

Polk County Schools Preschool

School Readiness Plan & Report

2025-2026



Approved by Policy Council:

About Polk County Schools' Preschool Program:

Our program provides comprehensive services for up to 144 children with and without special needs and their families in Polk County, North Carolina. We have 80 Head Start slots in nine classrooms located at four sites:

- *Polk Central Elementary (3 classrooms)
- *Saluda Elementary (1 classroom)
- *Sunny View Elementary (1 classroom)
- *Tryon Elementary (4 classrooms)

Polk County Schools Preschool Mission Statement:

Doing What's Right for Students

Polk County Schools Preschool Vision Statement

The philosophy and vision of our preschool program is to provide children with a high quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood experience that leads to a positive educational start. This will be done in partnership with our families and communities.

Head Start's Approach to School Readiness

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school, later learning, and life. For parents and families, school readiness means they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teachers and advocates.

Purpose of Our School Readiness Plan:

- *Improve the quality of teacher-child interactions
- *Implement evidence-based teaching practices
- *Implement and assess our evidence-based curriculum
- *Increase engagement, communication (including in-person, online, newsletters...etc.) and inclusion of parents and families to support children's school readiness;
- *Provide effective professional development so all staff understand how they support school readiness; and
- *Implement effective transitions and increase continuity through Kindergarten and the primary grades.

History of Polk County Schools' Preschool School Readiness Plan History

Our Head Start Policy Council reviewed the following documents:

- *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) Ages Birth to Five
- *Teaching Strategies GOLD Objectives for Development and Learning: Birth Through Kindergarten
- *Local Kindergarten Expectations
- *Teaching Strategies Gold Data from 2024-2025 School year
- *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning
- *Head Start Multicultural Principles for Early Childhood Leaders (2023)

School readiness goals were developed in the following domains:

- *Language/Literacy,
- *Cognition/General Knowledge,
- *Approaches to Learning,
- *Physical Development/Health, and
- *Social/Emotional Development

Our School Readiness Team will meet in January 2026, March 2026, and May 2026. Exact times and dates may be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances such as weather or illness. Members will include our Executive Director, at least one parent, at least one teacher, and the Preschool Education Specialist. Additional members may be added as needed.

Current Committee Members:

Kristin Smith, Parent
Jan Crump, Executive Director & Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Polk County Schools
Lori Byars, Head Start/Preschool Director
Jessie Roush, Preschool Teacher
Shelley Upton, Preschool Education Specialist

The goals were approved by the Polk County Schools Preschool School Readiness Committee on February 12, 2026.

ALIGNMENT RESOURCES

Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 7th Edition

Polk County Schools' Preschool program follows *Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 7th Edition*, which balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. It places an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) is an ongoing observational assessment system for assessing children from birth through Kindergarten. It helps teachers observe children in everyday experiences. TSG is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that include predictors of school success and are based on school readiness standards. Domains include Social-Emotional, Physical (Fine and Gross Motor), Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, The Arts, and English Language Acquisition for dual language learners.

Polk County Schools follows the 2025-2026 North Carolina Early Learning Inventory presented below:

Social Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Manages feelings *Responds to emotional cues *Interacts with peers *Solves social problems *Follows limits and expectations
Cognitive/Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Counts *Quantifies *Connects numerals and quantities
Cognitive/Approaches to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Attends and engages
Language & Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Notices and discriminates rhyme *Notices and discriminates alliteration *Uses and appreciates books and other texts *Uses print concepts *Tells about another time or place *Follows directions
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Uses fingers and hands

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (NC Foundations Task Force, 2013)

NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development describes goals for all children's development and learning, no matter what program they may be served in, what language they speak, what disabilities they may have, or what family circumstances they are reared in. Teachers, caregivers, and families can turn to *Foundations* to learn about child development because the document provides age-appropriate Goals and Developmental Indicators for each age level (infant, toddler and preschooler).

Foundations is intended to be a guide and resource for teaching—not a curriculum or checklist used to assess children’s development and learning. The resource defines the skills and abilities we want to support in the learning experiences provided for children. The Goals and Developmental Indicators are divided into five domains: Approaches to Play and Learning (APL); Emotional and Social Development (ESD); Health and Physical Development (HPD); Language Development and Communication (LDC); and Cognitive Development (CD).

Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes:

Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) Outcomes are embedded within the Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. The PFCE Framework is the guide used to promote family engagement in school readiness. Outcomes include: Family Well-Being, Positive Parent-Child Relationships, Families as Lifelong Educators, Families as Learners, Family Engagement in Transitions, Family Connections to Peers and Community, and Families as Advocates and Leaders.

Head Start’s Early Learning Outcomes Framework is divided into domains—or broad areas of early learning and development—that are essential for school and long-term success. The central domains for preschoolers are outlined in the table below:

CENTRAL DOMAINS AND SUBDOMAINS FOR PRESCHOOLERS				
Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Literacy	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning) Initiative and Curiosity Creativity	Relationships with Adults Relationships with Other Children Emotional Functioning Sense of Identity and Belonging	Language & Communication *Attending and Understanding *Communicating and Speaking *Vocabulary Literacy *Phonological Awareness *Print and Alphabet Awareness *Comprehension and Text Structure *Writing	Mathematics Development *Counting and Cardinality *Operations and Algebraic Thinking *Measurement *Geometry and Spatial Sense Scientific Reasoning *Scientific Inquiry *Reasoning and Problem-Solving	*Gross Motor (Large Muscles) *Fine Motor (Small Muscles) *Health, Safety, and Nutrition

POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL School Readiness Goal Summary and Action Steps

The goals and objectives of our program's School Readiness Plan are laid out in greater detail in the pages that follow. Each goal is expanded into objectives which show how they are aligned with Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework, North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development, and Teaching Strategies Gold—as well as how success in achieving the goals will be measured.



OUR SCHOOL READINESS PLAN ACTION STEPS

In order to effectively fulfill the expectations for school readiness as set forth by Head Start, our program will:

- 1) Create a School Readiness Team which will meet at least three times per year (January, March, and May) to develop and refine our school readiness plan and establish school readiness goals using existing child outcomes data (including prior year when applicable).
- 2) Establish school readiness goals for children that are aligned with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*, *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development* and *Teaching Strategies Gold*. These goals will ensure children are prepared for school across all domains of development and learning, including approaches to learning, social and emotional development, physical development and health, language and literacy, and cognition and general knowledge. Goals will be developed with input from parents, preschool and Kindergarten teachers, Policy Council and our School Readiness Team. Goals will be specific, measurable, and attainable.
- 3) Solicit input and feedback from stakeholders (families, staff, Policy Council, etc.), with regular updates provided to the same. Family engagement—with the process of school readiness—will be encouraged and supported in a variety of ways, including teacher/parent interactions, parent-teacher conferences, family meetings, newsletters, etc. Teaching professionals will be informed of and involved in the school readiness process, and will receive data on outcomes and training on how to use this information.

