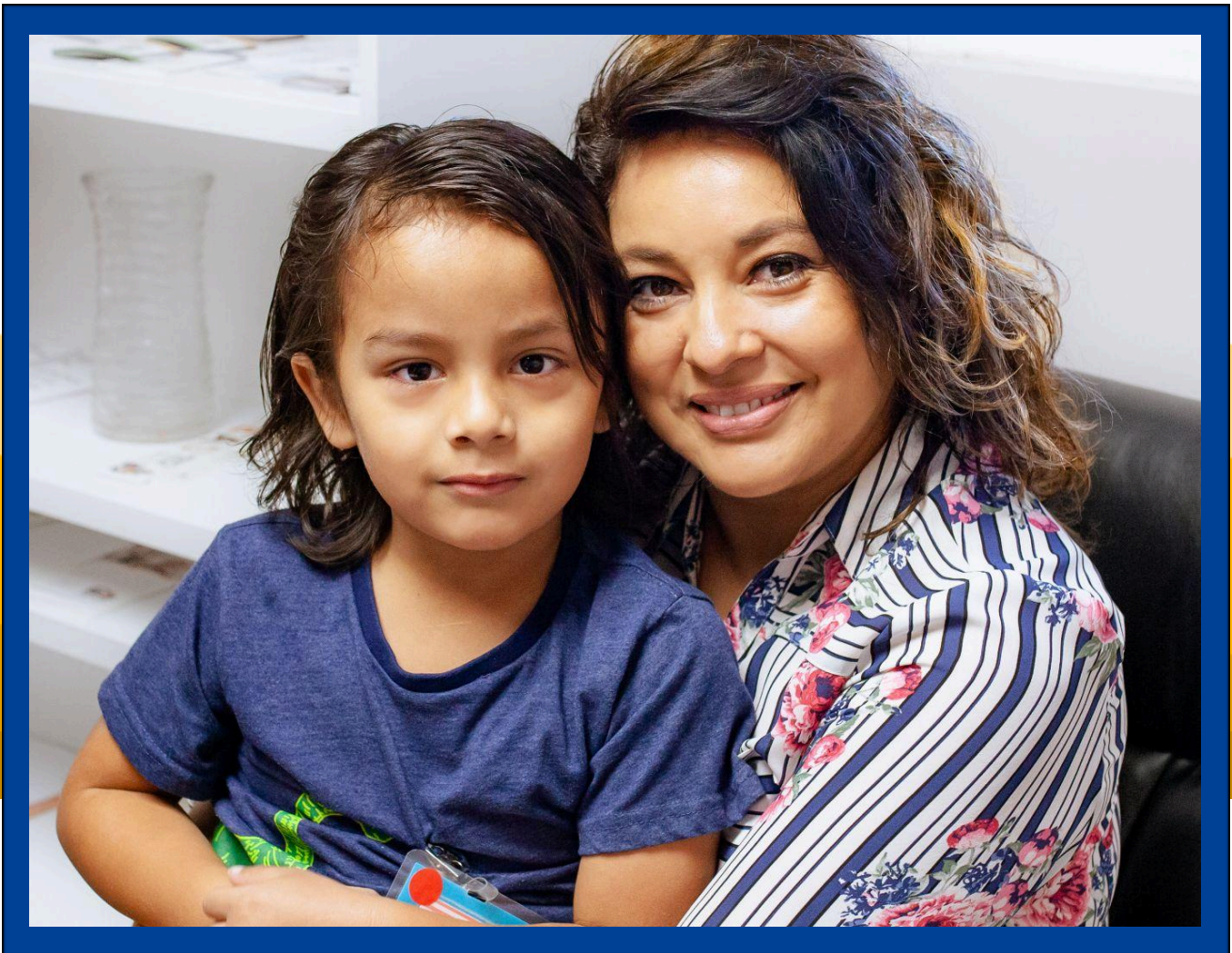




Early Learning

ESSENTIALS



Head Start Parent Handbook

2024-2025

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www.eleutah.org

Dear Parents,

Welcome!! We are so excited to have you join our Head Start family here at Early Learning Essentials. We feel it is a great honor and privilege to work with your family towards one of the greatest goals our community could have; the long term success of your child and family.

Did you know that according to First Things First...

- More than 80% of a child's brain is fully developed by the time they turn 3 and 90% is developed by the time they turn 5.
- "A child's relationships with the adults in their life are the most important influences on their brain development."
- "From birth to age 5, a child's brain develops more than at any other time in life. And early brain development has a lasting impact on a child's ability to learn and succeed in school and life. The quality of a child's experiences in the first few years of life – positive or negative – helps shape how their brain develops."

Early childhood (0-5) is a critical time in the life of every individual. So much happens during these first five years that will impact the life-long success of children. That puts a lot of responsibility on parents. We honor parents as the first, most important, and life-long educators of their child(ren). In most cases, no other individual will have a more profound influence on your child as you. If you feel overwhelmed by this idea, we understand. We have the highest respect for our parents who carry this heavy responsibility. Our goal at Early Learning Essentials is to support and empower you in that role and partner with you in helping your child(ren) be successful throughout their life.

To that end, throughout the year we will provide your whole family with a wide array of services to support your goals and success. We share at least two common goals. First, we want every child to have the opportunity to be successful not only in preschool, but throughout their lives. We want him/her to succeed in school, in work, and in his/her relationships. Secondly, we want every family to have the strength, knowledge, resources, and support required to be self-reliant, happy and achieve their own goals. We believe that by partnering with you, we can achieve these goals. *We invite you to take full advantage of every opportunity that Early Learning Essentials provides.*

While you are aware of our preschool services, you may not be aware of the holistic set of services that we provide and individualize to each family. Therefore, we have prepared this Parent Handbook as a resource to you. In it we will share the information that we feel is vital for this year to be a successful one for your child and family. Please read through the entire handbook if possible. We have tried to only include information that is necessary and beneficial, although it is not all-inclusive. We also invite you to share anything with us that would be helpful to know which we haven't included. We welcome your communication as your perspective on your child is very important. Our Website, www.eleutah.org, is also a fantastic resource for you.

Again, welcome to Head Start. We look forward to an amazing year together.

