South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (4K)

Parent Handbook

2015 - 2016

Site Center Name_____

Director _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

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4K Teacher: _____

Teaching Assistant: _____

Room Number: _____

Our 4K hours are: _____

Program Goal of the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (4K)

The goal of the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (4K) is to provide children and their families with the developmental and learning support necessary for school success. Each program shall endeavor to:

- ✓ Provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment that encourages emotional, social, physical and intellectual development that children must have in order to be ready for school
- ✓ Make learning fun so that children will develop a desire to be lifelong learners
- ✓ Encourage language development, creativity and an appreciation of fine arts
- ✓ Support comprehensive, systemic approach to reading and successfully complete the readiness assessment
- ✓ Encourage children to interact successfully with other children and adults and to live and work together in a cooperative environment which promotes decision making, peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for others
- ✓ Incorporate parenting education, including strengthening parent involvement in the learning process with an emphasis on interactive literacy
- ✓ Identify community and civic organizations that can support early literacy efforts.

4K Enrollment Requirements

Residency
Pursuant to Budget Proviso 1A.83 participation in 4K is limited to eligible children residing in the original 33 school districts funded for 4K since 2006, the additional 17 4K districts funded as of the 2013-14 school year, and the additional 10 4K districts funded as of the 2014-2015 school year. The 10 new school districts eligible to participate in the 4K Expansion for 14-15 are the following: Aiken, Edgefield, Greenwood 50, Greenwood 52, Horry, Oconee, Spartanburg 3, Spartanburg 4, Spartanburg 6, Spartanburg 7, and York 1.
The 3 new districts added as eligible for 2015-2016 are Kershaw, Anderson 2, and Anderson 5.
Parent(s)/guardian(s) of age- and income-eligible children must provide documentation of the children's legal residency within a 4K school district.

Age Eligibility
Child must be four years of age on or before September 1, 2015 based on acceptable documentation, such as birth certificates or official documents from other countries. Proof-of-age eligibility must be on file no later than the day the child begins 4K.

Family Income Eligibility
An annual family income of 185% or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services **OR Medicaid eligibility** qualifies a child for enrollment. Verification must be on file before the child is enrolled. Acceptable forms of verification include the following: (a) completed free and reduced lunch form with verification of family income, or (b) copy of current Medicaid card. Verification of family income may include pay stubs, tax returns, or W-2 forms.

Application Process
The parent enrolling a child must complete and submit a 4K application. The application must be accompanied by a copy of the child's proof of age eligibility, documentation of the family income eligibility, and immunization documentation.

Anti-Discrimination Statement
Approved 4K sites must comply with constitutional provisions and all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, or disability in admission to, treatment in its programs and activities or need for special education services.

Operating Policies & Procedures

Attendance
Regular attendance is crucial to your child's success. Each parent/family must agree to send their child to the SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (4K) for 6.5 hours of instructional time, five days per week, 180 days a year. Exclusions from the 180 days of attendance would include school district breaks due to dangerous weather situations. **A child who is chronically tardy or absent may be released from the program.**

District/School Calendar
The SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program follows the traditional 180 day school year. A copy of the school calendar is included in this handbook.

Tuition
No parent is required to pay tuition or fees solely for the purpose of enrolling in or attending 4K. Tuition or fees may be charged for Extended-Care or Wrap-Around Care provided.

Extended Care/Wrap Around Care
Extended-Care or Wrap-Around Care may be provided on site at a cost for families. ABC vouchers may be available for those children who qualify.

Transportation
Providers may offer (and will receive reimbursement for) transportation for eligible students. Providers may not charge fees for transportation to eligible students. Centers receiving reimbursement for transportation must have their current DSS transportation file available for review by the First Steps Regional Coordinator. All transportation services provided must adhere with the requirements detailed in South Carolina Section 56-5-195 (See Appendix G: Jacob's Law). Providers offering transportation may specify their own transportation routes and must make parents aware of these routes upon enrollment.
If transportation is offered, eligible students living within established provider routes must be afforded an equal opportunity to receive this service. Providers shall not be responsible for the transportation of any student living outside of these established boundaries. Parents choosing program providers located outside of their resident district shall be responsible for transportation.
Only authorized people with proper identification will be allowed to pick up your child.

4K Daily Schedule
Opportunity for a brief rest time will be incorporated into each instructional day. Rest time may not exceed one hour per day, except as necessary to address the specific individual needs of children. Children unable to sleep during the rest period shall be allowed to read or participate in another quiet activity. A copy of the daily classroom schedule is included in this handbook.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality of information about the child and family will be maintained at all times. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, principal, teaching staff and licensing agency. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent/ guardian.

Discipline and Guidance Policy
Our 4K Program began a three year implementation of **Conscious Discipline** into all of our SC classrooms in the fall of 2014. Please read more at http://consciousdiscipline.com/

Conscious Discipline is an evidence-based comprehensive program that includes:
- School climate changes
- Social-emotional competency changes in adults
- Social-emotional competency changes in children
- Behavioral and resiliency changes
- Classroom management shift from external rewards and punishments to problem-solving
- Academic success

School climate impacts all achievement. The culture of a school can foster bullying, blame and cliques, or it can build cooperation, willingness and responsibility.