- 4) Train teaching staff on the use of an evidence-based curriculum, valid and reliable assessments, and high quality teacher-child interactions (CLASS) to promote positive outcomes on school readiness goals. Teaching strategies, learning environments, materials, and daily activities will be developmentally appropriate, guide positive behavior, and enhance active engagement of children in learning activities. Classroom teachers will receive Formative Assessment training through the Teaching Strategies Gold platform, college coursework, through the Office of Early Learning, or another professional development platform. All new classroom teachers will be required to complete Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training offered annually through the Office of Early Learning. LETRS instructs teachers in what literacy skills need to be taught, why, and how to plan to teach them. New teaching hires after that date will adhere to the same schedule (e.g., formative assessment training within one year of their employment; LETRS training within one year of hire). Additionally, preschool classroom staff will be trained in *Heggerty Phonemic Awareness* curriculum (Early Pre-Kindergarten, and Preschool Editions), *Second Step*, and *Conscious Discipline* (within the first year of hire) to support early literacy and social-emotional development best practices.
- 5) Collect data on child outcomes and classroom quality regularly via Teaching Strategies Gold, CLASS, and ECERS (official review scores). Data will be aggregated and analyzed; this information will be shared in a timely manner with:
 - a) Teacher to facilitate planning and individualization.
 - b) Families to provide details about their child's progress in reaching school readiness goals; and
 - c) Other stakeholders (School Board, Policy Council, etc.) to maintain transparency of our program's progress toward achieving positive outcomes and goals. Data will be used by our program for ongoing monitoring, problem solving, and program management.
- 6) Support children's transition to Kindergarten by fostering the family-school connection and child-school connection (please refer to our Transition Plan contained in this document). This will be accomplished through multiple activities, including information sharing (verbal and written), Kindergarten registration events, parent meetings with Kindergarten teachers, visits to Kindergarten classrooms, etc. Communication between preschool teachers and Kindergarten teachers will be ongoing and site-specific.

This plan of action will support achievement of positive child outcomes on school readiness goals, and create a climate of success where children, families, and schools work together.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS)

(Pianta, R.C., La Paro, K.M., & Hamre, B.K., 2008)

CLASS is an observation tool that assesses the *quality of teacher-child interactions*. and includes three domains or categories of teacher-child interactions that support children's learning and development which are presented below.

CLASS DOMAINS

1) EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- a) Assesses the degree to which teachers establish and promote a positive climate in their classroom through every day interactions.

2) CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

- a) Assess classroom routines and procedures related to the organization of the classroom and management of the children's behavior.

3) INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

- a) Assess the ways in which teachers implement the curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development.

CLASS DIMENSIONS

Within each domain are dimensions which capture more specific details about teachers' interactions with children.

- 1) **Positive Climate (PC)** reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and children and between children.
- 2) **Teacher Sensitivity (TS)** reflects the teachers' awareness of and responsiveness to children's academic and social needs.
- 3) **Regard for Student Perspectives (RSP)**—captures the degree to which the teachers' interactions with children and classroom activities place an emphasis on children's interests and points of view—and encourages children's responsibility and autonomy.
- 4) **Behavior Management (BM)**—Reflects the teachers' ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent misbehavior.
- 5) **Productivity (PD)**—Reflects how well the teacher manages instructional times and routines, and ensures children have the opportunity to be involved.
- 6) **Instructional Learning Formats (ILF)**—Focuses on the ways in which a teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement & ability to learn.
- 7) **Concept Development (CD)**—Measures the teachers' use of instructional discussions/activities to promote higher-order thinking skills.
- 8) **Quality of Feedback (QF)**—Assesses the degree to which the teachers provide feedback that expands learning & understanding.
- 9) **Language Modeling (LM)**—Captures the quality & amount of teachers' use of language.

POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM CLASS OBSERVATION PROCEDURES

