



Division of Early Childhood

Pre-K and Head Start

# Parent Engagement Handbook

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Greetings Pre-Kindergarten/Head Start Parents:

The Memphis Shelby County Schools Early Childhood Program highly values parent involvement and engagement. Research indicates that a parent's involvement in their child's schooling experience is one of the primary indicators of student success.

By contributing to your child's school and classroom you will be showing your child that you value learning and hard work. It will help your child realize that you believe school learning is important and needed in the real world. You will be able to more directly praise your child's efforts and progress. The benefits are numerous.

To welcome you and your child, we have created this ***Parent Engagement Handbook***. It offers guidelines and policies to clarify classroom needs and parent responsibilities. We look forward to partnering with you during the school year as we all work toward empowering families and enhancing the academics of students.

We hope this information answers any questions you may have. If you should have any suggestions or concerns, please contact the Division of Early Childhood.

Warm regards,

Division of Early Childhood Staff  
3030 Jackson Avenue  
Memphis, TN 38112  
(901) 416-3450

Pre-K: Begin the Journey!

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## **WELCOME TO PRE-K/HEAD START PROGRAM**

Dear Pre-Kindergarten/Head Start Parent,

Memphis Shelby County Schools and its partners would like to welcome you and your family to the Early Childhood program. We are pleased that you have provided us with the opportunity to serve your child during the most important developmental years of their lives.

As the parent(s) you are your child's first and most important teacher. Our staff has made a commitment to partner with you to help your child develop to his/her full potential.

We invite you to visit our program at any time and we are looking forward to a successful year.

### **IMPORTANT NUMBERS (Division of Early Childhood)**

My child's school/center is: \_\_\_\_\_

The school address is: \_\_\_\_\_

The phone number is: \_\_\_\_\_

The Principal/Director is: \_\_\_\_\_

My child's teachers are: \_\_\_\_\_

My Family Engagement Specialist is: \_\_\_\_\_

The Division of Early Childhood phone number is: (901) 416-3450

### **OTHER PEOPLE I SHOULD KNOW**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Phone Extension</b>

## **ABOUT OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

The Early Childhood program provides comprehensive services for the “whole” child. Our classrooms offer developmentally appropriate activities in almost 300 classrooms across the school district. Our Education, Family Services, Health, Disabilities, and Nutrition areas offer services to engage families in their child’s education and to help them become more self-sufficient. Developmentally appropriate classroom activities and practices that prepare children for school are only a portion of what is provided to all participants. Not only do students engage in a variety of learning experiences to foster social, intellectual, physical, and emotional growth, but parents are provided services as well.

### **Benefits of the Program**

For children:

- ✓ Individualized education curriculum
- ✓ Challenging and creative activities
- ✓ Nutritious meals and snacks
- ✓ Health screenings and follow-up services
- ✓ Special disability services
- ✓ Diverse enrollment
- ✓ Safe and sanitary facilities
- ✓ 1:10 teacher to child ratio
- ✓ Credentialed staff

For parents/guardians:

- ✓ Social services
- ✓ Parent involvement groups, including parent meetings and Policy Council
- ✓ Foster grandparent and volunteer groups
- ✓ Employment and housing support
- ✓ Emergency assistance
- ✓ Crisis intervention
- ✓ Higher education aid

## PROGRAM HOURS & ATTENDANCE

1. Except for illness, children are required to be **in class at the required starting time each day** the program is in operation.
2. The hours of operation are determined by each school and center-based program.
  - *All children are expected to be in their classroom by the scheduled start of the day for each school. Parents are expected to notify their classroom teacher and/or their Family Engagement Specialist if they are experiencing any difficulties or there is a need to arrive late. If your child arrives late, you must report to the school's administrative office (in person) before entering the classroom. Parents will be referred to management for continued late arrivals.*
  - *Excessive tardiness will be logged and after the third occurrence, parents will be asked to meet with their Family Engagement Specialist to develop an attendance plan. The intent will be to assess the circumstances of the problem and assist the parent through the implementation of a case management approach.*
3. It is important for children to be picked up in a timely manner from their day at Pre-Kindergarten/Head Start (in person). It is the family's responsibility to arrange for an alternative pickup person if they cannot be on time.
  - If the designated pickup person has an emergency and believes that they may be 5-10 minutes late, they are required to call and inform staff.
4. If your child is going to be absent for any reason, the absence must be reported to your Family Engagement Specialist or teacher. Parent must contact the program within 1 hour of school start time if child is going to be absent.
5. Each day that a child is absent, the parent/guardian will be contacted. After three (3) consecutive absences without notification from parent/guardian, the Family Engagement Specialist will conduct a home visit to identify reason(s) for absences and assist parent with supportive services if needed. If no one is home during the visit, a letter of "enrollment status notification" will be left at the home.
6. Parent must contact their Family Engagement Specialist, and/or teacher 48 hours of the home visit/notification to further discuss participation in the Early Childhood program. If contact is not made after the 48-hour period, a letter of termination will be mailed to the parent/guardian's address on file.

7. The program's goal is to maintain 90% attendance rate. Therefore, we will make every possible effort to assist you in ensuring your child's regular attendance at school so that your child's enrollment in the program will not be interrupted.
8. If a child is consistently absent (for example, attends two days, misses two days), we will assess the reasons for the absences and assist you in exploring other child care options that are more suited to your needs. If the family has been provided many opportunities to meet the attendance requirements and fails to do so, the slot will become vacant and be filled immediately by another child on the waiting list. (All supportive services will be provided to assist family with meeting the attendance goals.)
9. If you need to request a transfer to another location, you must contact your Family Engagement Specialist to complete a transfer request form. If you have moved, you must submit your new proof of residence. **Transfer requests are not guaranteed, and your child will be expected to attend school regularly until the transfer request is approved.** Final decisions are made by the Director of Early Childhood.

