



# Great Start Readiness Program

## Family Handbook

part of Michigan PreK for All



These materials were developed in part by a grant from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential.

## Table of Contents

Program Overview . . . . .	2
Eligibility and Enrollment . . . . .	2
Philosophy . . . . .	3
Curriculum . . . . .	3
Developmental Screening . . . . .	3
Ongoing Assessment . . . . .	4
Notice of Program Measurement . . . . .	4
Confidentiality . . . . .	4
Inclusion/Cultural Competence Policy . . . . .	4
Referral Policy . . . . .	5
Daily Schedule . . . . .	5
Rest Time . . . . .	6
Food and Nutrition . . . . .	6
Family Opportunities . . . . .	7
Volunteers . . . . .	7
Transition Support . . . . .	8
Attendance Policy . . . . .	8
Withdrawal . . . . .	8
Weather Policy . . . . .	8
Illness//Health Policy . . . . .	8
Emergencies/Accidents . . . . .	9
Medication Policy . . . . .	9
Abuse/Neglect Reporting . . . . .	10
Discipline/Guidance Policy . . . . .	10
Dispute Resolution . . . . .	11
Licensing Handbook . . . . .	12
Calendar/Hours of Operation . . . . .	12
Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form . . . . .	13

## **Program Overview**

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a statewide, state-funded preschool program. It is part of the PreK for All initiative. It is designed for four-year-old children or those who will be four by September 1 of the program year, and who meet certain income eligibility requirements. The Shiawassee Regional Education Service District (SRES D) administers the GSRP program. This program is available in our community through our partnership with the SRES D.

## **Eligibility and Enrollment**

The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) provides enrollment guidelines and prioritization mandates for which we follow. To be considered for enrollment and tuition assistance, families must apply by submitting a confidential application and documents to verify income. Children that meet the income eligibility will be the first to be enrolled. Children that are over-income but have risk factors will be held until later into the summer to assure that all income eligible children are found and secured a place in the program.

Per Child Care Licensing and MiLEAP, all children will also need an immunization record on file by the first day of school (or a waiver), a physical health appraisal form signed by a doctor, documentation of the child's date of birth (preferably the child's birth certificate) and emergency information.

## **Early Education Philosophy**

The philosophy of our program is to enrich each child's life socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally. Our classrooms promote an atmosphere of acceptance. We strive to provide safe and nurturing environments where the individual needs of children can be addressed, and all children can flourish and grow under the guidance of a highly qualified teaching team.

Our program emphasizes teaching skills geared to each child's stage of readiness and development. Our approach to learning recognizes that children learn by doing. We recognize the tremendous capacity and desire of the young child to discover and explore their environment through hands-on activities using real-life experiences and materials. Our teachers take pride in helping children develop an overall feeling of competence, autonomy, and positive self-concept by challenging and supporting them as active learners. Children are encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible.

Our staff also believes that each family brings their values, language, diversity and traditions into the program. We, therefore, recognize the importance of forming a partnership with families. We strive to promote home/school relationships that are enhanced through open communication and activities. We strive to offer families opportunities for involvement that promote their roles as partners in their child's education.

## **Curriculum**

Our classrooms implement the research led Connect 4 Learning<sup>®</sup> preschool curriculum where children are active learners, supported and challenged by adults. Connect 4 Learning<sup>®</sup> balances all domains of early learning, including mathematics, science, literacy and social-emotional development within a consistent daily schedule. Both play and academic learning occur daily in the Connect 4 Learning<sup>®</sup> classroom. The curriculum consists of six units that address 140 measurable learning objectives and supports children's development of 10 fundamental thinking processes. Each of these objectives aligns with state early learning standards and seamlessly integrates child-centered activities with teacher-led instruction.

## **Developmental Screening**

All children enrolled in our preschool classrooms will participate in a developmental screening within the first 30 days. Our program uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening tool. The ASQ looks at each child's strengths and educates families about developmental milestones while incorporating families' expert knowledge about their child. Staff will discuss the results with each family and note any recommended follow up.

## **Ongoing Assessment**

Our preschool classrooms utilize the HighScope<sup>®</sup> COR Advantage to record observations and notes about children's actions, interactions and conversations throughout the year. This ongoing assessment information is used to help create lesson plans, while targeting specific skills in the classroom. Families will receive a written COR Advantage report at least twice during the school year.