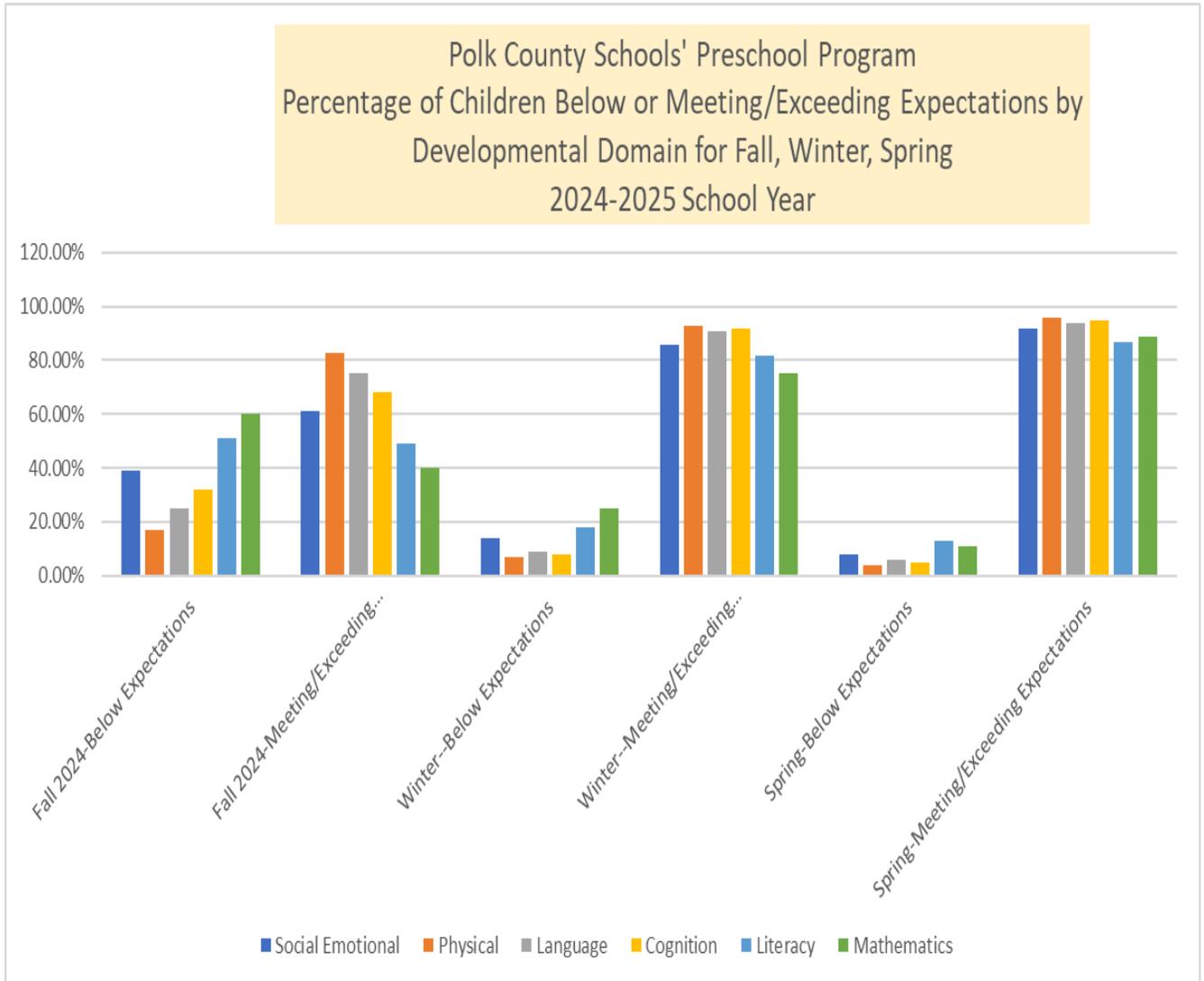
- 1) The Preschool Education Specialist is a Certified Pre-K CLASS Observer. Reliability certification is renewed annually.
- 2) Teaching staff will be observed at a minimum of two times per year to monitor teacher-child interactions, typically in the Fall and Spring.
- 3) Coaching will take place following each observation—with scores shared, and areas of strength and growth identified. Classrooms and the Preschool Education Specialist will identify at least one area for growth between observation periods (e.g., Fall to Spring).
- 4) Our Preschool program has created benchmarks for each CLASS domain which are **higher** than the National Average. If a classroom's score falls below our program's benchmarks, coaching (and potential additional professional development) is utilized to support development of CLASS skills specific and individualized for each classroom. For example, if a classroom needs to grow in the area of Language Modeling and use of Open-Ended Questions, the classroom and Preschool Education Specialist will work together to generate a goal of asking children questions that encourage an extended response. Questions such as "Can you tell me more?" or "What happened when...?" encourage complex responses. This gives children the opportunity to practice using longer sentences and a variety of words. The classroom team will then use these strategies to improve practice.
- 5) CLASS information will be included in our program's School Readiness Plan, as well as reported to the Office of Head Start, families, and community members.

NATIONAL HEAD START CLASS STATISTICS BY DOMAIN IN COMPARISON TO POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS ANNUAL GOAL AND ACTUAL CLASS SCORES

Head Start grantee-level dimension scores are averaged to produce grantee-level domain scores. Previous large-scale studies of CLASS have shown that the average preschool classroom scores are higher in the domains of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization than in the domain of Instructional Support. Below is a comparison of our CLASS goal scores (and actual for Fall 2024 and Spring 2025) in comparison to national averages. In the Fall, we met or exceeded national averages in Emotional Support and Instructional Support, but fell below the national average for Classroom Organization. This meant our teachers and assistants did an excellent job establishing and promoting a positive climate in their classroom through everyday interactions, as well as implementing the curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development. However, we need to grow programmatically in the procedures related to the organization of the classroom and management of the children’s behavior—with a specific emphasis on using a variety of modalities (e.g., giving children opportunities to move while learning; using hand movements during a song; actively reenacting a story during large group and materials (e.g., using picture cues during transitions...etc.), engaging child interests, clarifying learning objectives, and ensuring behavioral expectations are taught and are clear throughout any and all activities. Our CLASS data are presented below.

Office of Head Start CLASS® Descriptive Statistics, 2020 National Grantee-Level Scores by Domain		Polk County Schools Preschool CLASS Benchmarks (Goal)	Fall 2024 Polk County Schools Preschool CLASS Scores	Spring 2025 Polk County Schools Preschool CLASS Scores
Domain	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Emotional Support	6	6.25	6	6.59
Classroom Organization	5.78	6.00	4.64	6.19
Instructional Support	2.94	4	3.92	5.49

POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD ASSESSMENT DATA 2024-2025 School Year



POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM SCHOOL READINESS GOALS BY DOMAIN

Approaches to Learning	<p>Goal(s):</p> <p>*Children will become increasingly independent in managing their actions, words, and behaviors, and increase their ability to demonstrate flexibility in thinking and behavior and sustain attention and focus.</p> <p>*Children will show increasing eagerness and interest in learning about the world around them through verbal and non-verbal means while playing, listening, questioning and interacting.</p> <p>*Children will increase their ability to express themselves in their work and begin to exhibit originality and risk-taking.</p>					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will regulate emotions and behaviors with increasing independence.	APL-1j, APL-1m APL-1k, APL-1n APL-1l, APL-1o APL-1p APL-2i, APL-2l APL-2j, APL-2m APL-2k APL-2n CD-4h, CD-4j CD-4k CD-5m, CD-5r CD-5n CD-8d, CD-8f CD-8e CD-8h ESD-5p	Obj. 1a Obj. 1b Obj. 1c Obj. 11a Obj. 11b Obj. 8b Obj. 12a Obj. 11e Obj. 11c Obj. 2a Obj. 14b Obj. 11d	*Families as Lifelong Educators *Family Engagement in Transitions	*Set clear behavior expectations. *Give clear instructions to complete routine tasks. *Maximize learning time by providing a multitude of activities. *Acknowledge emotions and provide individualized support as needed. *Provide encouragement and reinforcement. *Be flexible to go along with childrens' ideas and organize instruction around their interests. *Promote problem-solving.	*Complete tasks despite distractions and/or interruptions. *Choose to participate in a variety of experiences with increased engagement. *Attempt a variety of strategies to solve problems. *Show creativity and imagination in using materials and assuming different roles in pretend-play situations.
	Children will follow multi-step directions.					
	Children will maintain attention and persist through challenging activities.					
Children will show initiative to learn about a variety of topics and ideas.						
<p>Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Approaches to Learning goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.</p>						