## **MY RIGHTS AS A PARENT**

1. To provide input in decisions affecting the planning and operation of the program.
2. To help develop adult programs that will improve daily living for my family and me.
3. To be welcomed in the classroom.
4. To choose whether or not I participate without fear of endangering my child's right to be in the program.
5. To be informed regularly about my child's progress.
6. To expect guidance from teachers and staff that helps my child's total individual development.
7. To have a part in planning and carrying out programs designed to increase my skills in areas of possible employment.
8. To be informed of all community resources related to health, education, and the improvement of family life.



## **MY RESPONSIBILITY AS A PRE-K/HEAD START PARENT**

1. To learn as much as possible about the program.
2. To accept my early childhood program as an opportunity through which I can improve my life and my children's lives.
3. To take part in the classroom as an observer or a volunteer and contribute my services in whatever way I can toward enriching the total program.
4. To provide parent leadership by taking part in elections, explaining the program to other parents, and encouraging their full participation.
5. To participate in required parent/teacher conferences and discuss ways in which I can help in my child's development.
6. To work with the teachers, staff, and other parents in a cooperative way.
7. To take advantage of programs designed to increase my knowledge about child development.
8. To become involved in community programs which help to improve health, education, and welfare of others.
9. To attend parent meetings, trainings, workshops, and other activities that promote parental engagement.

## **APPLICATION/ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

1. All children are enrolled in our program using selection criteria point system as required by the Department of Education and Head Start regulations and approved by the Policy Council and governing board (Memphis Shelby County School Board) in accordance with regulations.
2. Applications must be complete before processing begins.
3. A parent/guardian whose child is accepted for enrollment will receive a letter of acceptance. The letter will be sent by email.
4. Once accepted into the program, participants will be notified as to when orientation will occur. The parent/guardian of participants in the Early Childhood program are **required** to participate in the parent orientation training before they can start school.
5. Please contact Memphis Shelby County Schools Division of Early Childhood main office at (901) 416-3450 for any additional questions.

## **AUTHORIZATION OF PICKUP/DROP-OFF**

1. Upon enrollment, parents must complete an authorization of pickup/drop-off form. On this form, parents must list person(s) authorized to pick up and/or drop off their child. No exceptions are allowed, and this policy includes day care providers.
2. If the staff is unfamiliar with the person picking up your child, we will ask him/her to show a picture ID. The name listed on the authorization form must match the name on the person's personal identification. If the person does not have written authorization and is not on your pickup list, we will not release your child to that person. (This includes day care providers.)
3. Parents have the right to add or remove names from the authorization form. However, the parent must come to the Pre-K/Head Start site to complete a change of status form in person. Verbal or faxed requests will not be acknowledged nor is staff responsible for implementing the necessary changes unless the parent/guardian follows the procedure of coming into the center to update their child's pickup list.
4. If there is joint custody among both parents, the removal of one parent must be requested with legal documents or other verifiable proof indicating why the removal is warranted.

## **LATE PICKUP POLICY**

The Early Childhood Program will follow the policies and procedures of Memphis Shelby County Schools.

## **DAILY PROCEDURES**

1. Parents must sign children in/out daily on the classroom sign in/out sheet.
2. Parents must provide the child's teacher with a report of the child's eating, bathroom patterns, and mood each morning. This is done to ensure that we are providing the best possible care for your child.
3. Children will be given a daily health check for any contagious diseases (i.e. chicken pox, flu) or any bumps, bruises, and scratches they may have received before coming to the center. (Parents will inform staff of any medical concerns during virtual learning.)

4. While conducting the daily health check, the teacher will look at your child's stomach, back, arms, legs, eyes and nose before you leave the Pre-K/Head Start site. If there are suspicions or symptoms of any contagious diseases, you will be asked to take your child home for the day and provide a doctor's statement when the child is able to return to school. (Parent will inform teacher if child has illness that may interfere with their daily learning schedule.)
5. Children must be picked up at the authorized time you were given upon admittance to the program unless other arrangements have been approved in advance by Family Engagement staff. Some schools may provide Extended care; which is offered at a cost and is only available for parents who are working or attending school.
6. Family Engagement staff will update your records at least twice each year.
7. Early Childhood staff is prohibited from releasing a child to anyone whose behavior may place the children in imminent risk. This means that Memphis Shelby County Schools Pre-K/Head Start staff has the responsibility to refuse to release a child to anyone that they believe exhibits signs of drug/alcohol intoxication or any other behavior (rage/anger) that **may** place the child in danger. (Any signs of threatening behavior can result in parent or pickup person being BANNED from the property).

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY CLOSURE PROCEDURES**

All Early Childhood locations may be required to close early or close for a full day due to inclement weather conditions or other emergencies. Parents should watch media coverage and visit the Memphis Shelby County Schools webpage for school closings.

If our program closes early, parents will receive a message from the Memphis Shelby County School District automatic communication network. Parents will be expected to pick up their children immediately after receiving communication.



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parents are their children's first teachers, and we encourage parents to be actively engaged in their child's education and in the program. The family engagement activities that we provide to families are geared toward improving family well-being; increasing positive parent-child relationships; making families lifelong learners; engaging families in transitions; connecting families to their peers and the community; and empowering families to be advocates.