Historically, we have unconsciously used the metaphor of a factory when creating our classrooms and schools. The goal of a factory is to create standardized products through a rewards and punishment paradigm. Research and experience prove that we need a new metaphor if we wish to build successful and safe educational institutions. The School Family, built on a healthy family model, is this new metaphor. The goal of a healthy family is the optimal development of all members.

The School Family builds connections between families and schools, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students to ensure the optimal development of all.

These connections provide the three essential ingredients for school success:

A willingness to learn: Without willingness, each interaction becomes a power struggle instead of a learning opportunity. The School Family brings all children, especially the most difficult, to a place of willingness through a sense of belonging.

Impulse control: Connection with others is the construct that literally wires the brain for impulse control. Disconnected children are disruptive and prone to aggressive or bullying behaviors. External reward/punishment systems cannot improve a child's ability to self-regulate because they are not designed to teach new skills. The School Family uses connection to encourage impulse control while teaching self-regulation skills in context.

Attention: Our attentional system is sensitive to stress and becomes engaged with positive emotions. The School Family reduces stress while creating an atmosphere of caring, encouragement and meaningful contributions. These components are essential for children to develop and apply sustained attention.

The School Family is created through routines, rituals and structures. The School Family creates a fundamental shift in education and classroom management. Leave coercion, fear and external rewards behind, and step into a world where intrinsic motivation, helpfulness, problem-solving and connection govern your classroom.

Punishment or harsh treatment does not encourage the goals of good discipline. Our program does not allow corporal punishment by any staff or parent/guardian. Corporal punishment is defined as any treatment that humiliates or treats the child disrespectfully. This includes, but is not limited to spanking, belittling, shaming, shaking depriving food, water, naps, outside time, or bathroom facilities, unsupervised isolation, or improperly restricting the movement of the child. It is our strong belief that these methods work against the healthy growth and development of a child.

Educational Policies

Curriculum
All aspects of the learning environment, including equipment and materials, classroom environment, outdoor environment, staff child interactions, teaching strategies, learning center provisions, etc. must be founded on current early childhood research and focus on the developmental and academic needs of four year old children.
These are the three research based curriculum models that may be implemented in our 4K Program:

> **Creative Curriculum:**
> Creative Curriculum is a practical approach on how to organize the environment to support children's social development and active learning. It is based on child development theory. By continually changing and enriching the environment, teachers can support learning and creativity in children. It emphasizes establishing a partnership with parents and offers practical ideas for explaining the curriculum to parents. For more information, www.teachingstrategies.com

> **High/Scope:**
> In the High/Scope approach adult-child interactions are very important, both in small groups and individually. Large group time should be meaningful to the children and limited to a small amount of time in the daily schedule. Children PLAN their learning, DO or interact with the learning in small groups or individually, then come back to group time to REVIEW what they did and learned that day. High/Scope is based on the research by Dr. David Weikart. High Scope has a 46-year history of success. www.highscope.org

> **Montessori:**
> Montessori is a hands-on approach to individualized learning in a well-maintained environment that facilitates individual needs. The program is based on respect of the child, parents and environment.   Montessori programs have classrooms that are multi aged populated, offer child-centered schedules, enhanced individual and small group learning, and promote a community classroom learning atmosphere. http://www.montessori.org/

Assessing Student Learning
Your child's teacher will conduct ongoing student assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction based on the Good Start, Grow Smart standards. Our 4K Program uses a system that helps teachers observe your child, assess your child's work, and document your child's achievement with the following:

- **Portfolios:**
  Collections of your child's work that show progress and demonstrates special interests and talents as well as areas in need of development.

- **Developmental Guidelines and Checklists:**
  Lists of age or grade level expectations that are used for guiding teachers observations about your child's achievements in school.

The benefits of developmental child assessments are the following:
- Your child's strengths and needs are clearly identified for you, your child, and the teacher.
- Teachers focus on your child as an individual and set specific goals for him or her.
- Your child is observed and evaluated using a developmental checklist that is based on the most current knowledge about how children develop and learn.
- The process of evaluating your child is connected to what happens in the classroom.

Documentation from the assessment will be sent home three times per year, after approximately the 90th, the 135th day of school, and at the end of the year.

Early Literacy Assessment
Proviso 1A.76 of the General Appropriations Act of 2014 requires a readiness assessment focused on early language and literacy development be administered to all students attending a publicly funded pre-kindergarten or public kindergarten by the 45th day of the 2015-16 school year. The SC Legislature has awarded a contract for early language and literacy development assessment to Teaching Strategies for Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment to be used in all publically funded 4K classrooms.
All publically funded students participating in a SC First Steps 4K class will be assessed using GOLD for the 15-16 term.

Health, Wellness & Safety

Health Records
All sites shall comply with the South Carolina Department of Social Services Licensing Regulations for Private and Public Child Care Health, Safety and Sanitation requirements.