Sonia Pineda
Executive Director

Russell Virgin
Deputy Director

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USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Who Is Early Learning Essentials

Early Learning Essentials is a non-profit agency that receives a grant to provide high-quality, no cost preschool services to children and social services to their families. Our Administrative Office is located at 264 W 300 N in Provo with regular business hours of operation. We currently have twelve classroom sites located throughout Juab, Utah, and Wasatch Counties. For classroom locations and hours of operation, please refer to our website. Our mission as an agency is to empower young children and families along a path to their highest potential. But what does that look like in real life?

Child and Family Outcomes

Head Start is intentionally designed to achieve certain child and family outcomes, and all of our work is designed to partner with you in achieving these outcomes. The following are the child outcomes we are designed to achieve.

Children are...

- Safe
- Healthy and well
- Learning and developing
- Engaged in positive relationships with family members, caregivers, and other children
- Ready for school, and
- Successful in school and life

We as an organization are also designed to help the entire family achieve certain outcomes. While each of these outcomes are worthy of our support in and of themselves, they are also family factors which research has shown to be critical to the child outcomes already mentioned. They are as follows.

- Family well-being
- Positive parent-child relationships
- Families as lifelong educators of their families
- Families as learners
- Family engagement in transitions
- Family connections to peers and the community
- Families as advocates and leaders

We believe that these are goals we share with every Head Start family. If you ever have a question as to why we do something, it is because we believe it will positively impact

one of the above mentioned outcomes. We invite you to partner with us so that we can more fully achieve all of these outcomes.

Various Program Options

We recognize that every family is unique and has differing needs and expectations in regards to preschool. Our goal is to be able to provide program options that match your family's unique situation. We currently offer three different program options. At time of application we can not guarantee placement in any program option but will try to provide the option requested based upon your family's need. ***Please consider which option will best meet the developmental needs of your child when requesting a program option.*** Not all program options are available at every site. If you are not placed in the program option which you desire, please meet with your Family Advocate to submit a ***formal transfer request.***

1. **The part-year, part-day center-based option:** This option is for 3 and 4-year-old children which will attend classes for 3 ½ hours, morning or afternoon, Monday through Thursday for 128 scheduled calendar days.
2. **The part-year extended-day center-based option:** children attend 6 ½ hours Monday through Thursday and 4 ½ hours on Friday for 166 scheduled calendar days. *The length of this option can be difficult for some children, so if 6.5 hours of preschool would be hard for your child please consider another option.*
3. **The full-year Early Head Start home-based option:** This option is only available at Early Learning Essential for children ages 0 -3 and pregnant mothers, living in Juab county or southern Utah County (Payson or Spanish Fork). In this option the Family Educator visits the child's home weekly and works alongside the parent co-teaching the child in the home environment. Additionally, Early Head Start families meet twice a month for an hour to build peer support and help children with socialization opportunities. If you are interested in this program option but live north of Spanish Fork, please contact Kids on the Move through their website www.KOTM.org.

Enrollment, Tuition, and Fees

Early Learning Essential's full array of services are provided to qualifying families at no cost. Eligibility is determined by age and family income. We prioritize services for low-income families and children with disabilities. Once a child is found eligible, they are

considered eligible for two school years and do not have to re-verify income, unless they are over income and enrolled because of a diagnosed disability. Initial enrollment and class placement decisions are made in June and July prior to school starting.

Withdrawal, Suspension & Expulsion

Should you decide to withdraw your child from our program during the school year for any reason, we'll request a home visit with you in order to assist in transitioning your child out of the program and into another preschool or program (if applicable). Family Advocates can help you find another Head Start or other preschool program if you are leaving the area. They will also follow up one last time with things you have discussed already during the school year.

Early Learning Essentials does not expel children and severely limits suspension. We have a variety of services and/or referrals to help children with behavioral, mental health, or disability needs. We also partner with all five school districts in our area to ensure that children on IEPs receive some services, where possible and appropriate, at the Head Start center. However, we are not a special education preschool and therefore we can not serve children whose IEP indicates that the child's least-restrictive environment is a special education classroom. Parents are a critical player in their child's education. Should there be concerns for a child in the classroom, education staff will work closely with parents to identify solutions and support for the child that will meet their needs.

If a child's behavior presents a risk to himself, other children, staff or property, several layers of support will be put in place. In extreme cases where the risk to safety is significant, the teacher may place the child in a Safety Care Hold which physically restrains the child while maintaining their dignity and safety. Teaching staff are trained and certified in these holds to ensure no child is harmed by them. These holds are to be used only when safety is a concern and not as a punishment or form of discipline. If a Safety Care hold is used on your child you will be notified that same day. If the concern for safety is ongoing the child may be temporarily suspended to allow time for appropriate safety measures to be put in place. If our best efforts do not provide a change sufficient to ensure safety, we will work closely with parents to transition the child to a program where their needs will be more appropriately met.

While we will do everything in our power to keep your child safe at all times while at our program, it is important that you understand the normal risks associated with

participation in the programs and services offered by Early Learning Essentials. These risks are inherent in any early childhood preschool setting and include, but are not limited to, the following: the dangers of falling off playground equipment, collision with other children, aggression by other children, and other dangers associated with the facility, active play, and/or the equipment or materials at the facility. In the event that any issues arise, Early Learning Essentials (ELE) expects to be granted the opportunity to address and resolve them collaboratively with you. We understand the importance of this partnership in ensuring the well-being and success of every child enrolled in our program. If you have a concern with anything in the program please speak as soon as possible with the head teacher in your child's classroom, if it relates to the classroom, or to the Family Advocate, if it is not classroom related. If you are unable to resolve the concern with the teacher/FA then the concern would escalate to the appropriate supervisor. ***To speak with your teacher about a concern, please request a time to discuss it with them outside of class time when they can give you their full attention and not interrupt your child's educational experiences. For more information about how to address a concern please see our [community complaint policy](#).*** You may also submit a formal written complaint through our agency website.

Insert information here about the Zero Tolerance for Violence Policy

Transitioning Into Kindergarten

Early Learning Essentials provides several services to help children transition into Kindergarten. The Kindergarten transition is a critical time and often has an impact on the child's long term success in school. If your child will be going to kindergarten next year, staff will begin talking with you about this transition as early as December. Family Advocates will provide lots of information about the transition and your child's teacher will speak with you during their home visits and parent-teacher conferences about steps to make sure your child is prepared. As the end of the year approaches, Family Advocates will share information regarding the school district, the grading system, schools with special programs, participating in parent associations, and answer any other questions that parents have in regards to the upcoming transition. We believe it is important that your child's new school and kindergarten is aware of the progress your child made in preschool. Therefore, we will share your child's information with the school and school district they will be attending for kindergarten. You will be notified that this is happening before we send it to them and you can opt out of the data sharing.