In working with families and implementing a variety of family engagement activities, family engagement goals are to build partnerships with families to help improve family outcomes and to improve the transition process for children, families, and program staff. To achieve these goals and to generate positive family outcomes, we encourage families to consider the following opportunities. Participate in the program and the community:

- Policy Council and Parent Committee
- Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC)
- Community Partner Advisory Committee (CPAC)
- Other program committees
- Community organizations

By being active in the Pre-K/Head Start program, parents demonstrate an interest in the growth and development of their child. A child can then see that their parent is concerned about his/her well-being. Participate in the classroom and in the center (once approved):

- Parent meetings/trainings
- Adult education
- Volunteering in the classroom
- Visits to the classroom
- Parent conferences and transition meetings/activities
- Ready Rosie parenting curriculum
- Community engagement

By being involved in Pre-K/Head Start activities, parents show the child their willingness to share their time. This gives the child an opportunity to show pride in his/her own parents. Participate in parent activities and projects:

- Educational activities
- Family health and nutrition
- Budgeting and money management
- Parenting skills using Ready Rosie strategies to enhance parents' knowledge
- Community concerns
- Leadership and advocacy

In this area, parents often join with other community action groups. The child can see his/her parents becoming involved in community activities.

Learning activities can be administered at home with the parent serving as the teacher. This is an extension of early childhood classroom activities and allows parents to:

- Recognize the child's work
- Identify areas where children need support to enhance academic performance

The child needs to know that the whole family is involved and interested in his/her Pre-K/Head Start experience, teachers, friends, and his/her classroom.

## **PARENTING CURRICULUM**

All parents enrolled in the program will complete the registration for the Pre-K/Head Start parenting curriculum. The identified curriculum, *Ready Rosie*, is designed to be accessible and inspire strong home-learning practices and ongoing access to parenting content. The workshops and home-learning video practice are complimentary and reinforce foundational parenting skills, practices, and the joy of parent and child learning together. The web-based curriculum makes it easily accessible for usage from any communication device.

## **MALE INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVE**

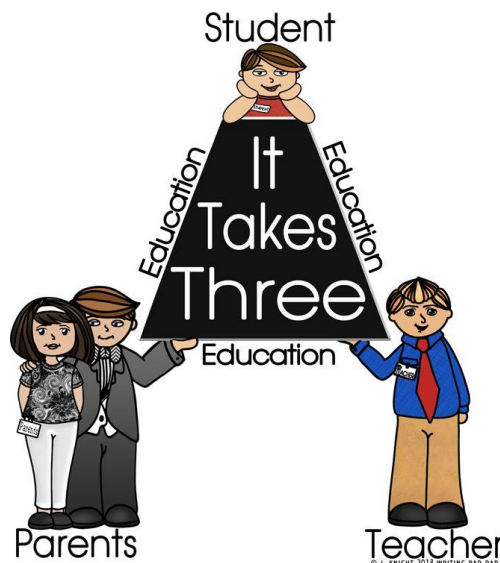
Head Start has a long history of focusing on fathers and father figures as important contributors to the school readiness of children and the well-being of families. Since 2004, when the Office of Head Start (OHS) introduced Building Blocks for Father Involvement to the Head Start community, many programs have continued to make their program environments more father-friendly and support fathers' strengths, needs, and aspirations for themselves and their children. Fathers and father figures play a key role in the healthy development of their children and have important and unique contributions.



# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

## TOP FIVE REASONS TO BE INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

1. Parent involvement leads to:
  - Feelings of ownership and pride
  - Better understanding of what is expected at school
  - Being more equipped to reinforce lessons at home
2. Decades of research show when parents are involved students have:
  - Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
  - Better school attendance
  - Increased motivation, better self-esteem
  - Lower rates of suspension, use of drugs, and violent behaviors
3. Family participation in education is twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status.
4. Benefits in school:
  - Increases student achievement
  - Extends support from families
  - Improves teacher/student morale
  - Enhances community relationships
5. What parent's presence in the classroom says to their child:
  - "I care about what you do here."
  - "I am proud of you."
  - "You are special."



## FAMILY SERVICES

Family Engagement staff will work with parents to develop a **Family Partnership Agreement**. The purpose of the Family Partnership Agreement is to support parents in identifying their own strengths, interests, and goals. This includes identifying and documenting these goals as well as setting timetables for achieving them. Family Engagement staff will schedule a time and place in order to begin the family partnership process.

1. Upon enrollment into the Pre-K/Head Start program, the Family Engagement staff will work with parents to complete a Family Outcome Assessment and to develop a Family Partnership Agreement.
2. Family Engagement staff will follow up with parents regularly (based on the strategies identified in the Family Partnership Agreement or emergency crisis of the family) to ensure that they are working toward objectives identified to accomplish goals. The follow-up may be daily, weekly, or monthly based on goals.
3. Each agreement will include goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines as identified by families with support of staff.
4. Family Engagement staff will identify community resources and assist families with objectives that will help achieve the identified goal.

Family Engagement staff will assist parents/guardians by making referrals to resources available in the community such as: (Referrals to be made to United Way, Driving the Dream)

- Affordable utilities
- Safe and affordable housing
- Home ownership
- Homeless services
- Food and clothing
- Family literacy training
- Affordable medical and dental care
- Adult educational training
- Employment
- Financial literacy
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Health services
- Child development and disabilities
- Social emotional and mental health services
- Parenting strategies
- Keeping Kids Safe (personal safety curriculum)

Family Engagement staff will also conduct announced home visits. Unannounced home visits will only be conducted when there are consistent attendance concerns, or emergency crisis of the family.

## PARENT COMMUNICATION

Every effort will be made daily through communication methods that may consist of virtual, email, phone contacts, etc. to communicate with families. If there has been an unusual or special circumstance during the day, information will be passed on to the parent(s) verbally or in writing. Serious incidents or ones that the staff feels may be upsetting to the parents will be communicated verbally and a follow-up incident report will be provided to parents.

In return, we ask that parents communicate with the classroom teachers or Family Engagement Specialist about any unusual behavior or incident that may have occurred while the child was at home. When teachers are well informed, they can take care of your child in the best way possible.

