, including health, parental involvement, nutritional, social, and transition to school. The key components of the standards are:

- Building relationships with parents as early as possible from enrollment, and creating ongoing opportunities for parent involvement throughout the time children are in the program;
- Helping families work toward their goals and linking families to or providing necessary services;
- Making programs open to parents at any time, involving parents in the development of program curriculum, and providing parents opportunities to volunteer or become staff;
- Providing parents with opportunities to enhance their parenting skills;
- Helping parents become active partners in accessing health care for their children, making community services more responsive to their family needs, and transitioning their children into school; and
- Involving parents in program decision-making and governance.

As soon as possible after a child is enrolled, Head Start Program staff is required to try to build relationships with their families, while taking into account that families will vary in their willingness to participate. Staff must work with parents to develop family partnership agreements that identify goals, responsibilities, and timetables and strategies for achieving these goals. In addition, teachers in center-based programs must offer to conduct at least two home visits (at times convenient for the parent) and two parent/teacher conferences per program year.

Based in part on family goals, the Head Start Program must help families access services and must follow up to determine whether the services met the needs of the family. These services must include:

- Emergency or crisis assistance, such as food, housing, clothing, and transportation;
- Information, counseling, and services specific to family needs;
- Continuing education and employment training;
- Nutrition education;
- Mental health education;
- Family literacy services; and
- Prenatal and postpartum care and health education for pregnant women in Early Head Start Programs.

Parents must be welcomed in Head Start facilities during all program hours, although they are not required to participate. Programs must develop opportunities for parents to learn about program

curricula and approaches to child development and education, and federal guidance suggests this is a way to share knowledge with parents and better individualize services for children. In addition to encouraging them to become volunteers, parents of Head Start children must be given priority for employment in positions for which they are qualified.

Programs must assist parents in enrolling in available health insurance programs, encourage and facilitate parents to accompany their children to medical and dental exams, and provide parents with opportunities to learn about preventative health care.

The Head Start Program must work at the community level to provide families with information about local resources and to support parents to influence the character of community services. Programs must assist parents in being their children's advocates in the transition from the Head Start Program into other programs, including elementary school. Staff must hold meetings with parents as the time for transition approaches, and must help parents prepare to participate actively in their children's schooling and to communicate with school teachers in their children's best interests.

A formal structure of shared governance has been established in the form of a policy committee including parents of currently enrolled children and community representatives to allow participation in program policymaking and decisions. At least 51 percent of the policy committee must be parents of currently enrolled children. Performance Standards include several specific responsibilities that must be carried out by the policy committee. In addition, all parents of enrolled children are automatically eligible to participate in required separate parent-only committees that advise staff, develop parent and staff activities, and participate in the recruitment and screening of employees. To enable parents to participate, programs must reimburse reasonable levels of expenses parents may incur, such as for travel or child care costs.

## **Staff Development and Instructional Support**

### *Commitment*

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has a strong commitment to quality in its early childhood programs. The determination to continually provide the best quality early childhood programs for children and families must be renewed, and continuously strengthened each year. This dedication to quality begins with providing resources, professional training and support for the teaching staff each year. Educators are being asked to master new skills and responsibilities, learn new methods of teaching and further develop their practice. Professional development has become an integral part of the teacher's work. The Office of Early Childhood Programs is committed to providing the best staff development available.

### *Purpose*

A primary objective for all staff development activities is to provide educators with a framework for examining the events and interactions of their classrooms, their own reactions, and their need for further professional growth. It is important that teachers acquire both knowledge and skills, and

strengthen their dispositions for working with children to encourage life-long learning. The staff development component is designed to encourage teachers to be knowledgeable about children's growth and development, to take a diagnostic approach to teaching, and to use specific strategies that will support and extend individual children's thinking and learning.

It is expected that teachers will be willing to take risks, learn from mistakes, participate in on-going reflection and self-examination, increase knowledge and refine their skills. In compliance with the federal requirements to provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum for prekindergarten programs, teachers, associate educators and infant and toddler center assistants will receive training in curriculum that matches the developmental stage, age, cultural and specific needs of individual children. Staff development activities include workshops, roundtable meetings, Teacher Education Center in-service activities, training provided by local colleges and universities, and classroom demonstrations. All teachers and administrators will be notified of professional development opportunities by email.

### *Instructional Support*

Curriculum Support Specialists (CSS) serve as a liaison between the Office of Early Childhood Programs and the preschool classrooms. CSS's provide teachers and school site personnel with support on the various components of the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. This entails one-on-one support, Professional Development, coaching, modeling, assisting with proper classroom arrangement, Head Start and VPK standards, VPK attendance procedures, fiscal documentation, ordering of materials, and responding to individual school/teacher needs.