Social and Emotional Development	Goal(s): *Children will increase their ability to demonstrate the emotional well-being and social skills needed to interact appropriately with others and build positive relationships with peers and adults.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will establish secure relationships with adults.	ESD-1k, ESD-1o ESD-1l, ESD-1p ESD-2k, ESD-2n ESSD-2l, ESD-2o ESD-3m, ESD-3q ESD-3n, ESD-3o, ESD-3r, ESD-3p, ESD-3s, ESD-4k, ESD-4p, ESD-4l, ESD-4q, ESD-4n, ESD-4o, ESD-4r	Obj. 2a Obj. 1b Obj. 2c Obj. 2d Obj. 3a Obj. 3b Obj. 2b Obj. 1a Obj. 29 Obj. 30	Positive Parent-Child Relationships	*Use positive and respectful communication with children. *Set clear behavior expectations. *Be aware of problems and lack of understanding, and respond appropriately. *Promote problem-solving. *Provide comfort and assistance when needed. *Encourage conversation among peers. *Encourage children to assist each other. *Participate in social conversations.	*Show increased competence in regulating, recognizing and expressing emotions verbally & non-verbally. *Play and interact cooperatively with others. *Work to resolve conflicts appropriately with adult support. *Respond appropriately to others' feelings (show empathy).
	Children will participate in cooperative play with peers.					
	Children will resolve conflicts with peers—including sharing and turn-taking.					
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Social and Emotional goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.						

Language	Goal(s): *Children will increase their ability to listen to and understand language and communication from others, responding to increasingly complex communications. *Children will increase their ability to communicate their needs, interact socially with others, and describe events, thoughts and feelings.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will gain receptive understanding of language demonstrated by expressive verbal or	LDC-1k, LDC-1n LDC-1l, LDC-1o LDC-1m, LDC-1p	Obj. 8a Obj. 8b Obj. 9a Obj. 10a Obj. 10b	Positive Parent-Child Relationships	*Use positive and respectful communication with children. *Set clear behavior expectations.	*Attend to language for longer periods of time *Demonstrate an understanding that people communicate in a variety of

	non-verbal responses.	LDC-2i, LDC-2l LDC-2j, LDC-2m LDC-2k LDC-2n LDC-2o LDC-4h, LDC-4j LDC-5d LDC-5e, LDC-5f LDC-6g, LDC-6i LDC-7k, LDC-7o LDC-7l, LDC-7p	Obj. 9b Obj. 9c Obj. 9d Obj. 13		<p>*Be aware of problems and lack of understanding, and respond appropriately.</p> <p>*Promote problem-solving.</p> <p>*Provide comfort and assistance when needed.</p> <p>*Encourage conversation among peers.</p> <p>*Encourage children to assist each other.</p> <p>*Participate in social conversations.</p>	<p>ways</p> <p>*Consistently respond to requests for information or action</p> <p>*Initiate and engage in conversations with others</p> <p>*Understand and use a growing vocabulary and increasingly longer & more complex sentences</p>
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Language goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.						

Literacy	Goal(s):					
	*Children will increase phonological awareness, print and alphabet knowledge, and comprehension skills.					
	*Children will demonstrate a progression of writing skills, and use writing for a variety of purposes.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will identify 15 uppercase and 15 lowercase letters.	LDC-8j, LDC-8m LDC-8k, LDC-8l, LDC-8o, LDC-8n LDC-9i, LDC-9o LDC-9j, LDC-9p LDC-9m, LDC-9s LDC-9n, LDC-9t LDC-10i, LDC-10l LDC-10j, LDC-10m LDC-10o, DC-11h, LDC-11k, LDC-11l LDC-12b, LDC-12e LDC-12c, DC-12d, LDC-12f, LDC-13c, LDC-13f, LDC-13d, LDC-13g, DC-13e, LDC-13h, DC-14a, LDC-14c, DC-14b,	Obj. 15a Obj. 15b Obj. 15c Obj. 17b Obj. 17a Obj. 16a Obj. 16b Obj. 18c Obj. 12a Obj. 18a Obj. 19b Obj. 19a	*Families as Learners *Family Well-Being	<p>*Provide a variety of auditory, visual, and movement opportunities using interesting and creative materials.</p> <p>*Integrate concepts with previous knowledge.</p> <p>*Relate concepts to childrens' actual lives.</p> <p>*Actively facilitate childrens' engagement to encourage participation.</p> <p>*Scaffold for children who are having a hard time understanding a question or completing an activity.</p> <p>*Use LETRS training and Heggerty instruction.</p>	<p>*Be aware of print and begin to understand that it carries a message.</p> <p>*Begin to understand that letters are different from shapes, pictures and numbers.</p> <p>*Begin to understand that letters represent sounds in words</p> <p>*Show an interest in books and other print, in being read to, and in using and sharing books in their play.</p> <p>*Represent thoughts and ideas through drawings, marks, scribbles and letter-like forms.</p> <p>*Use a variety of writing tools and materials.</p>
Children will identify 18 letter sounds.						
Children will decide whether two words rhyme.						
Children will independently write their first name.						

		LDC-14d, LDC-15f, LDC-15i, LDC-15g, LDC-15j, LDC-15h, LDC-15k				
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Literacy goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.						

Cognition– Mathematics	Goal(s): *Children will begin to develop an early knowledge of mathematical concepts, such as number names, count sequence, shapes, patterns, measurement and position words.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will use number operations to count, pattern, and measure.	CD-10f, CD-10g, CD-10h, CD-10j, CD-10n, CD-10k, CD-10p, CD-10l, CD-10r, CD-10o, CD-10q, CD-10m, CD-10s, CD-10t, CD-10u, CD-10v, CD-10w, CD-11f, CD-11i, CD-11g, CD-11m, CD-11h, CD-11n, CD-11o, CD-11k, CD-11q, CD-12e, CD-12f	Obj. 20a Obj. 20b Obj. 22 Obj. 20c Obj. 23 Obj. 21b Obj. 21a	*Families as Lifelong Educators	*Provide a variety of auditory, visual & movement opportunities using interesting & creative materials * Integrate concepts with previous knowledge *Actively facilitate students' engagement to encourage participation *Scaffold for students who are having a hard time understanding a question or completing an activity * Provide opportunities to classify or compare objects (CD) *Ask children to explain their thinking & rationale for responses & actions	*Experiment with and using numbers and counting in play *Recognize and describe shapes *Recognizing and duplicate simple patterns *Make comparisons and use standard and non-standard measurements *Use words and follow directions related to different positions in space.
	Children will identify numbers and quantities and connect written numerals.					
	Children will classify, compare, and describe shapes—and understand spatial relationships.					
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Mathematics goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.						