Early Childhood classroom and Family Engagement staff will communicate with parents often regarding program activities, daily activities for children, and closings/updates. Types of communication will include (but will not be limited to) the following:

1. Face to face meetings
2. Monthly newsletters/calendars
3. Policy Council meetings (meeting minutes posted at each program site)
4. Parent meetings
5. Daily activity reports
6. Parent-teacher conferences
7. Home visits
8. Email, phone calls, and text messages
9. Virtual Platform Professional Learning Meetings (TEAMs, Zoom, etc.)
10. Memphis Shelby County Schools automated calls
11. Memphis Shelby County Schools website
12. Memphis Shelby County Schools Division and Early Childhood Facebook pages

Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in activities provided in the program. We also ask that parents volunteer in the classroom and assist in planning programs, curriculum, and special events. When children are transported to school by someone other than a parent, efforts should be made by both the parent and staff to ensure that effective communication is maintained to:

- Stay abreast of school activities and events, and
- Stay informed about the child's development, progress, and needs.

**IMPORTANT:** The Early Childhood Program must **always keep up-to-date emergency contact information about each child in our files.** Any change of information from parents must be given to Family Engagement staff and/or the teacher to ensure that the master files are updated. All updates required by Memphis Shelby County Schools must be given to the school's administrative office.



## **PROGRAM GOVERNANCE**

The Division of Early Childhood program operates under a philosophy of shared governance. This enables parents and community members to be active decision-makers in policies, procedures and other important issues that affect how a program operates. Parents can express an interest and possibly be elected to be members of the Policy Council and attend meetings. Parents may attend training sessions that are planned for them, including some out-of-town conferences.

### **PARENT COMMITTEES**

Parent Committees are organized at the center level. Every parent of a currently enrolled child is a member of the Parent Committee. Activities for the Parent Committee include:

- Working with the Policy Council to support overall program development and implementation.
- Planning, conducting, and participating in informal or formal programs and activities, such as Parent Committee meetings, family picnics, family field trips, etc.
- Contributing to program development and operations in many ways, including:
  - Becoming involved in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education.
  - Assisting in planning program activities for program, group socialization experiences, etc.
  - Identifying how volunteers and community resources can extend program services.
  - Suggesting where to look for community volunteers and resources.
  - Assisting in identifying and updating school readiness goals.
- Collaborating with local foundations and other organizations to advocate on behalf of low-income family needs.
- Assisting in recruiting parents and other resources to support desired parent-driven activities and as part of the matching non-federal share.

### **PARENT ACTIVITY FUND**

The purpose of this fund will be explained during the Parent Committee meeting. Parents will be encouraged to use the monies for educational purposes in the program. Parents vote and make recommendations for annual activities.

### **MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL**

The Memphis Shelby County Schools Early Childhood Head Start Policy Council participates in shared governance of the Head Start program. The Policy Council functions as a link to Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in the Head Start program. Policy Council members operate as the voice for parents who have children currently enrolled in the program. The Policy Council is made up of 51% parents and 49% community members. Policy Council members receive formal training in their roles and responsibilities. Policy Council members cannot be Memphis Shelby County School

District employees or any employee within any program option in the Division of Early Childhood. Of these options, staff cannot be related to any Policy Council member by blood or marriage. There is a lifetime limit of three (3) one-year terms to serve on the Policy Council. Elections to be held virtually and communication to parents will be virtually, email, phone contact/text.

## **MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**

Memphis Shelby County School Board has administrative and fiscal responsibility for the Head Start program. As the recipient of the grant and the governing board for the program, the Memphis Shelby County School Board is a partner in shared governance with the Policy Council.

## **PARENT ORIENTATION**

Parent orientation is held at the beginning of each year. Parents/Guardians are required to attend orientation before their child is admitted to school.

Parents/Guardians will meet teachers and staff. During that time, information about Shelby County Schools Early Childhood program (Pre-K/Head Start) will be reviewed and forms will be completed. Parents/Guardians will obtain a Parent Engagement Handbook and licensing information. Parents will register online for participation in the Ready Rosie parenting curriculum.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

The Memphis Shelby County Schools Early Childhood Program offers medical, mental health, and oral health services for your child. **A current physical examination is necessary before children can start school. The physical exam must be current and completed within the last 12 months.**

Within the first 45-90 days of program enrollment, developmental and health screenings and assessments will be conducted. The information gathered from these screenings and assessments assist us in developing a profile for your child. This profile helps teachers to plan and implement activities that maximize your child's learning. In addition, it helps the teachers to determine the developmental milestones that a child has achieved and which milestones he/she is ready to accomplish.

1. Head Start will work with parents to conduct the following screenings.
  - **Vision, Speech, and Hearing Screenings**
  - **Oral Health Examinations** – Parents need to provide exam results from the child's dentist.

- **Lead Screenings** – Only offered through the Shelby County Health Department only or your child’s pediatrician. Please provide the results to your family services worker.
  - **Developmental and Social Emotional Screenings** are conducted by each child’s teacher.
  - **Developmental Assessments** are conducted by each child’s teacher a minimum of three times during the school year (beginning, middle, and end). Information about assessments will be provided to each parent prior to the assessment and assessment results are provided after each assessment period.
2. Staff will obtain consent from parents at the beginning of the school year before screenings are conducted.
  3. All parents will be notified regarding the screening schedules, updates, and/or follow-up needed as a result of screening results.
  4. Parents will receive a copy of their child’s developmental screenings and a staff member will contact you if further screenings are necessary.

## **MEDICATION AT SCHOOL**

If a child requires medication during school hours, the parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring that all necessary medication, supplies, and equipment required to administer the child’s medication are provided to the school. Under no circumstances are children allowed to transport medication containers (full or empty) to or from the center. All transfer of medication containers will be between parents and school staff.

The parent/guardian is responsible for providing instructions and supporting documentation to school staff on any equipment or supplies required to properly administer the child’s medication.

- The parent/guardian is responsible for notifying school staff and providing any required documentation whenever their child’s medication is changed or discontinued by the doctor (this will require a written medical statement).
- Parents are encouraged to give their child his/her morning dosage of medication at home as required by the physician before coming to the program.