#### Teachers New To Prekindergarten

New prekindergarten teachers and/or administrators are encouraged to contact the Office of Early Childhood Programs at 305-995-7632 to request technical assistance from a Curriculum Support Specialist (CSS). During the initial year of training, it is expected that teachers new to prekindergarten will be trained in the High/Scope Educational Approach framework, VPK Standards for Four-Year-Olds, Florida VPK Assessment and the Head Start Performance Standards to grow in their understanding of children and how they learn.

#### Veteran Prekindergarten Teachers

After the first year of training and practice, early childhood educators are encouraged to continue a quest for professional growth. This encourages teachers to become reflective practitioners, to develop and nurture the habit of inquiry, to continue to learn through dialogue about their practice, and to have collegial conversations among themselves and others.

## **Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program**

### *Background*

The Florida state constitution was amended in 2004 to include Section 1(b), Article IX. The amendment mandates:

Every four year old child in Florida shall be provided by the State a high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.

### *Program Description*

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a legislatively authorized program designed to prepare every four-year-old in Florida for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. All eligible four-year-olds are entitled to participate in one of the VPK program options. The VPK program provides each child with a high quality educational experience that includes high literacy standards, accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instructional periods, manageable class sizes, a certified teacher and a highly qualified paraprofessional.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools offers the VPK Core Instructional Day for three consecutive hours in the morning. In VPK/HS classes, the HS program extends the instructional day until 3:05 p.m.

### *Integration*

The VPK curriculum must be authentic and support and reinforce the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds* in other subject areas. Research emphasizes the importance of connecting classroom learning to real-life situations which is accomplished most effectively when children are able to move seamlessly from one activity to the next.

### **Alignment with Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011)**

Section 1002.67, F.S., requires the Florida Department of Education to develop and adopt performance standards for children in the VPK program that addresses emergent literacy, oral communication skills, knowledge of print and letters, phonemic and phonological awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development.

The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Standards were initially adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2002 and revised in 2005, 2008, and 2011. Presently, the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011)* establish one set of performance standards for Florida's four-year-olds in School Readiness and VPK Programs. They are also aligned with *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*, the kindergarten *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards* and *Common Core State Standards*, and prepare children for kindergarten.

### **Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011)**

The *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds* are grouped around these five domains:

- Physical Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Language, Communication, and Emergent Literacy
- Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

### *Physical Health*

There are two primary themes or components of physical health for four-year-old children. The first component is physical health across all body systems. The status and support of nutritional, physical, dental, auditory, and visual health are included in this component. This component is demonstrated when children follow basic health and safety rules and habits such as making good food choices, participating in physical activities, and performing self-care tasks independently.

### *Approaches to Learning*

The development of a child's approach to learning is highly dependent on the quality and quantity of interactions with supportive adults. For this reason, it is essential that instructors who observe and assess learning styles, provide a well-designed learning environment, plan a variety of challenging activities, encourage children and ask questions to scaffold group learning, and provide individual learning opportunities to help children develop positive approaches to learning. Four-year-old children learn best when eagerness, curiosity, persistence, creativity, inventiveness, and planning and reflection are encouraged and supported across all domains of development.

### *Social and Emotional Development*

Social and emotional readiness is critical to a child's successful kindergarten transition, early school success, and even future well-being. Studies indicate that young children who are able to understand and express their own feelings, understand the viewpoint and feelings of others, cooperate with peers and adults, and resolve conflicts are more likely to be successful in school. These skills appear to be rooted in relationships with adults.

Relationships guide how young children learn about themselves, others, and the world. Children who develop positive relationships with adults are secure, confident, and can master new learning challenges. Positive relationships with adults set the stage for learning as children want to interact with, convey their thoughts and ideas to, understand the feelings of, cooperate with, and model the actions of the adults who care for them.

Positive relationships with adults also lead to positive relationships with peers. Four-year-old children are developing important interpersonal skills. They are learning how to join, question, and listen to their peers and adults. They construct knowledge by interacting with others and their environment, and they learn how to interact successfully with a variety of people and in different settings and circumstances.

### *Language and Communication*

Prekindergarten children's language and communication develops in five primary areas. Listening or receptive language is demonstrated by the way a child verbally and behaviorally responds to oral communication. Speaking or expressive language refers to the child's own skill at clearly expressing him or herself in words. Vocabulary development includes an extensive expansion in the words that a child understands, especially words related to a growing knowledge of the world and the ways that people describe objects and actions, as well as substantial growth in the words children use in their own verbal expression. Children's development in the area of sentences and structure is expanded as they use more complete sentences and demonstrate growing mastery of correct structure in the way they arrange words used to communicate. Conversation skills include how to initiate, participate appropriately, and modify speaking patterns for different contexts and settings.

Additionally, participation in a VPK program allows children to learn the language of school, including vocabulary, sentence structure, and content that is a key part of the educational experience in the United States.