We believe that it is important for parents to be supported during these transitions as well. Your knowledge about the transition will empower you to make informed decisions

and better help/advocate for your child. During the early spring of each year we provide School Readiness Fairs in collaboration with the school districts. These fairs provide fun, learning games for children. As parents are involved they receive information about how they can provide similar activities in the home over the summer to further prepare their child. Parents also have the opportunity to connect with teachers, principals and staff from the elementary school their child will be attending. This is a great time to make a connection and get answers to any questions you might have.

School Year Calendar

The General School Year Calendar can be found online on our website at www.eleutah.org under the “For Parents” tab. It includes days when your child is not scheduled to attend class, different activities that are occurring, and when Parent Teacher Conferences or Home Visits are scheduled.

Daily Schedules and Routines

The daily schedule in the classroom establishes important and consistent classroom routines. This consistency helps preschoolers know what to expect throughout the day and anticipate what activity will come next. This, in turn, helps children feel more secure and more in control in their environment. ***It is critical that children attend consistently and arrive on time so that they benefit from each activity in the daily routine.*** Daily activities and routines in preschool include taking attendance, periods when children meet in large groups or with a few children in a small group, and choice times when children are free to explore interest areas and use whatever materials they wish. There are read-alouds, outdoor time, mealtimes and, for extended day classes, there is rest time. An example of a typical school day routine for both program options can be found in the appendix file.

Staff Structure and Roles

Great programs require great staff. This is especially true for classroom staff. We are very lucky in most classrooms to be able to provide three staff members (a teacher, assistant teacher, and classroom aide). Our teaching staff are trained in early childhood development and education and provide high-quality learning environments and instruction. In addition to teaching staff, your family has an entire team of dedicated staff to support your goals. This team consists of teaching staff, a center manager, a health specialist, and a family advocate. There are other staff available to help and support as needed including disability and mental health specialists and the health and nutrition

coordinators. The roles of the support team members you will most frequently interact with are outlined below.

Teacher - The primary responsibilities of a teacher are to provide an emotionally and physically safe classroom, to plan and oversee the curriculum, and collaborate with other staff and parents to provide individualized instruction for all children. Classroom aides and assistants support the teacher in her role. Every child participates in a variety of learning experiences to foster intellectual, social and emotional growth. Through these experiences teaching staff deliver comprehensive educational services to all Head Start children, including those children with Individualized Education Plans (IEP), behavioral support or health plans and English/dual-language learners.

Health Specialists- Health Specialists play the critical role of helping you to ensure that your child is healthy and ready to learn so that he/she can get the most out of their preschool experience. Few things will impede your child's success more than an undiagnosed or unaddressed health concern. These staff work to ensure your child is screened for health concerns at the beginning of the year by both Head Start staff and your primary care doctor and dentist. They will ensure that these screenings come within the first 90 days of enrollment. Once the screenings are complete the health specialist will assist you in completing any needed follow-up care as recommended by your medical and dental professionals to ensure your child is kindergarten ready.

Family Advocates- Your Family Advocate is a caring and highly trained professional who can offer your family a variety of support services ranging from financial management and employment to parenting education and child development. Their specific responsibility is to help your family achieve the family outcomes mentioned previously that promote your child's school outcomes. They are also trained on the many varied social services available in the community and can direct you, as needed, to those which will meet your family's needs. They will meet with you several times throughout the year at the center and in your home, with your permission, to help identify any goals your family has and support you in achieving those goals.

Communication with Staff

One of the most important and valuable things parents can do for their child is to take an active role in building a relationship with school staff. Parent-teacher relationships and ongoing, open communication are immensely important as it allows you to stay informed about your child's development and progress in the classroom.

There are many ways we hope to communicate with you throughout the year so as to keep you and us informed. One way to stay informed is to review information that has been posted on the parent board located in every classroom and the parent announcement boards on the outside of every center. Another way is to read material that is sent home with your child. Additionally, watch for and read the monthly electronic Parent Newsletter which will be sent to your email.

With a busy class schedule, finding time to talk with the teacher when they are not interacting with the children can be challenging, so here are some other ways to communicate, if needed:

- Request a time to meet
- Phone, text
- E-mail
- Home Visits
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Drop off or pick up times for minor items
- You may also speak with the Family Advocate at any time

Calling the Staff

Contact information for centers can be found on our website under the “For Parents” tab. When calling a center that has more than one classroom there will be a prompt to enter the classroom number.

Updating Contact Information

In order for us to better serve you, it is crucial that your contact information remains current. If your address, email or phone number changes, please share that information with the teacher or your Family Advocate. Please also remember to keep your emergency authorization contact current. Early Learning Essentials personnel will not release your child to anyone but you unless you have authorized that individual on the contact list.

Staying Connected

We also invite you to connect with us on our social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Here we will be providing ongoing resources, helpful parenting tips, and announcing upcoming events.

Classroom Curriculum & School Readiness Goals

In order to help each child be ready for school we focus our efforts on five central domains of development necessary for school success. They are visually represented in the Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework below. These domains align with state standards and school district expectations for children coming into kindergarten. If you would like to learn more about the state standards for either preschool or kindergarten you can see them at <https://www.uen.org/core/#k12>. We invite you to be aware of these expectations so that we can partner together in achieving them.

CENTRAL DOMAINS					
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication Literacy	Mathematics Development Scientific Reasoning	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

The curriculum we have chosen to use is called Creative Curriculum and it meets all Head Start and state requirements. If you have questions or concerns regarding the curriculum we invite you to please discuss them with your child’s teacher.

The philosophy behind Creative Curriculum is that young children learn best by exploring and doing. Learning for children isn't just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and learning firsthand about the world they live in. Children are actively involved in the learning process, experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials, and pursue learning interests in the context of their lives, their family cultures, their community, and the world.