## **EMERGENCY/RESCUE MEDICATION AT SCHOOL**

Children who require emergency/rescue medication will not be able to attend school without the medication. The Family Engagement Specialist and school staff will assist the parents with completing and acquiring the required documents.

## PROGRAM CARE OF SICK CHILDREN

- 1.) Teachers are required to conduct daily health checks. If a child is found to be ill or becomes ill while at school, parents will be notified by Family Engagement staff that your child should be picked up. In school-based classrooms, the teacher or designated staff will notify the parent.
- 2.) Children that are ill **must** be picked up within **1 hour** after the parent has been contacted.
- 3.) Parents will be notified if children have the following symptoms:
  - Fever 100 F (or above)
  - Diarrhea (3 episodes in one day)
  - Vomiting
  - Discolored discharge from eyes
  - Discolored discharge from nose (accompanied by other symptoms)
  - Rashes (example: ringworm)
  - Difficulty breathing (example: wheezing)
  - Symptoms associated with contagious (communicable) diseases

**Note:** *A doctor's statement to return to school should be provided to the school.*

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All staff will follow procedures indicated in the Memphis Shelby County School District Emergency Preparedness Procedures. Parents will be notified when emergencies require that children be picked up. Evacuation and emergency procedures are posted in each classroom.

***During emergency evacuation drills (fire, tornado, etc.), parents will not be allowed to sign children out of the classroom. All children, staff, parents, and visitors in the building during the time of the evacuation drill are expected to follow the program's safety protocols (proceed to emergency exits, remain in the building, etc.).***

## CHILD INJURY

1. All child injuries will be reported to the child's parent and the school staff.
2. OSHA practices and First Aid procedures will be followed to handle all child injuries. (Refer to Shelby County School District's policy.)
3. If a child needs to be transported to the hospital, parents will be notified immediately.

## HEALTH RECORDS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

1. Children's records must be updated and maintained. The immunizations must be on the Tennessee Certificate of Immunizations.

2. Family Service staff will work with parents and health providers to ensure children's immunizations are maintained and updated.

- No child is allowed to attend class without being properly immunized according to current Department of Health guidelines. Parents or guardians must provide documentation that their children have received the required doses of vaccines.
- Immunization waivers may be given for children who have a medical condition that prevents them from receiving immunizations. Such waivers must be documented. Religious and other waivers must also be documented by parents on the immunization waiver form or a signed statement by a parent/guardian indicating the vaccination conflicts with their religious practices.

**3. A complete physical examination is necessary before children can start school.**

- Physical exams must be renewed every 12 months. A copy of the physical and well-child exam must be presented to Family Service staff when updated.
- The child cannot attend school if the physical exam has expired. Parents will be notified by the family services worker, at least 30 days in advance of the physical's expiration date.

4. All parents must present a copy of their child's updated health and immunization records **after every appointment** to Family Service staff or teacher.

## NUTRITION SERVICES



All children enrolled in the program are provided two (2) meals and a snack (breakfast, lunch, and snack) at no cost to the parent.

**Children are NOT allowed to bring outside food into the school.** At this age, children are still learning about personal space and how to determine if foods are OK for them to eat. Many of our children have allergies to specific foods. For that reason, only food that is safe for ALL children will be provided by Memphis Shelby County Schools Nutrition Services.

In the event of special occasions or events, Teachers are required to let parents know at least 72 hours in advance if there will be food in the classroom for teaching

purposes/rewards, class parties, celebrations, etc. All food must be pre-packaged, have proper labeling, and not contain any allergic contents. No home baked goods will be allowed. The program will respect all cultures when planning such activities. (This activity is voluntary by classroom.)

All dietary restrictions must be reported to the classroom teacher and/or Family Engagement Specialist during orientation and as needed upon entry to the program. If your child has a medical dietary restriction, this **MUST** be supported by a doctor's statement and an alternative must be indicated. Meals will be prepared for children with such dietary restrictions.

## **EDUCATION SERVICES**

The Division of Early Childhood offers developmentally appropriate classroom practices and activities that focus on school readiness and enhance cognitive, physical, and social emotional development.

The Division of Early Childhood will use the Big Day for Pre-K curriculum to offer a variety of educational opportunities that will enhance children's learning.

Big Day for Pre-K is a proven-effective comprehensive early learning program that embraces children's natural curiosity and encourages them to explore and connect to the world around them.

## **SCREENING/ASSESSMENT INFORMATION**

Children will be screened and assessed using the **BRIGANCE® Early Childhood Screens**. As a screening tool, the Brigance allows teachers and staff to form a clear idea of the child's knowledge and motor ability in a consistent format. As an assessment, Brigance helps teachers to identify developmental skills/areas that need to be strengthened. It helps your child's teacher to set goals for your child and individualize lessons to meet your child's educational needs. It is also used to measure your child's progress.

## **SERVICES PROVIDED TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Inclusion in the early childhood setting provides children with disabilities an opportunity to learn, play, and live with non-disabled children. Inclusion helps children develop healthy attitudes about each other and themselves and starts them down the path toward becoming responsible, aware participants in adult society.

Children are eligible for special education services if they are professionally diagnosed as having a disability. Staff will work closely with Memphis Shelby County

Schools Exceptional Children and Health Services Department to ensure that children receive a continuum of appropriate services. Children with a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may benefit from the program. Exceptional Children and Health Services and Pre-K/Head Start staff will meet with the family to develop one service plan that is inclusive of all necessary supports, services, and modifications to ensure that your child is able to fully participate in the development of secure, trusting relationships and exploration of the environment. Conversely, all concerns about the development of a young child should be referred, with parent consent, to the local education agency (LEA).