Cognition– Scientific Reasoning	Goal(s): *Children will begin to observe and describe living things and the physical world. *Children will begin to ask questions, investigate, experiment, predict, analyze and draw conclusions.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will engage in exploring their environment by observing, manipulative, classifying, and comparing.. Children will participate in experiments and draw conclusions	CD-14c, CD-14e CD-14k CD-14d, CD-14f, CD-14l CD-14g, CD-14m CD-14i, CD-14p CD-15f, CD-15g, CD-15h CD-15i, CD-15n CD-15j CD-15k, CD-15o, CD-15m, CD-15r	Obj. 24 Obj. 28 Obj. 22	*Families as Lifelong Educators	*Be prepared by knowing the lesson & having materials ready * Actively facilitate students; engagement to encourage participation *Ask how & why questions to encourage analysis & reasoning *Make predictions & conduct experiments *Provide opportunities for students to brainstorm & generate their own ideas * Make connections to previous knowledge & student's lives *Be flexible to incorporate students' ideas	*Engage in scientific talk *Apply knowledge acquired from everyday experiences to new situations *Compare, sort and match things *Identify and/or describe changes in objects or situations
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Scientific Reasoning goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026.						

Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development	Goal(s): *Children will demonstrate increasing control, strength and coordination of both large and small muscles. *Children will increase their ability to demonstrate self-care skills, including hygiene, eating habits and safety practices.					
	Objectives	NC Foundations for Early Learning	TS Gold/ Creative Curriculum Objectives	Family Engagement Outcomes	Key Teaching Practices Staff Will:	Goal Evidence: Children Will:
	Children will use traveling, movement such as walking, running and jumping. Children will use balancing skills such as hopping and standing on one leg.	HPD-4l, HPD-4p HPD-4i, HPD-4m HPD-4n, HPD-4o, HPD-4r, HPD-4s HPD-5g, HPD-5j, HPD-5m, HPD-5h, HPD-5k, HPD-5n	Obj. 4 Obj. 5 Obj. 6 Obj. 7a Obj. 7b Obj. 1c	*Family Well-Being *Parent-Child Relationships	*Set clear behavior expectations. *Provide a range of movement activities. *Actively facilitate students—engagement to encourage participation.	*Engage in active physical play both indoors and outdoors *Move body through space with coordination, balance and flexibility *Manipulate objects and using tools with hand-eye coordination

Health, Safety & Nutrition	Children will manipulate objects by throwing, catching and kicking.	HPD-5i, HPD-5l, HPD-5o, HPD-6g, HPD-6i, HPD-7l, HPD-7r, HPD-7i, HPD-7n, HPD-1p, HPD-1s, HPD-1q, HPD-1t, HPD-1r			*Provide connections to the real world. *Provide encouragement and reinforcement.	
	Children will demonstrate hand strengths and coordination by writing, cutting, and drawing.	HPD-8i, HPD-8m, HPD-8j, HPD-8n, HPD-8k, HPD-8o, HPD-8l, HPD-8p				
	Expected Outcome: 90% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Fine and Gross Motor goals by performing at or above age requirements by Spring 2025.					
	Children will complete personal care tasks including toileting and handwashing, independently from adults.	HPD-4l, HPD-4p, HPD-4i, HPD-4m, HPD-4n, HPD-4o, HPD-4r, HPD-4s, HPD-5g, HPD-5j, HPD-5m, HPD-5h, HPD-5k, HPD-5n, HPD-5i, HPD-5l, HPD-5o, HPD-6g, HPD-6i, HPD-7l, HPD-7r, HPD-7i, HPD-7n, HPD-1p, HPD-1s, HPD-1q, HPD-1t, HPD-1r	Obj. 4 Obj. 5 Obj. 6 Obj. 7a Obj. 7b Obj. 1c	*Family Well-Being *Parent-Child Relationships	*Set clear behavior expectations. *Anticipate problems and plan appropriately. *Give clear instructions during routine parts of the day. *Provide comfort and assistance when needed. *Give children responsibilities within the classroom. *Participate in shared activities to model tasks throughout the day.	*Developing independence in caring for themselves and their environment *Following safety rules with adult support
Children will follow basic safety rules with adult guidance.	HPD-5i, HPD-5l, HPD-5o, HPD-6g, HPD-6i, HPD-7l, HPD-7r, HPD-7i, HPD-7n, HPD-1p, HPD-1s, HPD-1q, HPD-1t, HPD-1r					
Expected Outcome: 85% of Kindergarten-bound children will achieve Personal Health and Safety goals by performing at or above age expectations by Spring 2026. Did we achieve our goal for the prior school year (2025-2026)?						

TRANSITION PLAN

Polk County Schools Preschool Transition Plan

(revised June 2025)

INTO PRESCHOOL:

- Applications are available on an ongoing basis. Applications for the upcoming school year are targeted for distribution in January/February.
- Our program respects the right to each family's educational choice. Please see the attached link:
 - [Polk County Preschool's Educational Freed...](#)
- In the spring the program will contact WNCSource for a list of children who will be eligible to transition into Head Start. Applications will be provided to the EHS center, and staff will work with EHS staff to ensure families seeking enrollment in preschool have completed applications and are aware of enrollment events.
- Starting in March/April and ongoing, enrollment appointments will be scheduled with families to complete the application process, including a family needs assessment, and receive program information. Parent handbooks will be distributed and Head Start and NC PreK programs will be discussed. Health information about the child will be requested from parents. In July/August, parents will receive confirmation of placement and eligibility status. In August, the director and family services specialist will assign children to preschool classrooms. Class lists will be shared with the preschool office staff and teachers. Teachers will contact families in August and schedule home visits/initial conferences prior to the first day of school. Teachers will begin the relationship-building process with families during this first meeting. Teachers and parents will discuss what to expect from preschool. Teachers will seek parental input on how the program can best fit the needs of the child. Teachers will explain the developmental screening (DIAL) process, the curriculum and the ongoing assessment process. Copies of the initial visit documentation form will be sent to the preschool office staff.
- Families will be given an opportunity to visit the classrooms prior to the first day of school. This is done on a class-by-class basis. Some give this opportunity one-on-one; others have open houses prior to the first day of school.

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (EC) PRE-K CLASSROOM.

- EC staff will meet with teachers that are receiving children with Individualized Education Plans to discuss the child's IEP and transition into PreK. Parents and children are given the opportunity to meet with the receiving teacher and to visit the classroom. The receiving PreK teacher is given the opportunity to observe the child during a meeting and to discuss the transition needs of the child and family with the EC staff.
- EC and PreK staff will assist parents with the needed enrollment documents for the PreK program.
- IEP meetings are held prior to transition into PreK. The preschool family services specialist and PreK Disabilities Coordinator attend the IEP meetings and communicate with the parents and EC staff on the needs of the child. Needs include, but are not limited to: social, mental health, nutrition and health.