Creative Curriculum content includes the following areas of learning and development:

1. Social-Emotional
2. Physical
3. Language
4. Cognitive
5. Literacy
6. Mathematics
7. Science and Technology
8. Social Studies
9. and the Arts

Curriculum Extenders (Field Trips)

Throughout the year your child will have the opportunity to go on several day trips to extend the learning beyond the classroom into the world. We call these field trips curriculum extenders. Notification will be sent home prior to the curriculum extender providing more information and requesting permission for your child.

Communicating Progress

Supporting children's school readiness is an ongoing partnership between staff and families. At all stages of your young child's growth, it is important that you stay aware of your child's learning activities throughout the day. You are welcomed as a partner in the educational process and are encouraged to participate in the school learning environment by volunteering in the classroom. Your involvement helps extend teaching outside the classroom, creates a more positive experience for children and helps children perform better when they are in school. School to Home Practice, Teacher Assigned Activities, Parent Teacher Conferences, and Teacher Home Visit are just a few examples of how parents and teachers working together can support learning at school and in the home.

Teacher Home Visits and Parent Teacher Conferences

- Parent Teacher Conferences and Home Visits are a time when teachers and parents meet to discuss and share a knowledge and understanding of the child's education and developmental progress. Throughout the year you will receive two teacher home visits and attend two Parent-Teacher Conferences. During these visits, the teacher will share progress reports with you and invite you to set educational goals for your child in order to further their learning and development.

School-to-Home Forms

- Each month the teacher outlines ideas or activities that parents can do at home to support their child's learning. We request that parents track the time spent doing these activities with their child and then complete the online form by the end of every month. This not only extends learning outside of the classroom but helps us meet our required in-kind for the year

Volunteering in the Classroom

An essential part of our program is the involvement of parents in planned program activities. Parents are welcome anytime in their child's classroom. Participating in the classroom is a great opportunity to show your child that their education is important to you. You will also see some great educators at work and get new ideas for positive discipline and teaching techniques at home. For the safety and well being of our students, all parents who volunteer in the classroom are expected to abide by the Early Learning Essentials classroom standards of conduct.

While in the classroom, there are various ways to get involved in your child's preschool experience such as the following:

- Sit and engage with your child and/or other children, help children go to the rug, wash their hands, help children clean up, read a book, sing songs and participate in the classroom activities
- Help the teacher set out materials, clean up the tables, gather the children for group time, outside time, help set the tables
- If you speak a second language, help with translations, help translate classroom labels, signs, newsletters, read a story in your home language, and share ideas with the teachers on how to represent your culture in the classroom environment

Children's Health and Development

At time of application your family should have completed a health history and nutrition assessment identifying any individual concerns for the classroom, including food allergies. If a concern was identified you may have been asked to have your medical professional fill out a Child Health Plan or Special Meal Plan. To ensure that all necessary accommodations are made to keep your child safe, they will not be allowed to attend until these forms are completed as requested.

In order to follow Utah law and ensure the safety of your child, there are some items which are required before a child can attend class.

- Immunizations: Utah law requires all children entering an Early Childhood program be adequately immunized or provide an exemption certificate. If you need assistance getting your child current on immunizations, your Health Specialist can assist you. You will need to provide us with your child's completed immunization record or personal exemption form from the [health department](#) prior to your child attending class. If your child has a personal exemption and a case of one of these illnesses occurs at the center, your child will be required not to attend for a certain period of time until it is deemed safe for your child to return..
- Special Meal Plans: If your child has special dietary needs and will require any accommodations due to food allergies, intolerances or religious preferences, we will need a completed Special Meal Plan (SMP) before they can attend. The SMP must be created in conjunction with and signed by a doctor or registered dietitian. Once complete, our Nutrition Service Coordinator will review the SMP and train our nutrition staff on how to meet the needs of the child.
- Child Health Plan: If your child has any special health care needs or will require any accommodations in class, we will need a completed Child Health Plan (CHP) before they can attend. This plan must be created in conjunction with and signed by your doctor. Once complete, our Health Services Coordinator will review the CHP and provide training for our staff to meet the needs of your child.
- Authorization to Administer Medication: If your child will or may require any type of medication while in class we will need to have a completed Authorization to Administer Medication (AAM) form before they can attend. This authorization will need to be completed in conjunction with and signed by the prescribing doctor. Once complete, staff will be trained on how to administer the medication which will need to be provided along with the original prescribing information.

Screenings and Evaluations

One of the greatest barriers we see to a child's success in school is an undiagnosed or unsupported developmental or physical impediment/delay. Prior to your child attending class and throughout their first 45-90 days of enrollment, our staff will work very closely with you to screen your child in several areas. It is important that these screenings occur right at the beginning of the year as each area will affect your child's learning and development. We invite you to please work closely with your child's Head Start Health

Specialist to complete these in the indicated timelines. Those completed at Head Start will be done based upon the permission granted to staff by you on the screening consent form completed at the time of application.

ELE staff will work with you to ensure that all screenings are complete on time. We expect that parents will collaborate respectfully with staff to complete all screenings. The following screenings will need to be conducted for your child, either by an ELE staff member or your family's primary health care provider (PCP).

Within the First 45 Days of Enrollment

- Hearing Screening (HS)
- Vision Screening (HS)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (HS)
- Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic (HS)
- Preschool Language Scale- Language & Speech Articulation (HS)

Within the First 90 Days of Enrollment

- Growth Assessment (HS or PCP)
- Blood Pressure (HS or PCP)
- Lead (HS or PCP)
- Hemoglobin (HS, WIC or PCP)
- Physical Exam (PCP)
- Dental Exam (PCP)

If you have questions as to what any of these screenings are and/or why they are necessary please speak with your child's teacher or health specialist. They would be more than happy to explain them to you. Again, we will need your help in completing these screenings upon enrollment in the program.

Conscious Discipline

One of the major barriers to children's success in kindergarten and beyond is their ability to regulate their own emotions and establish healthy relationships and interactions with their teachers and peers. Conscious Discipline (CD) is a research-based behavioral curriculum we use in the classroom that is aligned with Creative Curriculum. It focuses on helping children feel emotionally safe and connected with others in the classroom. CD helps children master self-regulation, empathy, and social skills which in turn help children learn the importance of social interactions and cooperation. Children learn how to recognize their emotions, manage them, and calm

themselves to a state of mind where they can problem solve and learn from their own experience.