### *Emergent Literacy*

Emergent literacy includes two components, emergent reading and emergent writing. Both reflect the development of the knowledge and conceptual understanding of skills that form the basis for later reading and writing. Emergent reading includes showing motivation for reading demonstrated by interest in being read to and told what written words mean, and development in appropriate use of books and other printed materials. Children also develop age-appropriate phonological awareness which demonstrated by their growing capacity to recognize that words are made up of smaller units of sounds, understanding that they can blend sounds together to form words, or break words apart into smaller pieces. Alphabetic knowledge refers to children's growing recognition of and ability to name the letters and the sounds they make. As children are growing in their ability to comprehend spoken language, they also are developing their understanding of text read aloud as demonstrated by their accurate reenactment or retelling of stories read to them, and by their ability to ask and answer factual and abstract questions about the text. These oral language skills emerge with adult support as children who are four years old typically are not reading text.

In emergent writing, children develop motivation for written expression and learn the concept that print conveys meaning. Just as children grow in their ability to name and recognize alphabet letters, they also gain skill in using letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning, and age-appropriate skill at writing letters. Children's knowledge of the structure of written composition is demonstrated in their dictated stories and their own beginning forms of written expression.

### *Mathematical and Scientific Thinking*

Mathematical thinking refers to the child's reasoning, understanding number sense, using simple strategies to solve problems, sorting and grouping, recognizing patterns and relationships, collecting and describing information in a variety of ways, understanding spatial relations, and comparing and

measuring objects. Mathematics helps children understand and make sense of their world. Scientific thinking is evidenced through the asking of questions, the use of simple tools, and the making of comparisons. The natural world and physical events are fascinating to pre-kindergarteners, and the instructors' questions can foster inquisitiveness and scientific thinking.

### *Social Studies and the Arts*

Social studies knowledge is demonstrated through identifying attributes of familiar people and understanding family roles and relationships. Children are developing new ways of examining and noticing places and the environment. Group rules are becoming easier to understand and follow, and four-year-olds have a beginning understanding of leadership. The arts provide opportunities for children to grow, to express what they know, pursue their own interests and abilities, and appreciate the contributions of others in creative ways. Children express and represent their ideas through various art media, and begin to understand and appreciate art.

### *Motor Development*

Motor development activities must include opportunities for both gross and fine motor development. While unstructured play and movement activities are important and provide opportunities to practice developing movement skills, play alone is not sufficient for the development of physical skills. Planned movement activities are needed, and exposure to many different types of movements should be the goal, rather than high performance in one or more particular skills.

### **VPK Attendance and Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Monitoring**

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is responsible for the administration of the state funded VPK Program. Staff from the Early Learning Coalition will visit randomly selected schools unannounced to monitor the compliance with VPK Statutes. The principal will be requested to provide the previous month's VPK attendance records for all VPK students in general education and those in the Role Model Pre-K Program. To prepare for the monitoring visit and to avoid audit exceptions:

- Follow all procedures outlined in Weekly Briefings #13589 (Title I) or #13709 (Fee-Supported), Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program Registration Procedures/Guidelines for the 2013-2014 school year.
- Register a VPK child only with a valid COE. Forward COE copies to the Office of Early Childhood Programs throughout the year to Mail Code 9613. The original COE is returned to the parent/guardian at the time of registration. Maintain COE copies at the school office but not in the cumulative folders.
- Secure parent/guardian signatures on a monthly basis on the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) *Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate, AWI-VPK 03L* (Long Form) at the end of each month. Make sure that the form is signed in blue ink and dated on or after the last school day of the month. Staple the individual student's monthly attendance printout to the Long Form prior to parents signing the form.

- File by month in the school's office for state audit. Do not accept any pre-signed forms for future months. Do not fill in the calendar grid. COE copies may be kept along with the monthly attendance for ease of access.
- Provide to the Office of Early Childhood Programs any changes in VPK Instructional team to ensure compliance with the teacher or paraprofessional of record. The names of the teacher(s) and paraprofessional(s) of record are confirmed according to the annual Staff Survey of Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Form that schools submit to the Office of Early Childhood Programs and to the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. If any changes occur with the prekindergarten teacher or the paraprofessional, the school must inform Dr. San Juanita de la Cruz at M-DCPS Office of Early Childhood Programs and fax a new, updated Instructional Staff Survey of Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Classrooms to 305-995-2604.

**All Employees are required to read  
The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida  
Bylaws and Policies which can be found at <http://www.neola.com/miamidade-fl/>**

<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	<b>POLICY TITLE</b>
1113	Conflicting Employment or Contractual Relationship
1124	Drug Free Workplace
1129	Conflict of Interest
1139	Educator Misconduct

**This information is also provided in your school's faculty handbook.**

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