
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Capital Region ESD 113
Sound to Harbor Early Learning Programs**

**Serving Grays Harbor,
Mason & Thurston Counties**

Revised 9/26/18

Program Overview

Capital Region ESD 113 Sound to Harbor Early Learning Programs

OUR PROGRAM'S HISTORY, MISSION, AND VALUES

The National Vision

The federal Head Start program began in 1965 as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty." It was one of many federal poverty programs designed to help lift children and families out of poverty. Of all of the "War on Poverty Programs," Head Start is one of the few programs that survived, succeeded, and has grown. It is thought by many that there were several unique features (ahead of their time) that were built into the original model and contributed greatly to the program's success. Just two of these cornerstone traits were:

A comprehensive "system's" approach

From the start, the program was designed to provide support to families and children in an integrated fashion. Things like education, mental health, nutrition, health, and parenting skills were viewed as inter-related and interdependent, and integral to the healthy development of children and families. It was also understood that children and families do not exist in a vacuum, but live in communities that they are both dependent upon and responsible for shaping. A localized approach was valued from the start. These values have collectively allowed for the support of the "whole" child, family and community.

A belief in the importance of the role of parents/family members

Head Start was founded on the belief that parents are the primary and most influential educators of their children. It was always understood that the greatest potential for children's growth and development lies in the relationship between the child and his or her family. Parents have been intimately involved in program planning and the provision of services since the early days of Head Start. The Head Start program created a model for shared decision-making and meaningful involvement by families.

The State Vision

In the mid 1980s, in response to Washington Education Round Table's recommendation, the state launched a Head Start-like program, ECEAP, so that more of Washington children would enter kindergarten with age level skills. Washington's program is called Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and is funded through the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), formerly Department of Early Learning (DEL).

The Local Vision

Our local program began in 1965 with just one site, and has grown to a three county organization with 16 direct service sites.

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Our Mission

Sound to Harbor Early Learning Programs provides comprehensive individualized preschool education, health education, and family support to promote family engagement and school readiness.

Sound to Harbor also adopts and supports the mission statement of our Grantee:

The purpose of the Capital Region ESD 113 is to assure excellent and equitable education for all students through service and collaboration.

Our Vision

Every child kindergarten ready.

Our Values

We value:

- Creating enriched learning environments that support children, families, and staff in their own development
- Respecting each person as a capable individual and developing skills by focusing on strengths
- Diversity in children, families, staff, and communities
- Community support and involvement through collaboration and partnership
- Advocacy as a tool to build strong communities
- Integrity and commitment to working with children, families, and staff in a positive manner
- Communication that respects diverse perceptions and learning styles, embraces curiosity, and approaches conflict as an opportunity for growth
- Staff, family, and community input in setting priorities, planning, problem solving, and in the development and implementation of a successful program
- Developing and delivering high quality comprehensive services by being responsive to the changing needs of communities
- The unique contribution individuals bring to the team
- Visionary, innovative, and entrepreneurial thinking

As our communities change, our knowledge deepens, and our skills and resources develop, we continually evolve and grow in response.

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PROGRAM CENTERS AND SERVICE MODELS

Our program operates several models of service in an effort to meet the diverse needs of children and families in our communities, while maximizing our resources. Comprehensive services include: health and developmental screenings, mental health specialist services, nutrition services, parent education and leadership opportunities, transportation where available, and social service support.

Half-Day Program

Many of our sites provide half-day preschool. These sites are also referred to as Part-Day, Part-Year (PDPY) sites. The half-day preschool program has children attend 3.5 hours/day for 4 days/week. Families engage in at least 4 Home Visits/Center Conferences per year. The half-day program sites typically operate from September through June.

School Day Program

The School Day program provides 157 days of service, 1020 hours of child to teacher face time. The classroom schedule is 6.5 hours per day with alternating weeks of four and five day classes. This model is integrated into some of our PDPY centers and in some cases is stand-alone.

Head Start Child Care Center

At the Lacey Center, a full day Head Start child care preschool classroom and a full day child care toddler classroom are available for parents who work and use the State child care subsidy program. The site also has three half-day classrooms. The Lacey Child Care and Family Services Center is located at the Lacey Corporate Center. The hours are Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Child Care Center Blend

At the South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) Early Learning Center, we blend Full-Day, Full-Year (FDY) services similar to Lacey Center with School Day and Part-Day, Part-Year (PDPY) with diverse funding of fee-for-services, DSHS, Head Start and ECEAP.

