

Preschool Criteria for a Preschool Program



**Supplement to WASC Self-Study Documents
2000 Edition**

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CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION — PRESCHOOL

Within WASC Category A • **Organization for Student Learning** •

1. **Philosophy**

There is a statement of philosophy about preschool education that reflects the concept of developmental appropriateness and the need to provide for parent participation as well as parent education. This statement is congruent with the philosophy of the elementary school of which the preschool is a part. Goals and objectives prepared for the preschool program relate directly to the preschool philosophy and are reviewed annually.

Criteria Explications

- the philosophy of the preschool program is presented in a comprehensive written statement
- the goals and objectives of the program are consistent with the stated philosophy
- the preschool philosophy, goals, and objectives are consistent with other school policies and documents
- procedures for the review and update of preschool goals and objectives are adopted and scheduled for implementation
- faculty, parents, and community members are included in the procedures for review
- a process for presenting and explaining the philosophy, goals and objectives to the school-community is prepared and included as an on-going event
- an evaluation of progress in moving toward goals and in meeting objectives is conducted and documented

2. **Organization**

The school's organizational structure includes the preschool program as an integral component. Goals and objectives for the preschool program are in consonance with the goals and objectives for the elementary school grade sequence. The relationships among the governing body, administration, staff, parents and children are clearly defined as are the responsibilities and limits of authority.

Criteria Explications

- organizational charts and descriptions show preschool as an integral part of the school
- procedures for admission, classroom organization, staffing, record-keeping, parent participation and parent education are prepared and disseminated
- preschool staff carry out policies of the district/school
- the organizational structure allows for developmentally appropriate preschool programs

- school improvement processes involve preschool staff in continuous organizational, curricular and personal development
- roles and responsibilities for all staff are defined
- procedures for personnel supervision and evaluation are operational
- attention is directed to positive school climate
- staff is included in decision-making processes

3. Staff

The preschool teachers have appropriate certificates or credentials and are trained in child development and early childhood education. They work with the total school faculty to create a school environment in which effective learning takes place. Preschool teachers are aware of the need for parent participation and are adept at classroom management techniques that utilize parents to best advantage. Staff-parent interactions revolve around the concept that the child's learning and family are intimately associated. Teachers avail themselves of professional development activities and employ creative instructional practices.

Criteria Explications

- adult-child ratios vary depending upon the age of the children, type of program activity, special needs and licensing policies of the state and district
- teachers are well-trained in early childhood educational practices and possess appropriate certificates or credentials consistent with the requirements of the state and the elementary school
- there is appropriate use of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies, activities, materials
- teachers interact verbally with children in a calm, courteous, respectful, friendly manner
- teachers use positive techniques of guidance or redirection and abstain from inappropriate discipline measures
- certificated and classified staff have positive attitudes about cultural values and utilize culturally appropriate strategies/activities
- teachers display creativity in teaching
- teachers are knowledgeable about program enrichment sources such as businesses, community workers/groups, government agencies
- a good working relationship exists among all of the school staff, certificated and classified, at all grade levels
- all staff, certificated and classified, participate in professional development activities
- there is continued communication and interaction with parents
- teachers involve parents in the educational process
- the education of parents about preschool philosophy and procedures is a part of the teachers' preschool program plans
- custodial and maintenance staffs are adequate for the school's program

Within WASC Category B **• Curriculum and Instruction •**

4. Curriculum

The written curriculum includes task/behavior descriptions, specific objectives and activities, and references to materials and resources that relate directly to the stated preschool goals and that derive from the preschool philosophy which is congruent with accepted concepts of how young children learn. The curriculum is child-centered and focuses upon age-appropriate learning activities in the following areas: cognitive skills, social skills, social interaction, social behavior, language development, physical development, self-concept development, creative expression, routine personal tasks, and self-health/safety. Knowledge of and appreciation for the arts are included as basic elements in daily activities. Enrichment activities for all curricular areas are provided. Routine living tasks are a central theme in daily activities. The evaluation of each child's progress is ongoing and a specific part of the curricular documentation.

Criteria Explications

- the curriculum document is specific and is referenced to the philosophy and goals
- the curriculum is child-centered and developmentally appropriate
- the curriculum is balanced and includes cognitive, social, language development, physical, creative and routine activities
- the curriculum, integrated and experiential, is based upon the children's needs and interests
- children have time to play alone, with other children, or with an adult
- children are encouraged to think, reason, question, develop ideas, solve problems and experiment
- children are encouraged to make choices and display independence
- intellectual and physical development is fostered with a variety of approaches that reflect the needs of the children
- the curriculum specifically includes multicultural concepts and activities
- curricular activities encourage good habits of health, nutrition, grooming and safety
- knowledge of and appreciation for the arts are included as basic elements in daily activities with hands-on art, music and drama opportunities
- the curriculum allows for structured and spontaneous activities that can be added to an emerging program
- daily schedules derive from the curriculum document and balance the following: indoor/outdoor, quiet/active, individual/large group/small group, large muscle/small muscle, child initiated/staff initiated
- transitions from one activity to another are specific and are included as learning strategies
- routine personal tasks such as grooming, washing, toileting, dressing, eating and sleeping are included
- evaluation of the progress of the children is included in the instructional plan and is a regular on-going part of the teachers' activities

Within WASC Category C

• Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth •

5. Support Services

The needs, interests and aptitudes of the children are determined and program objectives for the children relate to those needs, interests and aptitudes. Special services and referrals to community or private agencies are available as needed. School-site administrators support the implementation of the program.

