

Critical Elements of the IDRA Early Childhood Centers of Excellence Model

Staffing

Each Center of Excellence director and one teacher in each center will possess a bachelor's degree. This teacher will serve as lead teacher. At least 80 percent of the teachers have an associate of arts degree (Sarcho & Spodek 2007).

Educational Equity

All classrooms in a Center of Excellence have the appropriate resources to support opportunities to learn regardless of the economic circumstance, English language learning level, disability, race, and gender (Scott, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002; *No Child Left Behind Act*, 2002; Owocki, 2007). Diverse cultures represented in the classroom are respected and addressed in the instruction.

Accountability

Education stakeholders, including parents, at each Center of Excellence hold themselves and each other responsible for the creation of classrooms of excellence that support the literacy development of children. Each stakeholder helps to build an appropriate educational environment and experience (Scott, 2002; *No Child Left Behind Act*, 2002; Scranton and Doubet, 2003).

Teacher Expectations

Teachers in Centers of Excellence articulate high expectations for *all* young children and are expected to discuss high school and college completion at this very early age (Vukelick & Christie, 2004; Gronlund, 2006; NAEYC, 2005, McDonald, 2006).

- The expectation is that children will be ready to read in kindergarten.
- The expectation is clearly and continually communicated to young children.
- The actions of teachers and other adults reflect the expectation.
- The reading success expectation is reflected in the curriculum and classroom activities.
- Children's reading efforts and successes are celebrated by adult stakeholders.
- Children are supported to celebrate and joyfully hold high expectations for their own genuine effort and success.

Academic Achievement

Each Center of Excellence has measurable objectives consistent with Texas curriculum standards with special emphasis on the necessary prerequisite skills in literacy (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) and other academic areas to be successful (National Reading Panel, 2000; Ellery, 2005; Ordonez-Jasis & Ortiz, 2007; Jackson, et al., 2007).

- Kindergarten reading readiness and appropriate numeracy preparation are successfully demonstrated on classroom assessments and measurements.
- Student effort and high student outcomes reflect a belief in the possible appropriately transformed into the reality of demonstrated high performance.

- Children successfully achieve at the highest level of excellence in reading and numeracy readiness.

Social Maturity

Young children have been trained and received guidance in self discipline to manage their learning individually and in groups in a way that creates personal and shared academic success and prepares them to move to higher levels of achievement (Epstein, 2007; Tyner, 2005; Lucas, Villegas, Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Morrow, 2007; Opitz, Harding-Dekam, 2007).

- Children learn to manage their own lives in school and beyond.
- Children learn to cooperate and work with others.
- Children learn to practice resilience and perseverance.
- Children learn academic goal setting and goal reaching.
- Children joyfully embrace learning and literacy as a key to their own success.

Classroom Management

Each Center of Excellence adheres to organizational systems and structures in the classroom and the human, mechanical, and technical supports for learning. All of the interactive dimensions of the classroom's operation are aligned and integrated in a manner to support student achievement and excellence and the appropriate acquisition of skills and competencies for academic success (McDonald Connor, 2006; Ellery, 2005; Bowman, 2002; Martin, Emfinger, Scott, O'Neal, 2007; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004; Schickedanz, 2004; Marrow, Gambrell, 2004).

- Classroom curriculum and learning experiences are organized and structured for success.
- Human, mechanical, and technical supports for learning and literacy are aligned, articulated, and integrated to support reading readiness success.
- Curriculum is organized to engage the learner in oral language development, phonological, alphabet, and print awareness.
- The learning environment is print rich and provides meaningful, challenging, creative, and joyful reading readiness opportunities in every learning/interest space.

Parent Participation

Parents work collaboratively with teachers and other staff in schools and/or in homes in support of schools to create and build opportunities for academic excellence and success for their children (Phillips & Norris, 2008; Tabors, 2005; Debruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclari, 2005, Keyser, 2006).

- Parents reinforce learning at home.
- Parents actively engage in building their own English language competency and proficiency.
- Teachers and parents collaborate on building children's reading readiness and school success.
- Parents are engaged to participate in classroom planning.
- Parents are presented with opportunities to participate in the learning experiences in classrooms.
- Parents, with teacher assistance, review student performance outcome data and plan for continued learning achievement and success.