We see the greatest benefits to a child's ability to self-regulate their emotions when the skills they are learning in the classroom are complemented with parents' efforts at home. A major component of the curriculum is helping parents to understand how the principles of Conscious Discipline can be applied at home. Several opportunities will be provided for you to learn Conscious Discipline principles and techniques. Family Advocates will share information from this curriculum with you on their home visits. We also provide a two session course on the curriculum specifically for parents. If you are struggling with behavioral issues or discipline at home this is a great resource available to you. ELE staff work very hard to provide a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate and engaging for preschool age children. With the combination of a safe, developmentally appropriate environment and social/emotional instruction in the classroom, most children are very successful in the program. When a child still struggles with behavior in spite of these supports we may provide the additional support and interventions discussed below.

Developmental Concerns, Delays and/or Disabilities

Early Learning Essentials values the opportunity to serve children in our program with developmental delays and/or disabilities. These children make great strides in our program and enhance learning opportunities for other children. If your child already has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) through a local school district then Early Learning Essentials will work closely with the school district responsible for the IEP to ensure that IEP services are provided in the least restrictive environment. That collaboration depends greatly upon the type of accommodations needed and the placement determination made by the IEP team, of which parents are a major contributor. If your child has an IEP, the Disabilities and Mental Health team will be contacting you, if they have not already done so, to make sure all needed services are received.

Some children who come into our program may have a delay or disability that has not already been diagnosed. Early Learning Essentials staff observe each child very closely and observe their development. If you or the staff have a concern for your child's development they will speak with you about it and may seek additional support in the classroom. They may also request that a member of our disabilities team observe the child in the classroom to determine if a referral for an official evaluation is needed. If a referral is recommended, the disabilities team will coordinate with you and the local

school district to schedule an evaluation, and set up an IEP meeting as needed. In many cases your child could receive the services they need right in the Early Learning Essentials classroom.

When any child, with an IEP or without one, has behavioral struggles in the classroom that threaten the safety of themselves, other children, or staff, the staff have many positive strategies to support the adjustment in behavior needed to ensure safety. They will follow a process with you to ensure that your child's needs are being met. Early Learning Essentials does not expel children with behavioral struggles. However, if a child's behavior is severe enough and endangers others, a temporary suspension may be considered to put appropriate supports and interventions in place to ensure the safety of every individual in Head Start. If your child is struggling with behavioral concerns, Staff will work very closely with you to determine what interventions and supports will best help your child to be safe and successful at school, while also protecting the safety of others. If your child's behaviors are unsafe to the point that Early Learning Essentials can not provide a safe environment, then we will work closely with you and the local school district to determine a placement that will be more supportive of your child's needs. Again, we expect this to be a team effort with parents and staff working collaboratively to ensure everyone's needs are being met.

Potty Training

We understand the importance of potty training in your child's development and we want to ensure that everyone is on the same page. At Early Learning Essentials, our teachers ***do not actively potty train the children*** but they are willing to assist and support your child during this process. Potty training is a big milestone that requires consistency, patience, and a collaborative effort between parents and teachers. Our role is to provide guidance, reinforce the skills learned at home, and maintain a consistent approach. Teachers can encourage the children to use the bathroom, wash their hands, and provide lots of praise. We believe that when parents and teachers work together, the potty training journey becomes smoother and more successful. We strongly encourage you to continue the potty training process at home, as your child's progress in this area will greatly benefit them becoming more independent. Additionally, the state of Utah recently passed legislation that all Kindergarten children must be potty trained, thus this becomes a critical step in their preparation. If you have any questions or need advice, our teachers and FA's are here to provide support and share resources.

Meal Time & Nutrition

Early Learning Essentials works very hard to provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks for your child that meet USDA guidelines. We follow the recommendations of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and are committed to serving foods high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. In part-day classes children will be provided with two meals during the school day. In extended-day classes children will receive three. Meals in most of our classes are eaten family-style with children and teachers sitting together and portioning out their own food. In some classes the food is pre-plated. *Since food is reimbursed by the CACFP, any food left over after a meal must be thrown away. Please recognize that this is not a Head Start policy but is rather a requirement of the funding of the meals.*

Because we provide nutritious meals and snacks to your child, we ask that you do not send any meals or snacks with your child to school. Please bring your child on time and ready to eat, as the first meal is served just 15 minutes after school starts. All of the children in the program are encouraged, but not forced, to taste each food component. Food is never used as a punishment or reward.

No Nut Policy

We have many children in our program with life-threatening allergies to peanuts and tree nuts. In order to keep these children safe, we don't allow nuts of any kind in any of our centers. Please don't bring any items containing nuts into our centers at any time, including during holidays. Children with these allergies can have severe reactions even from just being close to them, without ever eating the nuts. Thank you for your support in keeping our students safe.

No Home Foods

Another food policy we have to keep children safe is not to allow homemade food to be served to Head Start children at any time. We have many children with food allergies and intolerances and we don't know what ingredients homemade food has in it, so it has the potential to cause an allergic reaction. There is also the risk of foodborne illness with homemade food. Please don't bring anything made from home to your child's class. If you have to bring a treat, please pick up something at the store that doesn't require any further preparation.

Treats on Birthdays

In accordance with our no sugary foods policy Early Learning Essentials will not serve, nor allowed to be served in class, any sweets on children's birthdays. If

you desire, you may provide store bought treats to go home with children after the class is over at the end of the day.

Eating With your Child's Class

Throughout the year you may have the opportunity to eat with your child while volunteering in the classroom. For budgetary reasons we have a policy in place that only allows 3 adults to eat at each meal. However, if a teacher is absent, or would like to give up their meal, parents have the option to be the third adult at the meal. If you do eat with the class, there are several rules that you will need to follow. First, you must wash your hands before sitting down at the table to help keep the food safe. In classrooms where family style meal service is implemented, you will then unwrap each bowl of food, model child-size servings on your plate, and then pass the food around the table to allow the children to serve themselves. Please don't touch anyone else's food with your bare hands. If children need help, you will need to wear gloves in order to assist them. At the end of the meal, you and the children will clean up after yourselves and scrape and rinse your plates.