INTO KINDERGARTEN

- The preschool program will continue to focus on school readiness, with alignment of PreK early learning standards and Kindergarten Common Core Standards.
- Individual Preschool classrooms write Transition Plans in Fall, which are classroom and school (site) specific. These are shared with the Preschool Education Specialist..
- Preschool teachers will share ongoing assessment information with Kindergarten teachers via the MyTeachingStrategies platform, as well as child work samples.

- Teachers and family services staff will communicate with the Kindergarten teachers about any children of concern. In addition, preschool teachers *may* complete an information sheet on each child to give to the receiving K teacher, if requested/required by their principal. This document will explain such things as attendance history, special services received, IEP status, health & safety concerns, the child's strengths, areas of concern, and learning/behavior styles. Work samples may also be shared.
- Transition meetings for families will be held at individual schools with kindergarten transition as a focus. Kindergarten and preschool teachers may jointly plan and conduct these meetings. Various print resources are available to be used as a tool for transition discussions with parents.
- Elementary schools will hold kindergarten registration in the spring and preschool staff will assist with this if requested by school staff.
- Preschool children will visit the kindergarten area, cafeteria, library and gym prior to the end of the preschool year. In some schools, the librarian, PE teacher, art, and/or music teacher go into the classrooms periodically during the preschool year and conduct activities with the children-so that the children are familiar with these teachers.
- Children will eat in the cafeteria and practice going through the lunch line during the preschool year.
- Preschool teachers will complete a home visit or parent conference at the end of the year, during which school readiness progress and transition to kindergarten will be discussed. Parents will be given strategies and activities to use over the summer so they can continue to work with their child on school readiness. This will be documented on the home visit documentation form and a copy of the form will be sent to the preschool office.
- Families will be given an opportunity to visit Kindergarten classrooms before school begins in Fall, either on an individual basis or during an open house.
- Preschool teachers will place the following items in the child's cumulative folder to be transferred to kindergarten with the child: All Dial forms, All Teaching Strategies Gold assessment information, TSG online Kindergarten Transition Report transmitted electronically, information from FINCH Literacy Screener and any other information that would benefit the child and assist the teacher in planning for the child.
- For children with IEPs leaving preschool and entering kindergarten, a transition IEP meeting will occur. Preschool office staff and teachers will communicate with EC office staff and EC staff at individual schools to make sure everyone is aware of the child's needs.

SCHOOL READINESS GOALS FOR CLASSROOM-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Polk County Schools Preschool Program wants parents to be informed about and involved in helping their child obtain the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to be successful in school and life. The purpose of school readiness goals is to help prepare students to be successful in kindergarten, as well as be successful throughout their school career and in life in general. Our School Readiness Goals cover all domains of a child's development, including cognition, social-emotional skills, physical abilities, language, literacy, math and science. These goals are used by teachers to plan for their class and for each individual student. Your child's teacher will discuss these school readiness goals with you further at the initial home visit/teacher interaction, and will discuss your child's progress toward these goals throughout the school year, with a specific emphasis at Fall, Winter, and Spring checkpoint periods.

COGNITION

GOAL: Children will begin to demonstrate an eagerness and interest in learning through verbal and non-verbal means while playing, listening, questioning, and interacting. They will become increasingly independent in managing actions, words and behaviors. They will increase their ability to express themselves creatively in their work.

Strategies for Parents: Leave unscheduled time in your daily routine that allows your child to explore the world around them at their own pace, both indoors and outside. Support your child as they learn to do things for themselves rather than doing things for them. For example, have your child assist with clearing their plate from the table after a meal and place it in the sink. Be positive about going to school, making sure your child attends school and is on time every day unless they are sick or there is a family emergency. Provide opportunities and encouragement for children to use their imagination. Treat “mistakes” as an opportunity to learn. Encourage your child to talk about their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Provide opportunities to experience and create music, artwork, and dance.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Children will begin to demonstrate the emotional well-being and social skills needed to positively interact with others and build positive relationships with peers and adults.

Strategies for Parents: Develop a warm, loving relationship with your child, listening to them and actively involving them in family plans. Teach them to identify emotions in themselves and others. Encourage respectfulness, compassion and appreciation for others. Model appropriate ways to resolve conflict. For example, talk with your child about what they should be doing, rather than correcting them (“We use our walking feet inside—you can run outside). Allow children to learn and experiment (make “mistakes”) without fear of criticism or danger.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

GOALS: Children will demonstrate increasing control, strength and coordination of both large and small muscles. They will begin to demonstrate self-care skills.

Strategies for Parents: Encourage daily physical activity, both indoors and outdoors, and participate in physical activities with your child. Provide a variety of tools and objects for small hands to hold and use, like silverware, toothbrush, hairbrush, pencils, and crayons, etc. Model healthy eating habits and good personal hygiene (e.g. washing hands after using the bathroom and before eating, brushing teeth after meals, etc.). Establish a bedtime routine and make sure your child gets enough rest/sleep each day (see information below). Teach appropriate safety practices.

Sleep Recommendations. *The following are recommended minimum and maximum hours each age group should sleep regularly during a 24-hour period for optimal health (American Academy of Pediatrics):*

- *Ages 4-12 months: 12-16 hours (including naps)*
- *Ages 1-2 years: 11-14 hours (including naps)*
- *Ages 3-5 years: 10-13 hours (including naps)*
- *Age 6-12 years: 9-12 hours*
- *Age 13-18 years: 8-10 hours*

Health and Nutrition Recommendations (HealthyChildren.org, 2024).

- *Offer a range of healthy foods. When children eat a variety of foods, they get a balance of the vitamins they need to grow. Healthy options include fresh vegetables and fruits, low-fat dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheeses) or dairy substitutes, lean proteins (beans, chicken, turkey, fish, lean hamburger, tofu, eggs), and whole-grain cereals and bread.*
- *Don't expect children to "clean their plates." Serve appropriate portion sizes, but do not expect your child to always eat everything served. Even better, let your children choose their own portion sizes. It is okay if children do not eat everything on their plates. At this age, they should learn to know when they are full. Some four-year-olds may still be picky eaters. Parents can encourage their children to try new foods, but they should not pressure them to eat.*
- *Serve foods at regular meal and snack times. Try to be careful to not offer foods between these eating times. Children who are eating or "grazing" throughout the day may not be hungry at mealtimes, when healthier foods tend to be available. When it is meal or snack time, turn off the TV, and eat together at the table. This helps create a calm environment for eating.*
- *Limit processed food (such as fast food) and sugary drinks. Sugary drinks include soda, juice drinks, lemonade, sweet tea, and sports drinks. Sugary drinks can lead to cavities and unhealthy weight gain.*
- *The best drinks for children are water and milk (including non-dairy milk). Milk provides calcium and vitamin D to build strong bones. Ice cream is okay once in a while, but it should not be offered every day. Whole fruit is preferable to fruit juice—even if it is 100% juice—as juice is a concentrated source of sugar and low in fiber. If you offer juice, make it 100% fruit juice and limit it to 4 oz. or less per day. It is best to serve juice with a meal, as juice is more likely to cause cavities when served between meals.*
- *Small portions for small children—It is important to pay attention to portion sizes. Four- and five-year-olds need smaller servings than adults. Encourage your children to choose their own serving size, but use smaller plates, bowls, and cups.*
- *Turn off the TV—especially at mealtimes. Television advertising can be a big challenge to your child's good nutrition. Four- and five-year-olds are easily influenced by ads for unhealthy foods like sugary cereals, fast food, and sweets. The best way to avoid this is*

to put in place a "media break" at mealtime and bedtime, putting all devices away or plugging them into a charging station for the night.