Sub-Contract Centers

The ESD 113 partners with community-based organizations to provide ECEAP and Head Start services. Sub-Contract Centers provide a range of models, from part-day service to services that include DSHS subsidies allowing for full-day services. Classroom schedules vary based on the center, and eligibility varies based on the funding source.

PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

Capital Region Educational Service District 113 is the grantee for Head Start and the contractor for ECEAP. We are known as Sound to Harbor Early Learning Programs. Capital Region ESD 113 is the governing body that is legally and financially responsible for the program, sharing governance with the Policy Council, as outlined in Head Start Performance Standards and the 2007 Head Start Act.

The Sound to Harbor Early Learning department is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program. The Policy Council (which consists of parent representatives and alternates from all sites, past parent representatives, and community representatives) votes on issues related to budgets, personnel, policy, evaluation and program development, and forwards their decisions to

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the Board of Directors. They provide input to program planning to keep the program responsive to the changing needs of our families and our communities. Policy Council meets year round to carry out their responsibilities.

INTERNAL SYSTEMS TO ENSURE COLLABORATION AND QUALITY

Built into the program's design is the value that decision making is most effective and appropriate when all parties affected have a voice. At the center level, decisions about how the center operates, and how the children are cared for and educated are made in numerous group settings that allow for collaboration. These include: site and staff meetings, team meetings, staffings, conferences, behavior plan meetings, parent group meetings, etc. At the administrative offices, administrative team members collaborate in peer work teams and in issue-specific meetings.

Many written or formal procedures are used to assure that the program and its employees are continuously charting the progress of program operations. Tools for this monitoring include: employee evaluations, position plans, federal review processes, ECEAP review processes, annual fiscal audits, annual self-assessment of the program, monthly reports, regular documentation, licensing evaluations, Policy Council participation and oversight, etc.

A complete assessment of the progress of our program includes both a clear description of the tasks accomplished and the process by which they were achieved. All evaluations (whether of staff or of program operations) take this into consideration. This focus on both task and process addresses the underlying belief that how we do our work is as important as what we accomplish.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

All services to families and children are based on individual strengths and needs. Teachers, center directors and area coordinators, and health advocates consider all aspects of health, family, and child development when developing individual plans. The goal is to make families feel welcomed, valued, and respected by program staff. Program leadership supports staff to build strong relationships amongst each other, with families and the community. Staff and families work together to set expectations and support family goals as well as children's learning and development in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. Two-way communication and relationship building with families are adapted to meet changing family and community circumstances. In addition, opportunities are provided for family support and development through the family partnership plan process and through intentional parent/family activities within the program and community. Staff also utilize a variety of resources, such as the Community Resource Directory, to meet the variable needs of the families. Families are provided with a variety of opportunities such as home visits, conferences, regular contacts with staff, trainings, workshops, and resource materials to link them with community resources. Staff maintain regular contact with families to determine if services have been received and needs addressed.

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CONFIDENTIALITY

A system of confidentiality is interwoven throughout the program, and in this way program business is carried out in a manner that is respectful, as well as legal. Child and family records are kept in locked files. These records are only accessible to program staff and consultants as assigned, funding source representatives, and the families themselves. Families are allowed access to their own files. Staff, parents, and volunteers are made aware of confidentiality procedures. When information is to be shared with another party outside of the agency, a release form is always signed by the family beforehand. Information related to the individual goals of particular children or parents, which might be of a confidential nature, will be made available to classroom staff and volunteers on a discreet, need-to-know basis only. Confidentiality will also be respected during meetings and staffings, again focusing on having only those who need to know be involved. We all serve as models of this policy and remind others of its importance.

Confidentiality of personnel matters is also a high value within the program. Information is not shared about employees without their permission. For example, information regarding an employee's address, phone number, family, or work status is considered confidential. Personnel evaluations, development plans, etc. are other examples of confidential information.

Maintaining confidentiality about children, families, and employees is respectful and an ethical code of conduct expectation at Head Start/ECEAP.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

An underlying philosophy of continuous improvement relates to ongoing advances in knowledge and practices in the fields of administration, early childhood, family services, and health services, and not upon an unreasonable belief that achieving perfection is possible. In this atmosphere, mistakes or challenges are viewed as learning opportunities that provide us with information about what to do next. It is not nearly as important that a child, parent, or staff member has made a mistake, as it is that learning occurs in a way that is meaningful to the individual. In the work that we do with children, families, and one another, a respect for life-long learning is fostered and modeled.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

As a result of a systemic, comprehensive, and integrated approach to Family Engagement the following are goals:

- **Family Well-Being:** Parents and families are safe, healthy and have increased security.
- **Positive Parent-Child Relationships:** Parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.
- **Families as Lifelong Educators:** Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

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- Families as Learners: Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
- Family Engagement in Transitions: Parents and families support and advocate for their child’s learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including Early Head Start to Head Start, Head Start to other Early Learning environments and Head Start to kindergarten through elementary school.
- Family Connections to Peers and Community: Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.
- Families as Advocates and Leaders: Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children’s development and learning experiences.