Illness

Due to the nature of preschool classrooms various illnesses can be passed among the children and teaching staff throughout the year. Please do everything possible to ensure that your child remains healthy and able to attend. Ensuring that your child(ren) is getting sufficient sleep, eating a nutritious diet, and getting in the habit of washing their hands will go a long way in preventing illness and/or decreasing its intensity and duration. If your child needs to stay home due to illness we ask that you please inform the teachers as soon as you are aware they will not be attending. We ask that you keep children home if:

- your child has a rash or sores that are oozing
- your child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness like pink eye or strep throat
- your child has had a fever over 100.4 degrees or taken a fever reducing medication within the last 24 hours
- your child has thrown up or had diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- your child's eyes are pink and crusty

In all other cases we ask that you please send your child to class so as to not fall behind on classroom instruction. If you have any questions about whether or not to send your child please communicate with the teacher.

As you drop your child off at the beginning of each school day, staff will do a daily health check to ensure that your child is well enough to attend class and participate in the activities that day. If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, you or someone on your emergency contact list will be called to come pick your child up.

Attendance and Absences

Research has shown that consistent attendance is one of the most important factors affecting your child's success both in preschool and beyond. The class is always moving forward, and in most cases children are learning things that build upon the previous day's learning. If your child is frequently late and/or absent it will be hard for them to keep up with the learning. They will miss valuable learning time which will decrease their readiness for Kindergarten. The patterns of attendance that you develop with your child now will carry over into later years.

In order for us to make sure that all children are accounted for and safe, we pay close attention to who is and who is not in class each day. We ask that you contact the teacher or call our main office as soon as you know that your child will not be attending school. When a child is unexpectedly absent (parent has not reported the absence) we are required to contact parents and will send an automated phone call to inform you that your child is not present. It is not our intention to overwhelm you with phone calls. This procedure is just to ensure that the child is not absent without you being aware. Through this we hope to avoid dangerous accidents, such as children being forgotten in their cars. *As long as you call to report an absence within the first hour of class you will not receive the automated call.* To report an absence you can use the following QR code.



Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism for Head Start purposes is anything below 90% cumulative attendance. If your child falls below 90% your Family Advocate will work with you to problem solve the cause of the absences and improve attendance. If your child stops coming to school altogether you will receive a phone call or visit from the Family Advocate who will work with you to help the child resume their attendance. If attendance

doesn't resume then their slot will be considered vacant and will be filled with another child on the waitlist.

Absences due to Transportation

If transportation is an issue or becomes an issue during the school year, please speak with your Family Advocate. While Early Learning Essentials only provides transportation services to some children in Nephi, there are other supports that the FA may be able to offer to help resolve the transportation concern, including providing you contact information for those interested in carpooling.

Pre-approved Absences/Vacations

If your family is taking a vacation during school days, you can get up to two weeks of pre-approved absences one time during the school year. This must occur prior to the absence. Please speak with the teacher or your Family Advocate to request a pre-approval for these absences.

Safety During Transitions

Some of the riskiest moments to children's safety are during transition periods, such as drop off, pick up, and boarding/exiting a bus. This is due to the dangers present when tiny kids are moving around large vehicles that may struggle to see them. At various points during the school year, all parents and children will be pedestrians (i.e. walking from their cars into the classrooms, while getting on the Head Start bus on a curriculum extender trip. We do not provide any system to help you get your children from your car into the classroom, therefore safety is in your hands. When walking in a parking lot or crossing the street ***PLEASE KEEP A FIRM HOLD OF YOUR CHILD'S HAND!!! ALSO, PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE OTHER CHILDREN IN YOUR CAR WHILE YOU DROP YOUR HEAD START CHILD OFF IN THE CLASSROOM!! One careless moment can lead to a lifetime of regret and sorrow.***

Listed below are pedestrian drop off and pick up rules and guidelines. *All parents sign forms during the first teacher home visit indicating an understanding of and commitment to following these guidelines:*

- Parents and families are expected to follow the designated drop off and pick up times of their child's classroom scheduled hours.
- Parents are responsible to review the drop-off and pick-up guidelines, including reviewing with their children the safety rules such as holding their parents hands when walking from the parking lot into the classroom.

- Parents are expected to review the Transportation and Pedestrian Safety procedures that they sign during the first teacher home visit.
- Parents are expected to review the Safety Pledge and Safety Reminder information (All these guidelines are posted on the parent board in the classrooms)
- Parents are expected to follow the drop off and pick up map instructions that they receive during the first teacher home visit and which are posted on the parent board.

Drop-off and Pick-up - Signing in and out

Each day as children are dropped off and picked up, parents are expected to sign their Head Start child in and out. As part of the drop-off and pick-up procedures parents are asked to write the actual time of drop-off or pick-up and sign their name indicating the attendance of their HS child. It is expected that individuals dropping off or picking up any HS child be at least 18 years of age, and their contact information is on the “Authorization for Emergency Medical Care/Release”. As part of the program’s safety procedures teachers will only open the door for authorized adults during class and during the sign-in or sign-out time where the teacher will greet each parent and child. Parents are encouraged to assist their child in locating their name tag, helping their child to store their personal items in their designated cubby, and then assisting their child to join the class.

Since late drop-off and/or pick-up can both negatively impact children in the program we expect parents to honor the drop-off and pick-up times. When children are dropped off for class late they miss several routines that are critical for preparing them to learn and cooperate in a preschool environment. Additionally, they may miss the first meal of the day.

When a parent is late picking up their child from class it not only has a negative effect on the child but upon the staff and potentially other children in the classroom. Children can feel scared or abandoned when parents don’t pick them up as expected. Staff also need the time after class to prepare for the next class, whether that is the same day or the next day. Additionally, staff have lives and family outside of their work and late pick-up detracts from those other obligations. Therefore, we expect all parents to pick their children up during the scheduled pick-up time. If you will be more than 10 minutes late picking up your child we ask that you call the classroom so they are aware of the delay.

If late pick-up becomes a pattern then staff will work with parents to develop a punctuality improvement plan. If that plan isn't followed then other steps will be taken to ensure children are picked-up on time. If a child is not picked up from class within a reasonable time and staff haven't heard from a parent informing them of when they will be there, staff may call law enforcement and DCFS to take the child into custody to keep them safe until someone is able to pick them up. Obviously, this is not ideal for any children so please make sure arrangements are made for the child to be picked up on time every day.