Local Options for Fresh Fruit and Produce:

Landrum Farmers' Market (seasonal Spring-Fall)

Columbus Farmers' Market (seasonal Spring-Fall)

Ingles (Landrum)

Food Lion (Columbus)

IGA (Tryon)

Local Playgrounds, Parks, Gymnastics and Dance Options:

Hamon Field (117 Harmon Field Road, Tryon, NC)

Stearns Park (125 Mills Street, Columbus, NC)

Veterans Park (Gibson Street, Columbus, NC)

Polk County Recreation Department (105 N Peak Street, Columbus, NC)

IGA Kids Gymnastics (Forest City, NC)

Releve Dance Studio (Hendersonville, NC)

General Safety for Preschoolers:

- Keep an eye on what your child is doing—indoors and outdoors. .
- Make sure your child plays away from the street.
- Teach your child how to watch out for traffic and look both ways when crossing the street with an adult holding their hand.

- When visiting playgrounds or parks—check playground equipment to make sure it is safe and has no sharp edges or loose parts.
- Make sure your child knows how to be safe around strangers and never to go with strangers at any time, anywhere.
- Always maintain supervision around bodies of water—including bathtubs, pools, ponds, lakes...etc.
- Lock up medicines, cleaners and chemicals in cabinets with safety latches.
- Make sure your child is in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they reach the top weight or height limit for that car seat
- Use a booster seat with the seatbelt in the back seat of the car when your child outgrows their car seat

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Language and Communication

GOAL: Children will increase their ability to listen to and understand language. They will increase their ability to communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings and interact socially with others. Dual language learners will develop proficiency in their native language and develop beginning proficiency in English.

Strategies for Parents: Talk with your children every day! Be a good listener. Have fun with words (rhymes, songs, word games) and teach your child new words. Encourage your child to express their thoughts and feelings in their home language. Expand on what your child says by adding information, explanations and descriptions. Ask open-ended questions that make children think and encourage creativity. Give enough wait time for children to respond to questions.

Literacy

GOAL: Children will increase phonological awareness, print and alphabet knowledge, and comprehension skills. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear, recognize, and play with the sounds in spoken language. Phonological awareness is really a group of skills that include a child's ability to: Identify words that rhyme; and count the number of syllables in a name. They will demonstrate a progression of writing skills, and begin to use writing for a variety of purposes.

Strategies for Parents: Read to your child every day! Point out words on signs, labels, and on other everyday materials. Let your child see you reading. Use your home language when reading, singing and playing word games with your child. Point out letters in familiar names and signs. Recite nursery rhymes and play word games. Encourage your child to scribble, draw and print. Keep markers, crayons, pencils, and paper available at home. Accept and celebrate your child's writing attempts!

MATH AND SCIENCE

Mathematics Development

GOAL: Children will begin to learn number names, shapes, patterns and position words. They will begin to count in sequence and use measurement words.

Strategies for Parents: Provide a variety of materials that can be sorted, counted, and used to make patterns. Take advantage of opportunities in daily activities and play where you can count, measure, and use shape and position words. Read books and talk about shapes, sizes, numbers, and measuring.

Scientific Reasoning

GOAL: Children will begin to observe and describe living things and the world around them. They will begin to ask questions, investigate, experiment, predict and draw conclusions.

Strategies for Parents: Encourage your child to ask questions and help them find answers. Experiment and talk about discoveries. Provide opportunities to play with materials in ways that change them (dough, mixing paint, etc.). Go on nature walks. Grow plants.

Experiences Children Will Be Provided to Achieve Their School Readiness Goals of Development and Learning

Polk County Schools Preschool Program understands that children learn best through play and active exploration in a healthy, safe, nurturing, and respectful environment. We believe that the foundations of learning are laid by developing trusting relationships with children and their families, encouraging communication and developing language skills, and building their self-esteem and confidence.

Our curriculum, *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 7th Edition*, incorporates a variety of experiences and routines that are developmentally appropriate for preschoolers in a well-planned and thoughtful environment. Our teaching techniques and learning experiences foster cognitive, social, emotional, physical development, and are modified to meet the needs of each child, including children with special needs. The characteristics and traditions of many cultural, ethnic and regional groups are an important part of our curriculum.

Learning Experiences That Support School Readiness Goals

In our program, our early childhood educators are loving, nurturing, consistent, and creative in supporting children's natural desire to be active learners. They create a learning environment for children by consciously considering the needs of the whole child, including:

- *Social and Emotional Needs...security and companionship
- *Physical Needs...bodily care, rest, movement, and safety
- *Cognitive Needs...opportunities to make choices, explore interesting materials,

and try out a range of challenging experiences.

Working with young children, our professionals know that children:

- *Learn with their whole body and all of their senses.
- *Learn because they want to.
- *Communicate what they know.
- *Learn within the context of trusting relationships.

Children need active, hands-on experiences to develop age-appropriate understanding of the assorted concepts they encounter each day. Our teachers and assistants take advantage of everyday materials, daily routines, and the children's interests to promote independence and exploration, and to foster emergent thinking within the curriculum. Our caregivers create environments and select materials that support that learning experience. Teachers who have children with special needs in their care also work closely with the family and related-service providers such as speech, occupational, and physical therapists toward the achievement of goals. Assistive technology is provided when needed.

Materials are open-ended, interesting, safe, developmentally appropriate for the child's age, and recognize unique, individual interests. Children have many opportunities throughout the day to choose these hands-on activities and use the materials to experiment and create, both independently and in small groups. Active engagement with attentive and responsive adults, in combination with an inviting environment, provide our children with a base of experience for interpreting their world.

POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL SCHOOL READINESS ACTION STEPS

1. Adopt and align established Office of Head Start (OHS) preschool child goals from the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, establishing clear school readiness goals within and across domains.
 - a. Become familiar with the specific goals in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, State early learning standards, and Local Education Agency (LEA) expectations.
 - b. Compare OHS child outcome goals with the LEA expectations, and State Early Learning Goals.
 - c. Communicate with relevant partners;
 - d. Determine if and how program curriculum-targeted skills and knowledge address (align with) established goals;
 - e. Determine if and how ongoing child assessment tools and procedures address (align with) established goals.
2. Create and implement a plan of action for achieving our established school readiness goals:
 - a. Improve the quality of teacher-child interactions;
 - b. Implement evidence-based teaching practices;
 - c. Increase engagement, communication, and inclusion of parents and families to

- support children's school readiness;
 - d. Provide effective professional development so all staff understand how they support school readiness;
 - e. Implement effective transitions and increase continuity through kindergarten and the primary grades.
- 3. Assess child progress on an ongoing basis and aggregate and analyze data at multiple times throughout the year:
 - a. Take advantage of mid-point aggregation and analysis so that our program has opportunities to make changes that can make meaningful school readiness differences for currently enrolled children. It is important for our program to aggregate and analyze data at least three times per year. Therefore, we will collect data that can be aggregated at the program level.
 - b. Aggregate and analyze child assessment data at multiple points across the year and demonstrate program-level child progress using norms or criterion references. Norm references means that results are compared to the results of a similar group of people and ranked in relation to others. Criterion-referenced mean results are compared to a set standard or criteria.
 - c. Maintain the use of information from ongoing child assessment to inform teachers and parents/families on how best to individualize for each child's continued development and learning, assessing child progress on an ongoing basis across domains.
- 4. Examine our data for patterns of progress for groups of children in order to revise, or develop and implement plans for program improvement:
 - a. Program improvements may include professional development adjustments, including specificity, intensity, frequency, and type of training;
 - b. Improving communication and engagement with families;
 - c. Intensifying curriculum supports or implementation; or
 - d. Other similarly responsive efforts based on the analysis of our program's data.
 - e. Examine the patterns of progress and outcomes (achieved goals) for groups of children served by the program. For example, this may include (but is not limited to):
 - i. By age;
 - ii. By rates of attendance;
 - iii. By program settings and/or options;
 - iv. By language groups;
 - v. By child, family, or community risk factors

MULTICULTURAL PRACTICES

Our program supports inclusive and culturally responsive practices. These practices include an awareness of the diverse experiences, strengths, and needs of children, families, and staff. Program practices are built on positive and nurturing relationships and interactions that are

culturally and linguistically responsive and affirm children’s backgrounds, experiences, and abilities (e.g., culture, language, ability, family context).

Equity means providing fair and supportive learning environments so that all children and families have access to the opportunities and supports they need to be successful. Equity includes ensuring:

- A welcoming and nurturing environment where children, families, and staff feel valued, respected, and supported, and where they experience a sense of belonging within the program.
- Resources, opportunities, systems, policies, and supports that promote children’s learning and development and support families, staff, and providers in reaching their goals.
- Program-level protective, promotive, and supportive factors, including effective and inclusive leadership and governance practices. This also includes meaningful parent and family engagement; developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching and learning practices; and access to high-quality health and behavioral health services for children, families, and staff.

DUAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

A dual language learner is a child who is learning two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language (Head Start Multicultural Principles, 2023). Our program and staff support the home language promotion and acquisition of English by:

1. Intentionally planning to support children who are dual language learners.
2. Using planned verbal strategies to help children who are DLLs develop their home language skills while acquiring English language skills.
3. Using planned non-verbal strategies to support home language development and the learning of English.
4. Intentionally using books to promote home language development.
5. Using inclusive practices to promote the full engagement of children whose home language is ASL/sign language.

TRAUMA-INFORMED EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICES

Trauma-informed early childhood practices are essential for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all children in Polk County, especially those who have experienced or are experiencing trauma. Trauma can significantly impact a young child's development, behavior, and learning. By implementing trauma-informed practices, our early childhood educators can help these children heal, build resilience, and thrive. Polk County Schools Preschool Program supports the following key principles:

1. **Safety:** Creating a physically and emotionally safe environment where children feel secure and protected.
2. **Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Building strong, positive relationships with children and their families based on trust and honesty.
3. **Choice, Control, and Empowerment:** Giving children choices and control over their experiences to foster a sense of agency.
4. **Collaboration and Mutuality:** Working collaboratively with children and families to develop individualized support plans when needed.

WE SUPPORT CHILDREN EXPERIENCING TRAUMA BY:

1. **Building Strong Relationships:**
 - Spending quality one-on-one time with each child in our class.
 - Using positive reinforcement and encouragement.
 - Being patient and understanding.
 - Offering physical comfort, such as hugs.
2. **Creating a Safe and Predictable Environment:**
 - Establishing consistent routines and schedules.
 - Creating a calm and organized classroom.
 - Minimizing stressors and avoiding sudden changes.
3. **Using Positive Discipline Strategies:**
 - Using positive reinforcement and redirection.
 - Avoiding punishment and shaming.
 - Teaching children self-regulation skills through *Conscious Discipline* and *Second Step*.
4. **Promoting Social-Emotional Learning:**
 - Teaching children how to identify and express their emotions.
 - Providing opportunities for social interaction and play.
 - Using books, songs, and games to teach social-emotional skills.
 - Using *Conscious Discipline* strategies
 - Using *Second Step* lessons
5. **Collaborating with Families:**
 - Communicating regularly with families about their child's progress.
 - Sharing information about trauma-informed practices.
 - Providing resources and support to families.
6. **Seeking Professional Development:**
 - Attending workshops and training on trauma-informed practices.
 - Consulting with mental health professionals.
 - Joining professional organizations that support trauma-informed care.

By implementing these strategies, our early childhood educators can create a nurturing and supportive environment that helps our county's youngest learners heal from trauma and reach their full potential.

Educational Freedom Options for Families

At Polk County Schools Preschool program, we are deeply committed to supporting families in making the best educational choices for their children. Inspired by Head Start's recent guidance on educational options, we believe it is vital for every family to have the resources to select the ideal learning environment. Therefore we have developed a strategic plan that highlights not only our program's offerings but also a wide array of educational options available across our county and surrounding areas. We want to ensure that every family feels empowered and informed in their decision-making process.

We invite you to explore these options and our comprehensive plan by clicking the link below.

 [Polk County Preschool's Educational Freedom Options for Families--Polk County ...](#)