

**STRENGTHS OF OUR PROGRAM....strategies that
contribute to our success**

- **Our program is designed to meet each child's individual needs.**
Regardless of cultural background or special needs, every child is offered a variety of learning experiences designed to foster physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth and to develop an appreciation for cultural diversity. Children participate in indoor and outdoor play..... in field trips around the community and in music, art, and language activities. They are encouraged to express their feelings, to develop a good feeling about themselves, and to get along with other children.....*thus, we are a holistic organized early learning program.*

Our balanced program encourages children to participate in activities at their own developmental level. Learning experiences are planned based on observations taken as well as communication with families. There is a balance of play and fun with literacy and numeracy.

Children are encouraged to be independent, be responsible for their own actions, cooperate with peers and staff, and make choices.

Our classrooms are full day, busy, interactive environments that promote high-level learning experiences through *developmentally appropriate, well-planned play activities.*

- **Our program is outcome based with assessment being the key.**
Every three and four year old student receives frequent assessments. Results from the individual profiles are used to monitor curriculum implementation and to plan for teacher training in any area that shows systemic weakness.

Teaching Strategies Gold areas of development and learning indicators are aligned to meet the **Head Start Framework** and **Louisiana Kindergarten Readiness Goals**. A customized version of **CLASS** and **ECERS** are being used to determine the effectiveness of our learning environments. In

addition, we use customized assessments, **Concepts of Print and Count with Me**, based on **Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Standards:**

The collection of information from the data enables the staff to plan and make changes to their environment. We collect data from parental input, observations documented by the teaching staff, and portfolios to individualize child goals,

Teachers receive individual classroom staff training, mentoring, and in-service training based on our program's data from school readiness aggregated reports.

- **Our transition plan involves parents, Head Start, and kindergarten teachers;** lets children and parents know what kindergarten will be like; link children and their peers with one another; involve personal contact between teachers and parents; include field trips by HS children to kindergarten classrooms;
- **Our program has on staff an early interventionist** who meets with teachers on a weekly or as needed basis to provide support and conduct demonstration classes. She also works with the parents/teachers to design strategies to assist any child displaying difficulty in behavior.
- **The teaching staff also have support through dedicated non-teaching directors** who strive to see that our environments support best practices; the staff works as a team and are committed to making each child's day happy, safe, and educationally stimulating; *the Education Manager has received training in CLASS.*
- **All full-time teaching staff have a professional development plan.** We employ 15 teachers.....6 have either a BA or BS, 9 have an AA, and 4 or working towards the four year degree. We employ 15 teacher aides.....10 have a CDA, 2 have an AA, and 2 have a 4 year degree. We are fortunate to have a university in our parish that is in fairly close proximity to our sites. We receive funds to enable staff to continue their education.

- **Another strategy that makes our program successful is the support of administration and the governing boards concerning training and educational opportunities at state, regional, and national conferences.**
- **Lafourche Parish Head Start and Lafourche Parish Schools (LEA) have a close relationship.** There are regularly scheduled collaboration meetings with Head Start, state prekindergarten programs, Even Start, and other preschool programs in our parish. This is another piece that ensures that curriculum and classroom experiences for HS are aligned with the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills that children entering kindergarten are expected to demonstrate.
- **Our program follows Dr. Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline techniques;** the public preschool classrooms in Lafourche also follow her; the LEA invites Head Start staff for trainings in Conscious Discipline. Guiding children's behavior is constructive and non-threatening; physical force or punishment will not be used at any time; children will be encouraged to resolve their own conflicts through role-modeling and support by staff;
- **Our program is trained in IMIL and is part of the daily routine.**
- **Bus transportation is provided for most of our children;** every bus has a qualified, well-trained bus driver, and a bus monitor; all buses have safety harnesses that are height and weight appropriate;
- **A nutrition staff of 8 is employed and trained in Safe Food Handling to enhance their food safety skill while creating a pleasant meal atmosphere;** meals and snacks are served family style; the food program adheres to strict requirements. **Parent education** covering a variety of nutrition topics are offered through workshops, newsletters, and handouts. Special dietary needs/feeding problems are given individual attention. A *registered dietician* is employed on a monthly consulting basis to review menus and make recommendations to parents in regards to nutrition and health information.

- **Our program employs a full-time Registered Nurse who supports and trains our staff in keeping our Head Start centers a healthy and safe environment for all children**thus, this program ensures that a qualified content area expert oversees the health services.

All of our children have a medical and dental home and most of our 292 children have their physicals and dentals .

- **Another strategy is our emphasis on meaningful parent engagement**

Parents are engaged in literacy through daily reading with their child and take-home activities. Our centers have an “open door” policy....parent participation is not only welcomed but encouraged; parents may come and visit at any time; parents can exchange information in the morning and afternoon with the same staff members; *parents are recognized as their child’s first and most influential teacher*therefore, parents are encouraged to provide feedback specifically about their child, the curriculum, their child’s room, and about the center through surveys.

We recognize that *communicating information* is vital to establishing a trusting and caring relationship with our families and consider our communication system to be very effective.

Our classrooms are father-friendly; fatherhood/male initiative events are planned to ensure that more children are connected with a significant, positive male role model; guest speakers are utilized to enhance the growth of the fathers; Father Fridays are special days for males to get involved in the classrooms; a Male Involvement Committee has been created by parents to assist in developing activities for interested dads etc;

Some parent meetings/activities are planned in the evening hours to accommodate working parents.

- **Another strength of our program is the availability of the information concerning our program on our web site:**
www.lafourchegov.org this enables parents to learn more about our

program before the child enters as well as during the time the child is enrolled in our program.

- **A major strength of our program is the fiscally sound management of our financial resources: our Parish President and the governing board have established and implemented strong, appropriate internal controls to safeguard Federal funds.....**
this strength was noted in a prior review; with few increases in Head Start funding, the Parish President provides additional revenue to cover rising costs in many areas such as insurance ; we are able to purchase new furniture and equipment, including upgrades of computers, when needed; we are able to build a strong supply of learning and development tools, such as books, educational toys, art supplies; playground equipment ; and are able to maintain and/or purchase buses as needed
- The strength of an organization is reflective of the **cohesive management team:** ensures that facilities and learning opportunities promote children's health and safety;
_____managers are assigned to specific components and have knowledge, training, and experience in early childhood education and care;
-----the team is committed to making each child's day safe and happy;
----- the managers and director work in close proximity , thus allowing daily communication, discussion and resolution to any problems that may occur;
-----director encourages all managers to participate in trainings offered locally, and at state, regional, and national conferences;

Submitted by the Head Start Director, Martha Babin