A health record for each child shall be maintained in the school. Each health record shall include all of the following information:
- A statement, signed by the parent/guardian, of the child's health prior to admission to the Child Development class. (DSS Form 2900)
- A current copy of the child's immunization record signed by a physician or other health official. This record should indicate that all required immunizations are complete as recommended by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), or that the appropriate official has provided written proof that the child meets either medical or religious exemption requirements; and
- Other health information deemed necessary by the program director and/or by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Please refer to your Center/School policies concerning **illness, medication, minor injuries and emergencies.**

Reporting of Abuse or Neglect
All 4K Programs are mandated by law to report suspicion of child abuse or neglect, the law requires reporting the following:
- Any physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for his/her care, custody and control (with the exception of discipline including spanking administered in a reasonable manner) shall be construed to be **abuse.**
- Failure to provide by those responsible for the care, custody and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, medical, surgical or any other care necessary for his/her well-being shall be classified as **neglect**.

Parents may not be informed of reporting if such confidence may hinder a full investigation.

Parent/Family Involvement
The SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program recognizes that parents and families are their child's first teachers. We want parents and families to be actively involved in their child's education this school year and for many school years to come.

Parent/Family Workshops
A series of Parent/Family workshops and/or Parenting Programs on various topics may be offered throughout the school year. Families are strongly encouraged to attend these.

Parent-Teacher Conferences
Schools will report at least quarterly to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on his/her child's progress.
- An orientation to 4K (ex: Back to School Night, home visits, etc.) will be conducted as the first of these quarterly contacts to complete the Parent Orientation Checklist.
- Two of the quarterly contacts will include parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Conferences will be a time for parents to learn about their child's experiences and developmental progress. Documentation of your child's progress curriculum developmental checklists and portfolios will be shared with during the conference and at regular reporting times during the school year.
- The final review of your child's progress will be provided at the end of the school year as the concluding parent contact.

Other conferences may be scheduled at the request of either the teaching staff or parents.

Communication
Each SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program believes in building a partnership with all families of the children enrolled. Open communication is the most important characteristic of this partnership and is considered the most beneficial to the children's learning and development. Parents are encouraged to share information that would be helpful in the staff's caring of their children. The teaching staff will also share information with parents about their children and about the program using various modes of communication:

- Regular newsletters
- Face-to-face conservations
- Phone calls
- E-mails
- Written notes

Classroom Visits
All parents are encouraged to visit their child's class to observe or participate in class activities. There is always room for parents and grandparents alike to spend some time with the children or to share talents, hobbies, and interests with all children.

Parent-Teacher Agreement
The schools that are participating in 4K truly believe that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. The selected schools see their role as that of a partner. The Parent-Teacher agreement symbolizes this partnership. It is a document that outlines how parents and teachers can share the responsibility for the success of each child.

We ask that each parent agree to strive to the following:

- ❑ Believe that your child can learn
- ❑ Demonstrate that you value education and that school is important
- ❑ Ensure your child attends school regularly and is on time
- ❑ Set aside time each day to talk with your child about his or her learning
- ❑ Read to your child daily and allow your child to see you read daily
- ❑ Provide a home environment that encourages your child to do his/her best
- ❑ Provide structured sleeping and eating habits for your child
- ❑ Attend parent-teacher conferences

Your child's teacher will strive to:

- ❑ Believe that each child can learn
- ❑ Respect and value the uniqueness of each child and his or her family
- ❑ Provide a safe environment that promotes active hands-on learning
- ❑ Provide frequent communication with newsletters, reports, and telephone call
- ❑ Seek ways to involve parents in the school program
- ❑ Schedule parent-teacher conferences to accommodate parents schedules
- ❑ Welcome the participation of parents in the classroom and their support in helping their children succeed

Please sign the copy of this agreement which is at the end of this handbook, and return to your child's teacher.

The following page is for signatures - to be signed and included in child's records.

Parent-Teacher Agreement

The schools that are participating in 4K truly believe that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. The selected schools see their role as that of a partner. The Parent-Teacher agreement symbolizes this partnership. It is a document that outlines how parents and teachers can share the responsibility for the success of each child.

Student's Name:_____

As a parent, I, _____ will strive to:

                                                 Date

- ☐ Believe my child can learn
- ☐ Demonstrate that I value education and that school is important
- ☐ Ensure my child attends school regularly and is on time
- ☐ Set aside time each day to talk with my child about his or her learning
- ☐ Read to my child daily and allow my child to see me read daily
- ☐ Provide a home environment that encourages my child to do his/her best
- ☐ Provide structured sleeping and eating habits
- ☐ Attend parent-teacher conferences

As a teacher, I, _____ will strive to:

                                                 Date

- ☐ Believe that each child can learn
- ☐ Respect and value the uniqueness of each child and his or her family
- ☐ Provide a safe environment that promotes active hands-on learning
- ☐ Provide frequent communication with newsletters, reports, and telephone call
- ☐ Seek ways to involve parents in the school program
- ☐ Schedule parent-teacher conferences to accommodate parents schedules
- ☐ Welcome the participation of parents in the classroom and their support in helping their children succeed