## **VOLUNTEERING IN THE CLASSROOM**

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and at the school when CDC restrictions allow. Your involvement can make a big difference for your child, your child's school, and your community. All parents that volunteer more than 20 hours must complete a background check.

***Appropriate activities that a volunteer may perform include, but are not limited to:***

1. Talking, offering encouragement, and providing support to staff and students
2. Listening, reading, singing, or playing games
3. Comforting a child or acting as an example
4. Encouraging appropriate behavior
5. Supporting and participating in lessons or long-term projects
6. Assisting the classroom teachers in carrying out or preparing for lessons
7. Sitting and eating meal served with the children during mealtime (family style dining)
8. Attending field trips and/or special events

## **SCHOOL READINESS GOALS**

Throughout the school year, activities are implemented to help the children achieve their school readiness goals. We wholeheartedly promote the collaboration between parents and staff to develop the most effective school readiness goals for the program and the child. We facilitate this collaboration by:

- Providing opportunities (through parent meetings, surveys, and correspondences) to review and contribute input on school readiness goals, the School Readiness Plan, and outcomes.

- Reviewing and analyzing outcomes and scores three times a year to ensure that progress is being made toward school readiness goals and/or determine if modifications are needed.
- Using the results of their child's assessment to identify individual school readiness goals in order to develop an Education Partnership Agreement.
- Providing the opportunity to serve on the School Readiness Team.

MSCS uses the School Readiness Plan that outlines the adoption, alignment, and implementation of these goals to ensure that: 1) children will be academically ready to be successful in educational settings as they transition; and 2) parents are actively engaged in preparing their child to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

## **HOME VISITS AND PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

- 1) Teachers are required to conduct **two parent-teacher conferences and two home visits** each year.
- 2) Goals, assessments and objectives for the child will be formed, developed and discussed during meetings.
- 3) Parents are expected to participate in all conferences and home visits.
- 4) All visits and conferences will be conducted virtually during remote learning.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Students engage in educational field trips. All safety precautions are followed, and parents are notified of the purpose and plans for the field trips.

For off-site transition activities and field trips:

- Parents may be requested to accompany their child on a field trip when there are behavioral safety concerns for their child.
- Parents will be notified of field trips at least two weeks in advance.
- Each child must have a signed permission slip from the parent/guardian in order to attend.
- If a parent chooses to transport his/her child to the field trip site from school, he/she must sign the child out for dismissal prior to the field trip.
- If a child rides the school bus to the field trip site, a parent cannot take the child home from the field trip site.



- Parents are encouraged to volunteer and attend field trips. When parents or other volunteer chaperones attend field trips they will receive field trip information and be provided with the expected behavior and responsibilities for chaperones before going on the field trip. There must be two additional chaperones per class.
  - The program will only make allowances to pay for two approved parent/guardian chaperones per classroom for each field trip. This is based solely on budget availability. These parents are chosen on a first come, first served basis and must have clear background checks to serve in the chaperone capacity.
  - Parents who attend as a chaperone must have a completed background check (paid for by the Division of Early Childhood). Parents that do not have a background check on file may only supervise their child on field trips.

## **END-OF-YEAR (TRANSITION) ACTIVITIES**

Please keep in mind that Memphis Shelby County Schools **does not endorse graduations** (cap and gowns, white dresses, diplomas, etc.) for Pre-K students as a developmentally appropriate activity. Graduations signify the end of an educational journey, and our young learners are just getting started. Also, we do not want to take away from instructional time by having students engage in long practices for programs. We suggest fun activities to recognize and celebrate our preschoolers' first year of formal education and encourage continued achievements. Examples include field day activities, spirit days/week, and other approved activities.

## **DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PROCEDURES**

### **ADHERE TO THE MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY**

If a child is exhibiting serious misbehavior, and/or creating safety issues, the teacher may take the following actions:

- A. Contact the parent to discuss the child's behavior
- B. Inform the Instructional Advisor and/or site administrator
- C. Inform the Family Engagement Specialist of the referral
- D. The teaching staff completes a referral for behavioral observation

## **PARENT CUSTODY MATTERS**

The program will remain neutral in custodial issues and adhere to requests from official institutions such as court orders, attorney/legal documents, etc. A professional relationship will be maintained with both parents and/or guardians of enrolled children. All information provided to the program will be confidential in accordance with program policies and procedures. In the state of Tennessee, the program is mandated to report any suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, or child endangerment.

We will release your child to either parent or legal guardian, or any person listed on the enrollment application. In the event of divorce, dissolution, or separation of the parents, the program staff will continue to follow the authorized contact information on the application form unless we receive written official instructions such as a change in custody agreement from the court or legal representative. A copy of the document must be presented to the program for record-keeping. Program will follow any instructions outlined in the court order. It is the responsibility of the parent/s or legal guardian to inform the program of any criminal indictments that would prevent a person from being on school property with children or any other specified person. (Documentation will be requested to support reported information and for program to comply accordingly.)

## **CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT**

1. If child abuse or neglect is suspected, staff are required by law to report suspected cases to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

### **Reportable situations include, but are not limited to:**

- ◆ Bruises, sores or other injuries observed on the child's body, even though the source or event of injury is unknown;
- ◆ Abandonment of a child by a parent or guardian;
- ◆ Suspected sexual abuse;
- ◆ Absence of proper parental control or care including medical or other care of control necessary for the child's well-being. This may include failure to follow up on educational, medical or safety concerns identified by staff (i.e. leaving children unattended in the car or ongoing neglect of ensuring children are in proper child safety restraints).

Parents will be provided this information at enrollment orientation and continuously throughout the program. Training on the detection of abuse and neglect, as well as the program's reporting procedure is reviewed annually for employees and parents. All new employees are trained on child abuse, neglect identification, and reporting during orientation.

