



BLESSED SACRAMENT EARLY LEARNING MISSION:

The mission of Blessed Sacrament Early Childhood Program is to create a Christ-centered community by providing an aligned, high quality, relationship-based program which appropriately supports the individual development of birth through age 5 children in our parish school and child development center.

Philosophy/Core Beliefs:

- Every child **develops** (social-emotional, language, literacy, cognitive, physical, spiritual) at an individual rate and possesses unique God-given characteristics, with regards to family language, background, culture, special needs, socioeconomic status, experience and ability
- **Child-centered learning through play and exploration** is an essential vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, literacy, and social competence
- **Positive and intentional interactions** (includes all) support a nurturing learning environment focusing on student language and learning while answering our call to love our neighbor as ourself
- **Focusing on the whole child** builds strong social, emotional, and spiritual competencies which leads to a sense of self, friendships, independence, and appropriate decision-making
- **Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, persistence, and a growth mindset** (believing that one can learn) are intentionally developed through school and home learning opportunities
- Culturally relevant, responsive, and respectful **family engagement** requires authentic partnerships between the school and the domestic church (home) which supports a child's self-identity, individual development, and academic success
- **Effective instruction** provides children with a developmentally appropriate setting, daily schedule, materials, experiences, and social support while providing choice and building on their interests
- **Language, literacy, and math** learning experiences are based on student data and intentionally incorporated throughout the program

Components Critical in Achieving Our Core Beliefs:

- Leadership committed to high quality early learning for all
- Intentionally designed and safe (physically and emotionally) environments (indoor/outdoor) that reflect the culture of our families and offer equitable learning opportunities
- Qualified, nurturing, and collaborative staff with a growth mindset who are supported through continual job-embedded professional learning opportunities
- Research-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum with consistent implementation
- Strong partnerships with local and parish community that supports our mission and program
- Assessment data used to guide ongoing, intentional planning to support each child's development and learning

Background: *Our philosophy is based on input from staff and families, early childhood research and practice as outlined in the TX Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines, National Association of the Education of Young Child standards, knowledge of child development, National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools, and best practices for educating young children. These resources emphasize culturally, linguistically, and individually responsive learning experiences and environments. High-quality early learning opportunities prepare children to learn at grade level and beyond to ultimately be college, career, and life ready.*

A. PROGRAM (throughlines of faith, culture, child development, interactions, equity)

1. ENVIRONMENT: Early learning classrooms allow for developmentally appropriate experiences including child-centered learning through play and exploration

GOAL: Nurturing early learning classrooms that allow for developmentally appropriate exploration, creativity, critical thinking, student engagement, and play

Strategy #1: Arrange age-appropriate furniture to allow for movement, exploration, play, and learning

Action Steps:

1. Inventory current classroom furniture, identify vendors, and purchase, when necessary
2. Provide professional learning (including coaching) on classroom environments
3. Set the classroom up for first year teachers or new to early learning teachers
4. Follow up with support for all teachers as needed

Strategy #2: Select teaching and learning materials that intentionally address the TX Birth through Pre-K Guidelines

Action Steps:

1. Inventory current classroom “play to learn” materials in support of the TX Pre-K Guidelines
2. Identify appropriate vendors and purchase materials so all classrooms are equitable
3. Ensure that all curriculum materials are approved by the Early Learning Coach

Strategy #3: Displays include authentic student work, including content-related and culturally relevant materials

Action Steps:

1. Display materials are representative of children, cultures, races, genders, etc.
2. Displays include current content-related foci

Strategy #4: Create positive classroom cultures that provide opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and student independence

Action Steps:

1. Include this focus through professional learning on classroom environments
2. Arrange classroom environments and create procedures that allow for student independence

Strategy #5: Provide outdoor learning through play opportunities

Action Steps:

1. Assess current outside learning through play opportunities
2. Identify components that can be added
3. Create an action plan on how to set up, use, and maintain the area

2. CURRICULUM/PROGRAM

GOAL: An aligned curriculum supporting our core beliefs is implemented with fidelity from birth to 5

Strategy #1: Ensure that current curriculums meet the needs of the students

Action Steps:

1. Evaluate current curriculums to determine consistency and alignment
2. Either adopt the same curriculum or ones that align from Birth to Pre-K

Strategy #2: Obtain materials to support the adopted curriculum(s)

Action Steps:

1. Inventory current materials, identify vendors, and purchase, when necessary

Strategy #3: Ensure curriculum is implemented with fidelity

Action Steps:

1. Provide ongoing, job-embedded training to teachers and instructional assistants
2. Assess classrooms/program on a regular basis to identify improvement goals

3. ASSESSMENT

GOAL: Students are assessed through an authentic and continuous process guiding each child's development while informing all teaching and program decisions

Strategy: Identify consistent assessment system for Birth through 5

Action Steps:

1. Research assessment systems to identify the appropriate one
2. Provide professional learning to effectively collect and use data
3. Implement system to effectively collect and use data to plan program
4. Communicate progression of children's development to parents and guardians

4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Children develop increasingly complex speaking and listening skills

Strategy: Provide intentional opportunities to develop increasingly complex speaking and listening skills

Action Steps:

1. Provide professional learning to help develop teachers' understanding of guiding children's speaking and listening skills throughout the school day
2. Provide materials that support language development
3. Consider CLASS to evaluate use of teacher language and interactions in the classroom

5. EMERGENT LITERACY

GOAL: Students develop skills necessary for success in speaking, listening, reading, writing as outlined in the TX Pre-K Guidelines

Strategy #1: Ensure that all staff understand and implement the components of emergent literacy, using the High Scope resources as a guide

Action Steps:

1. Provide professional learning on the developmental strands Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing as identified in the TX Pre-K Guidelines and the progression of how children develop in those strands
2. Ensure that teachers have a working knowledge of the TX Pre-K Guidelines and how they connect to the K TEKS

Strategy #2: Provide the resources and materials which support early literacy teaching and learning

Action Steps:

1. Evaluate the curriculum components and provide additional resources when appropriate

Strategy #3: Embed literacy opportunities throughout the day and classroom

Action Steps:

1. Provide literacy opportunities in each Area (labels, books, writing utensils)
2. Share interactive read-alouds daily
3. Use transitions to support literacy and language
4. Use authentic and social language (i.e. snack time)

6. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

GOAL: Students use effective social and emotional foundational competencies (self-awareness and management, social interaction, relationships, and decision-making)

Strategy #1: Ensure all staff understand the progression of social and emotional competencies

Action Step:

1. Provide professional learning on the development of social and emotional skills as identified in the TX Pre-K Guidelines and the progression of how children develop those skills

Strategy #2: All staff and volunteers intentionally support social and emotional development

Action Steps:

1. Use strategies consistently from the adopted curriculums (High Scope Conflict Resolution)

Strategy 3: Parents and guardians support the development of social and emotional competencies

Action Steps:

1. Offer parent education to help parents guide the development of social and emotional skills
2. Offer individual family support as needed

7. POSITIVE AND INTENTIONAL INTERACTIONS

GOAL: Interactions are positive, responsive, nurturing, and supportive of children's social, emotional, language, cognitive, and spiritual development

Strategy #1: Ensure all staff support development and learning through positive and intentional adult-child interactions

Action Step:

1. Provide professional learning on interactions which support social and academic development
2. Provide follow-up classroom observation and coaching
3. Consider CLASS to evaluate use of teacher language and interactions in the classroom

Strategy #2: Ensure that all interactions reflect our faith-based ideals of treating others with respect in line with our spiritual beliefs and child development

Action Steps:

1. Provide opportunities for community building which will promote our faith-based ideals of treating others with respect in line with our spiritual beliefs and child development.

8. CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER TO SCHOOL ALIGNMENT (through K)

GOAL: Intentional alignment of specific strategies and programs exist between the two programs

Strategy #1: Leaders identify shared vision and actions for alignment between the two programs

Action Steps:

1. Share vision to teachers and parents
2. Evaluate current status of each program in line with Philosophy and create improvement plans

Strategy #2: Consider opportunities for alignment between the CDC and School programs

Action Steps:

1. Evaluate curriculums, staffing, programs
2. Identify resources that can be shared (personal and material)

Strategy #3: Consider opportunities for Pre-K to K Alignment

Action Steps:

1. Identify strategies that align through grades (i.e. interactive read-aloud, Morning Message, SEL)
2. Identify opportunities for cross-program collaboration

B. STAFF [Note: "Teachers" include both teachers and instructional assistants throughout this document]

1. HIRING

GOAL: Hire and retain teachers who possess knowledge of child development and experience with teaching young children

Strategy #1: Implement a hiring process that assures that children receives the highest quality education

Action Steps:

1. Provide authentic job descriptions
2. Identify core values of a Blessed Sacrament employee
3. Determine an interview/hiring process aligned to the Mission & Philosophy

Strategy #2: Implement a new employee on-boarding process

Action Steps:

1. Identify a consistent on-boarding system which includes all aspects of the program
2. Create an on-boarding program for both teachers and support staff
3. Consider creating Handbook that outlines policies and procedures in alignment to Mission & Philosophy

2. TEACHER and PROGRAM CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

GOAL: All teachers and staff provide the highest quality program to children

Strategy #1: Offer high-quality, culturally relevant, and varied professional development on priorities

Action Steps:

1. Assess current status of completed professional learning for all early learning teaching staff
2. Identify teacher and program quality needs to identify relevant professional learning for each school year
3. Design and implement a variety of professional learning experiences on topics such as child development/developmentally appropriate practices/adopted curriculum, GOLD, etc.
4. Provide follow-up coaching by experienced early learning coaches

Strategy #2: Offer training to other professionals who support the youngest students

Action Steps:

1. Consider training personnel such as specialists, office staff, lunch workers, etc.

C. LEADERSHIP

GOAL: An organizational leadership structure that understands, advocates for, and actively supports quality programs

Strategy: Create an organizational structure which administers and supports the CDC and School programs

Action Steps:

1. Build a collaborative structure including the Principal, Coach, and CDC Director with clearly defined roles
2. Identify procedures and policies which support the early learning program (enrollment, progress reporting, etc.)
3. Build advocacy through representation on the School Council for a high quality early learning program

D. FAMILIES, CHURCH COMMUNITY, and PARTNERSHIPS

1. FAMILIES

GOAL: Families are actively engaged in their child's school and learning experience

Strategy #1: Establish a welcoming, faith-based, and culturally relevant school environment for families

Action Steps:

1. Ensure families understand the school and early learning mission and philosophy
2. Build staff understanding of equity, bias, and cultural relevance topics
3. Ensure classrooms reflect the cultures of the families

Strategy #2: Establish effective family communication in regards to program and each individual child

Action Steps:

1. Identify and implement consistent strategies for family communication
2. Provide a curriculum overview at the start of the year that actively engages families (this is in addition to the regular "Back to School Night" agenda)

Strategy #3: Engage families in supporting their child's learning and development

Action Steps:

1. Provide family education that supports learning and development
2. Include articles in newsletters to help families support their child's learning and development
3. Consider aligning early learning family newsletters (weekly/monthly)

2. PARTNERS

GOAL: All partners intentionally support the Blessed Sacrament Early Learning Mission, Philosophy, Strategic Plan

Strategy: Create a collaborative partnership with all external partners (e.g. Pre-K 4 SA, church and parish, grant-funded programs, etc.)

Action Step:

1. Determine when and how to align resources, training, and programs to apply for grants
2. Ensure partners review and adhere to the Mission & Philosophy

E. INFRASTRUCTURE

1. FINANCE

GOAL A: The early childhood program is funded to meet the stated goal of the long-range Strategic Plan

Strategy #1: Provide annual funding to support consistent classroom and programs

Action Steps:

1. Inventory current materials and equipment
2. Identify basic materials and equipment that should be in each classroom
3. Analyze future funding through Pre-K 4 SA and external sources

NOTES:

- Professional Development includes training, coaching, and monitoring
- The term "Teachers" includes "Teachers and Teacher Assistants"
- TX Pre-K Guidelines:
<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/texas-prekindergarten-guidelines>
- High Scope: <https://highscope.org/our-practice/preschool-curriculum/>
- "Specials" includes subjects such as art, PE, and Music
- Emergent literacy means what children can do before they learn to read and write