Criteria Explications

- assessments of needs and interests by staff are used to set goals for the children
- assessment information is collected throughout the year to monitor children's progress and to modify goals
- school-site personnel, including administrators, are resources for and advocates of the program
- community resources such as social services, mental services, mental health agencies, counseling services, crisis centers, clinics, recreational and youth organizations are used for program support
- special needs identification lists and plans for remediation are prepared by teachers and parents cooperatively
- translators are available, as necessary, to communicate with parents

6. Health and Safety

The health and safety of the children are a paramount concern and there is compliance with all legal and health requirements including, but not limited to, immunizations. Adults are physically and psychologically healthy. Each child has a health evaluation by accepted medical personnel and detailed health records maintained in the classroom/school. Provisions are made for the safe conduct of the children from home to school, from one area of the school facility to another, and from school to home.

Criteria Explications

- there is compliance with all state, legal and health requirements
- adults are free of any physical or psychological conditions that might adversely affect children
- staff have pre-employment physical examinations, tuberculosis tests, other communicable disease tests
- staff are considered physically and psychologically competent to work with children
- every child has a written health record, report of health evaluation six months prior to enrollment, records of required immunizations
- emergency contact information is on file and available to staff
- staff are alerted to children's medical problems

- there are provisions for notification of parents of children who are ill
- staff are qualified to administer first aid, including CPR
- first aid supplies are available in sufficient quantities
- vehicles used for transportation have appropriate restraint devices
- staff and children know the evacuation plans and safety drills
- safe arrival and departure procedures are employed
- children are released only to authorized adults
- areas in and around the school plant allow for safe movement of the children
- suspected incidents of abuse or neglect are reported
- children's clothes are appropriate for the weather and for program activities
- equipment and materials are clean and serviceable
- building, classroom and outdoor area are maintained in clean and safe condition
- hand-washing facilities are available for adults and children, and are used, as necessary, for personal cleanliness

7. Food Services and Nutrition

Food services meet the special nutritional requirements of preschool children and promote healthy habits of nutrition. Guidelines disseminated by the United States Department of Agriculture serve as the framework for the food services program.

Criteria Explications

- food provided meets the nutritional requirements of the children as recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture
- food preparation and facilities meet all health standards
- food handlers are free of any communicable disease or condition
- food is stored, prepared and served under sanitary conditions
- eating areas and utensils are appropriate for the size and development level of the children
- food served reflects the cultural diversity of the children
- meal times are pleasant social events
- meal times are used as nutritional learning activities
- children learn habits of cleanliness as part of the nutritional learning activities

8. Parent Participation

Parents are participants in preschool indoor and outdoor activities, and provide instruction and supervision as they demonstrate acceptance of the concept of family-preschool interrelatedness. Parent participation fosters, in the home, the continuance of and support for the preschool program practices.

Criteria Explications

- parents receive an orientation to the program
- parents, as necessary, are included in training activities in preparation for their participation in program activities with children
- teachers discuss specific program activities with parents
- parents work under the direction of the teacher to provide learning experiences and supervision for the children
- parents help to prepare material for program activities
- parents assist on study trips and in outdoor play
- parents assist with the food service activities
- teachers and parents develop a continuity for parent participation in program activities
- parents are encouraged to use program learning activities with their children at home
- parents are asked to work with their children at home in preparation for special events
- parents are encouraged to read to their children at home and to share enriching experiences with them

9. Parent Education

There is a well-defined program of parent education that enhances parents' knowledge and capabilities in early childhood development and education.

Criteria Explications

- parents are encouraged to attend pre-enrollment meetings
- parents are given information about the program, including the philosophy and goals
- conferences are held to discuss children's progress
- parents are informed about the program through newsletters, notes, notices of events, conferences
- meetings for parent groups are scheduled to discuss the program, learn about agency assistance, hear guest speakers
- parents are invited to attend performances or events presented by the children
- special evening or Saturday classes for parents are provided, as needed, to teach English, coping skills and/or basic community life skills

Within WASC Category D
• Resource Management and Development •

10. Classroom and School Facilities

The learning environment enables staff to implement the preschool program at an optimum level with classrooms, school structures, materials, and grounds that are safe and appropriate for the preschool children. Space, both indoor and outdoor, fosters interaction of the children with each other, with adults, and with the learning materials.

Criteria Explications

- indoor and outdoor facilities meet all state licensing and district policies, and are safe, comfortable, clean
- outdoor space is used as an extension of the indoor areas for learning activities
- outdoor areas are suitable for climbing, running, playing games and for using wheeled toys, building play structures
- arrangements of space allow individual, small group, large group activities
- age-appropriate materials and equipment are accessible to the children
- soft components such as cushions, rugs, mats, grass are included as part of the room furnishings/play areas
- sound-absorbing materials are used to reduce noise
- personal storage space is provided and is accessible to the children
- toilets, washing facilities, drinking water are accessible to the children

11. Finance

There is financial support that provides a quality educational program that includes the necessary staff, provision for parent involvement and education, instructional resources, physical facilities appropriate to the children served, and other support services necessary to achieve the objectives of the school. The budget development process involves those who are responsible for implementing the school's programs and services.

Criteria Explications

- the preschool budget is part of the total school's program budgeting system and practices
- the budget includes provision for all elements of the preschool program
- preschool teachers, as members of the school faculty, provide program information for use by the administrators during the budget development process
- preschool teachers are included with the total faculty during budget preparation discussions
- teachers have some discretion with funds expended for food, instructional materials, and supplies