## VEHICLE SAFETY

Safety is a priority for children and families. We value the health of all children that are on our property; therefore, no young child is to be left in a vehicle **alone**. No exceptions will be tolerated; parents are required to bring all children inside the center during drop-off and/or pickup. The staff is required by law to notify the Department of Children's Services and the Memphis Police Department immediately with vehicle make/model and the identity/description of persons involved in leaving a child in a vehicle alone.

### SAFETY FIRST

- Check your back seat
- Avoid locking doors until all children are out of the vehicle
- Always transport young children in an age-appropriate car seat or booster seat

### CAR SEATS/SEAT RESTRAINTS

A parent/ legal guardian should not transport a child under eight (8) years of age in a motor vehicle without properly securing that child in a back seat in an appropriate child passenger restraint system meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards.

- Children age one (1) through age three (3) weighing more than twenty (20) pounds must be secured in a child safety seat in a forward-facing position in the rear seat, if available, or according to the child safety restraint system or vehicle manufacturer's instructions.
- Children aged four (4) through age eight (8) measuring less than four feet nine inches (4'9") in height must be secured in a belt-positioning booster seat system meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards in the rear seat, if available, or according to the child safety restraint system or vehicle manufacturer's instructions. **(Note: If the child is not between age four (4) and eight (8) but is less than four feet nine inches (4'9") in height, he/she must still use a seat belt system meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards.)**

Parents are asked to ensure that children are properly restrained before leaving the school campus. Parents may request additional information or assistance on safety seats from their Family Engagement Specialist.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

When coming to your child's school to drop off your child or to pick up your child, always remember to secure your vehicle.

Car burglars will seize the opportunity to enter unlocked vehicles. Don't make your car an easy target by leaving your car doors unlocked.

- Avoid locking doors until all children are out of the vehicle.
- Always lock your doors.
- Spare car keys should not be stored in or on your car; thieves know where to look.
- Don't forget to close windows and sunroofs.
- SCS is not responsible for any stolen items.

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BUS SAFETY TIPS FOR HEAD START CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **Walking in Traffic**

The safe transport of our children should be an important topic for everyone. Walking is a mode of travel that places young children at as much risk as traveling by passenger vehicle or school bus.

**Protect yourself and your family by doing these things:**

### **Walk on the sidewalk or off the side of the road**

- ◆ Children should always walk on the sidewalk.
- ◆ If you must walk on a road without sidewalks, walk facing the traffic.
- ◆ Cross at intersections if possible. Most people are hit by cars when they cross the road at places other than intersections.
- ◆ ALWAYS hold your child's hand when crossing the street.

### **See and be seen**

- ◆ Drivers need to see you to avoid you.
- ◆ Stay out of the driver's blind spot.
- ◆ Make eye contact with drivers when crossing busy streets.
- ◆ Wear bright colors or reflective clothing if you are walking near traffic at night.
- ◆ Carry a flashlight when walking in the dark.
- ◆ Do not let children play near traffic or cross the street by themselves. Children are small and drivers may not see them if they run into the street.

## Watch your kids

- ♦ Children should not cross streets by themselves or be allowed to play or walk near traffic. Children are small, unpredictable, and cannot judge vehicle distances and speeds.
- ♦ Children should know three things to do before they cross the street.
  1. **Try to cross at an intersection if possible.**
  2. **Stop at the edge of the road.**
  3. **Look left, right and then left again to make sure no cars are coming.**

## TIPS ON BUS DRILLS & FIELD TRIPS

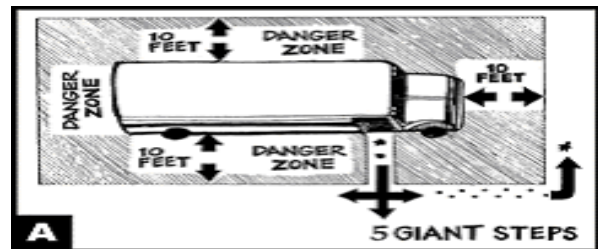
School buses are nearly eight times safer than passenger vehicles, but children must take care when boarding or leaving the bus. Please discuss and practice these safety tips with your children.

### Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

- ♦ Hurry to get on or off the bus,
- ♦ Act before they think and have little experience with traffic,
- ♦ Assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- ♦ Don't always stay within the bus driver's sight, or
- ♦ Drop something as they get off the bus and run into the path of the bus to pick it up.

### Teach your child to get on and off the bus safely:

- ♦ When getting on the bus, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus one at a time.
- ♦ When getting off the bus, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus.
- ♦ Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen. Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- ♦ Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Keep watching traffic when crossing.



### Safety steps you can take:

Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.

- ♦ Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he/she drops something near the bus. If a child bends down to pick up something, the driver cannot see him/her, and the child may be hit by the bus. Have your child use a backpack or book bag to keep loose items together.

- ◆ Make sure clothing and backpacks have no loose drawstrings or long straps, to get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- ◆ Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading.
- ◆ If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location.





## PROGRAM GUIDELINES AGREEMENT

**The intent is for your child to gain the greatest possible benefits from this Pre-kindergarten experience.**

As space is limited, selection to the program is a privilege that requires parental responsibilities. **Each parent is asked to carefully consider the following guidelines for participating in the program.** Your signature will acknowledge that you understand and agree to abide by these guidelines.

### **I agree to:**

1. Attend all academic meetings to discuss my child's progress and goals.
2. Read the **School and Parent Engagement Handbooks** and abide by the policies and guidelines set forth.
3. Complete at least 3 hours of volunteer service each nine-week period. ***Please see the Volunteer Resource Form for ways to volunteer.***
4. Stay informed and up to date about events and issues at the school by reading notices, newsletters, notes and emails.
5. Respond promptly (within 2 school days) to school communications including permission slips, surveys, emails, phone messages, etc.
6. Support my child at home by reviewing and discussing schoolwork. Offer assistance that reinforces weekly lessons.
7. Ensure that my child attends school every day, on time, and is ready to learn. Ensure that my child is picked up on time every day.
8. Read and listen to my child regularly and make reading part of my child's day.
9. Notify the Family Engagement Specialist and/or teacher within 1 hour of the school's start time if my child is going to be absent. If perceived absence is pre-scheduled due to a family matter (medical, emergency, etc.), I will inform staff of such matter.
10. Ensure that my child does not bring outside food to school.