Release of Children

Also of great importance is ensuring that children are only released to adults that are authorized by you to take them from our classrooms. No child will be released to any unfamiliar adults on your behalf unless there is written authorization from you on the contact list that is on file. If anyone comes to pick up your child from the classroom (i.e. Aunt, Uncle, Grandparent, friend) the teacher will ask to see the individual's driver's license (or other form of valid ID) to ensure the adult is listed on the "Emergency Contacts" form. If you need to call and inform staff that a different person will be picking up your child than those on the authorized release form, you will be asked to answer a security question to verify your identity. **Please be aware that if a teacher has reason to believe that the adult picking up a child is intoxicated or otherwise unable to safely transport the child, they will not release the child until another adult is contacted and arrives. In cases where there isn't anyone who can safely pick up the child, staff members will contact DCFS or the local police department.**

Parking at School and Leaving Children in Cars

During your initial teacher home visit you will receive a map outlining walking instructions and recommendations as to where to park your car when at the center. To make sure all children are safe, please review this information carefully and make sure to follow the guidelines outlined. PLEASE NEVER LEAVE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE CAR WHILE YOU DROP OFF YOUR HEAD START CHILD!!

Locked Doors

For the safety of children and staff while school is in session, classroom doors are to remain locked. Only authorized staff, volunteers, and parents are permitted into the classrooms.

Video Cameras in Classrooms and Playgrounds

Each classroom and playground has a mounted video camera to record what occurs in these spaces while your child is at the center. The footage is only saved and retained

for 30 days for classroom video and 60 days for playground video. The purpose of the cameras is to provide administration with the ability to review any safety questions or concerns of which we become aware. To protect confidentiality, only director level staff may review the footage. The footage may also be used for training purposes. Parents may request to view video footage of their child to review specific incidents in the classroom. Parents may not receive a copy of the video footage.

Accident Reports

If an accident occurs during school (i.e. your child falls and injures his/herself or if your child has an allergic reaction to something) parents will be notified by teaching staff or health specialists by the end of the day. If the accident requires further attention or follow-up, parents will be notified immediately. In cases of severe emergency, emergency medical services will be contacted immediately.

Emergency Procedures

In emergency situations each center's staff is responsible for the safety of children and will coordinate emergency response activities with public safety officials, the Administrative Office, and families/guardians. Staff will teach and conduct monthly emergency drills with children to help them become familiar and comfortable with the procedures in case an actual emergency occurs. This also helps teachers to react quickly in emergency situations so that the decisions and actions they take will reduce the negative impact of any emergency.

In order to prepare children for a variety of emergencies and/or natural disasters, all classrooms practice the following drills in a child-friendly way:

- September: Transportation Bus and Pedestrian Safety, Fire
- October: Bus, Fire
- November: Earthquake, Severe Weather
- December: Bomb Threat, Lockdown
- January: Shelter-in-Place, Bus
- February: Lockdown, Shooting
- March: Earthquake, Fire
- April: Shelter-In-Place, Bomb Threat
- May: Shooting, Severe Weather

All staff are trained in handling emergency situations including being certified in first aid and CPR. For further details on emergency procedures please review our full Emergency Manual which is found on our website. ELE staff will activate the Emergency Medical Services by calling for assistance if they determine any situation

warrants the services of medical professionals to deal with an emergency situation, especially if they require rapid response or immediate medical attention.

Confidentiality

We take great effort to ensure that any information provided to us is protected and confidential. Personal and family information is maintained in a secure software program designed specifically for educational use. Upon your request and with appropriate prior notification, you may review your family's file at any time during the year. You may also request a copy of any information shared with third parties. Policies and procedures regarding personally identifiable information and its protection is shared with parents during the application intake. Early Learning Essentials staff and guests will only take pictures and videos of your children if you have provided us with permission on the Media Consent form. These images will also only be used for those purposes for which you have given permission.

Concealed Weapons

Possessions of weapons, including firearms, on Early Learning Essentials property is prohibited unless otherwise authorized by Utah state law.

Parent Involvement

Parents are the key to the life-long success of children, and as such our main goal is to partner with you. We have an open door policy and you are welcome to be in your child's classroom anytime you are available. It also means that should you ever need to talk with a staff member, we will make ourselves available to you. Please be considerate, however, of the needs of the classroom and find a time to speak with staff that will not interrupt their interactions or teaching with the children.

Parent Volunteering

Each month your child's teacher will send activities for your child to work on at home with your assistance. We ask that you keep track of the time you spend helping your child learn and report that time to us by the end of each month. Below is the Parent link, (QR CODE) where you will report the time you have spent working at home with your child(ren). It would be good to bookmark this link for easy access going forward. It is important to know that you can enter your time on the following devices:

- Personal computers QR Code (Scan with your Smartphone)
- Smartphones

- Classroom computers
- Teacher iPad
- Center Manager Laptop

Before entering information, please verify your child's correct center name and classroom number as you will be asked this on the Parent / Guardian Volunteer form. By clicking on [this link](#) or scanning the QR code below you will be taken to the following document.

The information you enter will be generated automatically for the teacher to see. It is very important to enter your time on or before the last day of the month. You can enter daily, weekly or before the last day of the month. Whatever works best for you. We appreciate and thank you for working with your child's teacher throughout the month on the School-to-Home activities as you are engaged in your child's education.

If you have questions please let your child's teacher or Family Advocate know. They are happy to help you.



Parent Communities

Early Learning Essentials works tirelessly to provide many opportunities outside the classroom for parents to get involved. Every parent at Early Learning Essentials forms part of their center's Parent Community and each community elects officers from their center to represent them. These officers plan bi-monthly activities, workshops and/or trainings based on the interests expressed by all parents at the center. We encourage you to attend these activities and to also consider serving as an officer in this community. It's a great opportunity to develop leadership skills and it's a valuable experience you can add to your resume. Some of the officers also participate on our Policy Council which provides Early Learning Essentials with parents' perspectives when making important policy and agency-level decisions.

Family Activities

Families that take the time to have fun, to share experiences, and to reconnect with each other create strong emotional bonds between parents and children. Throughout the school year we plan family-friendly activities that families can attend together. We highly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to spend quality time together at these events and if you have any fun ideas that you would like us to consider for a family activity, let your Family Advocate know.