With a genuine focus on supporting a partnership with parents and communities, we want children who are healthy, emotionally secure, and ready for school.

CURRICULUM AND SCHOOL READINESS

Our Head Start/ECEAP early childhood program uses the research-based Creative Curriculum as a foundation. Developmentally and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional strategies support the program philosophy, goals, and objectives for children’s school readiness. The curriculum is developmentally sequenced to meet individual and group needs. Curriculum goals are determined by conversations with parents, observations and developmental assessments results. Curriculum plans are written in advance, schedules are consistent and predictable, yet staff are flexible and responsive to emerging interests of the children or events that may occur. The curriculum activities emphasize process, discovery oriented, hands-on, concrete experiences. School readiness, language, literacy, and numeracy are also emphasized as we assist children in their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. (See the Program Policies and Procedures Manual’s Education Section’s Procedure 412 Curriculum – Definition for more information.) School Readiness goals are established under the leadership of the Assistant Superintendent, Early Learning with input from staff and parents. Progress is reviewed regularly and goals are updated as needed.

Individualization

In our program, we strive to provide services in ways that meet the specific needs of individual children and families, as well as specific communities and sites. We strive to ensure that the program is respectful of the values and experiences of children, families, and staff, and that it validates the way they make meaning of these experiences. Program development is ever evolving in response to our desire to individualize for the people and communities our program serves. One way that we individualize is by applying a strength based approach to the way that we conceptualize the meaning of the behavior, needs, and values of those we work with.

Another way that we individualize is by using Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). DAP is a set of assumptions about how children learn, and the “best practices” teachers should follow

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in planning and implementing activities. The three primary assumptions which form the basis of DAP are:

Age appropriateness

Each child proceeds through an orderly and predictable sequence of growth and development in each of the areas of social and emotional competence, communication, large and small motor skill, and logical/mathematical reasoning. Teachers must be familiar with the natural sequence of development in order to plan appropriately.

Individual appropriateness

Each child follows the developmental sequence at their own rate, according to their own particular learning style and temperament, and in relation to their prior experiences. Children may also have special learning needs that may or may not have been diagnosed. Teachers must be responsive to the unique interests and needs of individual children, and not make assumptions based on chronological age alone.

Social and cultural appropriateness

Children are influenced by the social and cultural contexts that surround them – the values, expectations and behavioral and linguistic conventions. Teachers must strive to understand these in order to ensure that children’s experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful.

Our program staff are supported in demonstrating competency in both awareness of the theoretical basis for DAP, as well as the practical application of DAP. The Creative Curriculum and the TS GOLD assessment system are resources for education staff and families to look at individual children’s growth and development while in the program.

DIVERSITY

We support diversity by applying the growth model of development to the way we conceptualize our work with families, children, and colleagues. We use our understanding and respect of other cultures to accept and appreciate diversity in values, presentation, preferences, life-style, orientation to life, communication styles, etc. In the classroom, we use culturally relevant anti-bias curriculum. This approach explores the concept of diversity and multiculturalism from a DAP perspective. The four primary goals in implementation are:

- Help each child to build a sense of self-worth, and confidence in themselves and as a group member.
- Help each child to develop empathy and comfort with differences in others.
- Help each child to recognize and think about the influence of bias.
- Help each child be assertive when confronted with bias.

We always strive to look at our own biases, and model culturally relevant anti-bias in our own lives as professionals and people. These principles should be evident not only in what we do in our work, but most importantly in how we do it. Constant evaluation of the choices that we make as a program and as individuals in relation to diversity allows us to grow.

MULTICULTURAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

- Everyone has a culture
- Know your own culture first
- Provide authentic unbiased images
- Foster concrete experiences at the child or adult's level
- Make the cultural climate of the classroom and the home compatible
- Support and value the home language
- Staff should reflect the families we serve
- Expose staff, children, and parents to a variety of cultures
- Examine and challenge bias
- Everyone must be involved in these efforts

ENVIRONMENTS

In the classroom, we expect that the primary way to support the success of children is to ensure that adults understand developmentally appropriate practices for three, four, and five-year-old children; and we carefully plan both the classroom environment and activities to encourage responsibility and a sense of caring to emerge in children. The indoor and outdoor learning environment too should act as a second teacher, facilitating learning and exploration through the innate curiosity of the child. We offer Home Visit/Center Conference activities that are compatible with and respectful of the home environment.

Staff members work to plan classroom and outdoor environments, which are stimulating, safe, and conducive to the development of a positive self-image for children, parents, and colleagues alike. Classroom environments are enriched but not over-stimulating; for example, the majority of classroom displays consist of children's artwork and photos rather than commercially prepared materials. Program services are planned in a manner that is respectful of, and responsive to, the characteristics of local communities.

DISABILITIES

Sound to Harbor Head Start/ECEAP disability services is based on the value of early intervention through family partnerships and interagency collaboration. A minimum of 10% of the children enrolled will be children with disabilities. The program partners with the local school district to enroll children already identified with disabilities; and to screen, assess, and qualify children currently enrolled in the program who are determined to have a disability. All service components may be involved in providing appropriate services, including food service, health resources, transportation, family support services and classroom services.

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TRANSITIONS

A transition is a passage from one place, system, stage, or subject to another. Like any change, transitions can be challenging for both children and adults. Facilitating and supporting transitions is a vital part of what our program does. To support transition experiences, specific plans are made by direct service staff.

Here are some examples of the kinds of transitions we support:

- Transitioning children and families into the preschool experience from other types of care.
- Transitioning children between preschool and childcare settings.
- Transitioning children and families into the public school system.
- Transitioning families from utilizing Head Start/ECEAP health and family support services to establishing connections in the greater community for support.
- Transitioning children between learning and care activities in the classroom setting.
- Transitioning our community as it adapts to policy changes such as welfare reform, national mandates, budget cuts, and local economic trends.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Sound to Harbor Head Start/ECEAP provides training to staff and parents in a variety of formats:

Required Training: All new staff are required to complete new staff training modules as assigned by their supervisor and content area coordinator. Training modules include but are not limited to: Head Start/ECEAP 101, Guidance, Bloodborne Pathogens, Sexual Harassment, Child Abuse and Neglect. Some training modules include follow up new staff group trainings which are scheduled two times per year. Depending on their job role, staff are required to complete training that may include First Aid/CPR; USDA food program training; USDA Civil Rights training; Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training; food handler's; and a variety of child development, early childhood curriculum, health, or family services topics. Supervisors do individual orientations and ongoing coaching with new employees throughout the year. All ESD employees are also assigned training modules on an annual basis through Safe Schools.

Furthering Professional Development: To align with the Sound to Harbor Head Start/ECEAP philosophy, life-long learning is encouraged. Training is offered both within our program and through community workshops, conferences and classes.

In partnership with South Puget Sound Community College, seminars with college credit may be offered to Head Start/ECEAP staff on early childhood curriculum or topics in child and family development.

Obtaining an Initial ECE certificate is required for all teacher assistants who do not have an ECE related degree or a current CDA. The program provides ECE Certificate coursework in partnership with South Puget Sound Community College and pays the full cost of the credits or CDA application fees.

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Staff training at the center level is individualized based on need and interest. These are organized by center management as needed.

Content area trainings for family services, education, transportation, office support, technology, food services, health, fiscal, and management staff are supported by a variety of high quality, sustained, and intensive training opportunities. Topics are determined in response to current needs, interests and program mandates.

Staff members can access funding to attend training outside the program through a training request process. Community training sources may include: Capital Region ESD 113 Early Childhood/Special Services, local Child Care Aware agencies, MERIT, community and four year colleges, Head Start and ECEAP conferences, etc.

Classroom staff seeking a degree in early childhood education are encouraged to read the Post-Secondary Education procedure, which articulates the process for accessing financial assistance.

Parent Training: Many opportunities are available for parents to participate in training within the program, as well as, within their local communities. At the center level, our program offers training activities through family nights, parent meetings, parenting education series, and through Home Visits. Center Parent Advisory Committee (CPAC) activities are included at family nights and parent meetings. Program wide, parents are welcome to attend staff trainings. Policy Council parent representatives participate in an annual Policy Council training. Center newsletters include many parent education topics in condensed articles, as well as, announcements about local community training opportunities.