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Child's Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Date

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## Code of Conduct

Memphis Shelby County Schools



Thank you for your contribution to the school and the children. The following code of conduct was developed to ensure an optimum learning experience for all. We appreciate your willingness to abide by the code.

- When working in the classroom, your role is to support the teacher/s and all the students in the class. When observing in the classroom, please be as quiet and as unobtrusive as possible to support the learning process.
- Cell phones will be turned off while working in the classroom.
- In order to provide full attention to the teacher and students, siblings will not be allowed to attend while parents are volunteering.
- Follow the teacher/s/staff directions and modeling. Teachers will make decisions professionally, not emotionally. Follow their lead.
- In all communications seek first to understand – then to be understood. Keep lines of communication open and flowing. Reserve discussions for after class for students to receive maximum attention during class. Remain focused on the priorities developed by the teacher.
- Maintain student confidentiality. Avoid ever discussing students with other students, parents, or outside parties.
- Respect all people and their ideas, beliefs, and opinions. Be a caring person and model this for the students.
- Be an advocate for school programs and philosophies. Demonstrate pride in the school, teachers, and students.
- Address any incidents of concern to the teacher as soon as possible.

Any criminal activity or threatening behavior on the school property will be reported to the appropriate officials of the program and, may result in a parent or any visiting person being BANNED from the premises. (Please refer also to Shelby County School District policies and procedures.)

As a parent of a Shelby County Schools Pre-Kindergarten student, I acknowledge the importance of the above code for the purposes of helping to establish and maintain a positive environment for students and productive relationships with my child's teachers and other school staff. As such, I agree to abide by this code.

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Child's Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

---

Date





**DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**  
**PARENT INVOLVEMENT RESOURCE FORM**



Name (Parent or Guardian) \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Best way to get in contact with you \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to volunteer at home \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to volunteer in the classroom \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Day of the week / or no preference)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(morning or afternoon / or no preference)*

**Ways to be involved (have fun)** *Please check your preferences.*

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with arts and crafts

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with recipes and cooking activities

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with center time activities

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with classroom preparation (sorting, gluing, cutting, stapling, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with parties

\_\_\_\_\_ read to the class

\_\_\_\_\_ chaperone a field trip

\_\_\_\_\_ help with and/or attend school events (field day, programs, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ complete take-home packets at home

**Students are our greatest assets and parents are our greatest resources. If you have any talents or special interests and would like to volunteer your services, please state what they are. Thank you.**



## PARENT ENGAGEMENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



My signature below acknowledges that I have:

- read and understand my rights and responsibilities as a parent of the Shelby County Schools Early Childhood program.
- received a copy of TN Department of Human Services Summary of Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers.
- been given a program tour and informed about the hours of program operation along with the behavior, sickness, attendance and pickup policy of the Memphis Shelby County Schools Early Childhood program.
- been informed about the services and safety procedures including the Child Abuse policy, Personal Safety Curriculum "Keeping Kids Safe", health and medication requirements, as well as the exclusionary procedures of the Shelby County Schools Early Childhood program.
- have received Pedestrian and Bus Safety Education, information about volunteering, and the Client/Community Complaint form.
- been advised of the permission for photo release in which  
\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my child to be photographed/video recorded for social media and marketing purposes at special events and activities.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT give my permission for my child to be photographed/video recorded for social media and marketing purposes at special events and activities.

I, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby acknowledge that I have read and received a copy of the Parent Engagement Handbook and that the program's Family Engagement Specialist, teacher, or designated staff member has discussed these policies and procedures with me.

Parent Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Staff signature verifies that the Shelby County Schools Division of Early Childhood Parent Engagement Handbook was reviewed with the parent and that the parent was given a copy.*



## ATTENDANCE COMMITMENT

The Memphis Shelby County Schools Division of Early Childhood would like to thank you for taking time to come and invest early in your child's education. We believe that children and families who are ready for school and schools who are ready for children and families can generate positive outcomes for long term success.

The Division of Early Childhood has set an aggressive goal of a 95% attendance rate program wide. Studies show that when students attend school regularly the students maintain higher achievement, better behavior, grade-by-grade promotion, on-time graduation, and other educational and social and emotional success. Some of the social and emotional benefits of timely regular attendance are as follows:

- Sleeping and eating patterns are regularized with good effects on health.
- A predictable schedule builds the child's confidence in the caregiver and in the environment.
- Children know what to expect when they enter the classroom.
- Children recognize they are a part of the community; their peers expect and include them. This promotes self-confidence, social skills, and empathy.
- Ongoing conversations and learning can be built upon.
- Children are increasingly able to control their emotions by recognizing the effects of their emotions upon their peers and their own performance.
- Teachers spend less time "bringing a child up to date" and more time in supporting continuous learning.
- Families recognize one another and the community of caring is extended. Parents are better able to support and engage with each other. Information is shared.

It is the expectation of that children attend school regularly barring any unforeseen circumstances where conditions would not permit the student to do so such as illness, family situations, death, hospitalization, etc.

By signing this letter, you agree to adhere to the attendance policy of the program.

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**Parent Name (Print)**

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**Parent Signature**

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**Date**

*Shelby County Schools offers educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, creed, age, disability, national origin, or genetic information. By signing this application, you will be receiving services from the collaborative partnership between Head Start and the Pre-K dual enrollment program. Furthermore, you are expected to participate in required programmatic, parent, and family related activities.*