Male involvement

Every child needs someone who will encourage, motivate and support them— whether it's coming from a man or woman. Research has shown, however, that males and females not only interact differently with children, but they also teach and encourage different personality traits. Thus, Early Learning Essentials works hard to also involve positive male role models in program activities, they being statistically less likely to participate. A male role model doesn't necessarily have to be a father. It can be an older brother, a family friend, uncle, grandfather or coach. We also encourage men to volunteer in the classroom at any time.

Early Learning Essentials also has a group specifically designed to help men participate consistently with a HS child. This group is called the D.U.D.E (Dads United Dads Engaged) group. On a monthly basis we hold D.U.D.E activities where the student and their male role model can go and have a fun time together. Males are not the only ones who can participate with the Head Start child in these activities, females are also welcome to attend, especially where a male role model is not present.

Dads (or other male role models) can also earn a free book for their child's library by reading fifteen minutes six times during the month with the HS child. They can also earn a math oriented toy or activity by completing math related activities. Each month you will receive a D.U.D.Es reading or Math slip. At the end of the month, turn it into your Family Advocate to get a reward.

Parent Concerns and Behavior

If you have a concern or are upset with something in regards to the program, we expect you to please address the concern with the teaching staff, the Center Manager, or your Family Advocate privately. Doing so during class or with other parents or children present can disrupt the classroom and further complicate concerns, slowing their resolution. We are anxious for your feedback and are always seeking to improve. Please consider us as a partner with you as we are willing and open to receive your

feedback. Please be aware of our zero tolerance for violence policy which explains the consequences for parents addressing concerns in a disrespectful or intrusive manner. Consequences for breaking the Zero Tolerance for Violence policy could include removal of parental rights to be on Early Learning Essentials property. If you want to make a formal complaint you may do so through the "Feedback Forum" on the website, which also describes the process we expect community members to go through to address concerns. If you have a concern with something that is going on in the classroom or with a staff member we invite you to speak directly with that person first.

Parent Behavior While in the Classroom

We consider being in a Head Start classroom to be a great honor. As you are always welcome in the classroom, we extend to you a high level of trust and have high expectations for your behavior in the classroom. Please don't do anything that would take away from the children's experience. The volunteer handbook is a great resource to help you understand our expectations for volunteers, including parent volunteers, in our classrooms. Safety of the children is of ultimate importance to us, therefore, we will make every effort to keep your child safe. Whenever you are on Head Start premises we will expect you to be respectful of the children, staff, and other parents' persons and property.

With that in mind, it is important to know that all staff, including teachers, are mandatory reporters of any suspected or real child abuse. That means that if ever they observe behavior or signs of potential child abuse, they are under legal requirement to report it immediately to the Division of Child and Family Services. While staff may discuss concerns with you, Early Learning Essentials policy prohibits them from discussing any reporting that may occur. As this is a requirement of all staff, any parent/guardian who threatens or attacks a staff member as a result of a report will be immediately subject to the steps outlined in our zero tolerance for violence policy.

Custody Concerns

We recognize that custody is a delicate matter and often requires great care to protect children and families. Therefore, in order to protect your child, we ask you to provide us with any custody, protective or restraining order documentation. Until we have received this documentation, we will operate as though whoever is on the child's birth certificate has full rights to the child and their information. We can only enforce whatever legal documentation is provided to us. If anything changes in regards to custody please inform your Family Advocate as soon as possible.

If there is a sensitive custody issue in your family, we expect you to please resolve details of its implementation outside of our classroom. Early Learning Essentials and/or staff will not get involved in custody disputes or visitation rights of either parent. The only exception to this procedure is when we receive a subpoena.

Family Services

We believe that every family enrolled in our program has incredible strengths and knowledge that can support and lift themselves, other families in the program and the community. We also recognize that each family comes with unique challenges and barriers to their desired goals, specifically as it relates to their children. There are many variables related to the home environment that are critical to the child's optimal growth, development, and success. Several of the variables that have the greatest impact on children in the home are articulated as outcomes in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement framework described at the beginning of the handbook.

Early Learning Essentials is committed to helping parents use their strengths and program/community resources to overcome their challenges and create a home environment that will help their child to be most successful. We therefore provide highly trained Family Advocates to every family to help define the family's goals and create a plan to achieve those goals with whatever support is necessary and available.

Family Advocate Visits

Your Family Advocate will schedule several visits with you throughout the year. The purpose of these visits is to partner with you in achieving your family's goals. The first event will occur at the Head Start Center and will usually happen before your child attends school. This meeting is called an Orientation and the purpose is to orient you further to the program and develop a plan for participation and engagement. It also is an opportunity to make sure everything is ready for your child to begin classes.

The other visits will occur at your home. The number and duration of these visits will be determined together with your Family Advocate and will be individualized to your family's needs and interests. The topic of each home visit is also determined by you and the FA, based upon the self-evaluation you completed at intake. Topics may include financial literacy, Conscious Discipline, parenting and discipline, housing, learning English as a second language, nutrition, and any number of other topics. While we can provide many services directly to your family, if you have any needs that we can't address we will provide referrals and support you in accessing any quality resources in our community that meet your needs. Family Advocates will also encourage and partner

with you to set a family goal of your choosing, and if you want support in its completion, they are ready and willing to assist you as you work towards meeting your goals.

Classes for Parents

Throughout the year we offer various classes to parents on a variety of subjects such as health and nutrition, parenting, relationships, ESL, work preparation, and financial literacy. Classes are offered at different times and in different locations throughout the year. This year we're especially excited to offer a 2-session Conscious Discipline Parenting class. If you are interested in a specific class, please let your Family Advocate know. Child care is often provided for these classes.

Financial Literacy

We have had many families express an interest in learning about and improving their financial literacy and skills. Throughout the year, look for opportunities to attend workshops offered by community agencies who specialize in this area.

Other Resources

Please speak to your Family Advocate about any need you may have. They receive ongoing training to learn first hand about the resources that are available within the communities which we serve. They are knowledgeable and helpful and can share this information with you.

Refer a Friend

We take applications continually throughout the school year. If you have friends with children who are preschool age, we would love to have you refer them to us. Word of mouth is by far the best way to let people know about Head Start, and we want to serve those who can be benefited by our wonderful program. To refer a friend please visit our website under the "Apply Now" tab.