## **Notice of Program Measurement**

Our program is required to work with the Michigan Department of Education to measure the effect of the statewide Great Start Readiness Program. Data about your child is reported and analyzed to support continuous program improvement. Data is confidential and will not be shared with others in any way that your child or family could be identified. For any questions, you may contact:

Michigan Department of Lifelong Education Advancement and Potential, Office of Great Start, 608 W. Allegan, PO Box 3008, Lansing, MI 48909 or 517-241-7004.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

Every child and parent in the program deserves privacy and respect. Parents can be assured that all information regarding children and families is kept in strict confidence by staff. Student information is gathered in accordance with the Michigan Department of

Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) requirements for GSRP. Licensing has access to all licensing-required child records. Parents/legal guardians have the right to look at or ask for a copy of his/her child's educational record (unless a court order denies such access). Anyone else requesting information must get written consent from the parent/legal guardian.

## **Inclusion/Cultural Competence Policy**

Our staff believe ALL children benefit by interacting and socializing with their peers in a high-quality learning environment. We are committed to promoting learning, fostering growth, and ensuring the health and safety of all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, family composition, socio-economic status, education, immigration status, religion, language, occupation, home, interests, skills or developmental needs. We offer an inclusive early childhood program, which strives to promote acceptance, understanding, and development of all children and all families. We believe it is important to respect and value all families represented in our program and beyond our community. Some of the strategies we use to promote family cultures include: inviting families to contribute to the classroom (materials, reading, share/ demonstrate a skill or hobby, planning events), displaying family pictures, providing educational materials in the classroom that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures (books, dress-up clothes, puppets, dolls, food and kitchen utensils, music).

We also believe all children develop at different rates and attain skills at different times. We strive to develop appropriate activities to meet each child's unique needs. Children are not excluded or expelled because of the need for additional developmental, medical or behavioral support.

Our program has access through the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District (SRESA) to speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and social work services for all identified and eligible children per their written Individual Education Plan (IEP). See the referral policy below for more information about how a family may access additional consultation or services for their child.

## **Referral Policy**

If staff or family have any concerns about how a child is developing and/or progressing, a meeting will be held. This meeting (known as a staffing or consultation) will include the family, teacher, program coordinator and/or support services staff. Families will decide what, if any, next steps should be taken to address the area of concern. Next steps may include any of the following: different learning strategies, further assessments/evaluation, modified daily schedule, etc. Please do not hesitate to discuss any concerns you may have about your child's development with your child's teacher.

## **Daily Schedule**

Our goal is for your child to feel secure and independent, to move from one activity to another as easily and confidently as possible. We develop the daily schedule with these goals in mind and follow the schedule each day.

15-20 minutes	<b>Welcome and Read Aloud:</b> Children and adults together begin the day with sharing and announcements and often a welcome song. The Read Aloud portion of this daily activity introduces high-quality books to children and each book is carefully chosen to support children's learning, engagement and conversation about the unit of study.
10 minutes	<b>Planning:</b> Children indicate their plans to adults in a place where conversations can occur and where people and materials are visible.
60 minutes	<b>Free Choice Play at Learning Centers:</b> Children make many choices about where and how to use materials. Adults participate as partners in child-initiated play and encourage children's problem solving both with materials and during times of social conflict.
5 minutes	<b>Clean Up:</b> Children and adults clean up together.
10 minutes	<b>Recall:</b> Gathered in small group settings, children choose Work Time experiences to talk about and reflect upon.
10-15 minutes	<b>Connect:</b> This brief large group time typically is used to introduce or review concepts and games that will be featured in Small Group Time.
30 minutes	<b>Outside Time:</b> Children have many choices on outdoor activities supervised by adults.
45 minutes	<b>Lunch:</b> Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Adults eat and have meaningful conversations with the children. Children are encouraged to develop independence by disposal of leftovers and pushing in their own chairs
45-50 minutes	<b>Quiet/Resting Time:</b> Resting is a time for sleeping or quiet on-your-own play.
15-30 minutes	<b>Small Group Time:</b> This adult-initiated time gathers 4-5 children and a teacher together. The lessons are designed to support each

child's development. Small group lessons include many games and fun activities for a teacher and children to work on together.

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 15 minutes    | <b>Snack:</b> An optional nutritious snack is provided. Children are encouraged to develop independence by disposing of their own leftovers, napkins, cups, etc., and pushing in their own chairs. |
| 45-60 minutes | <b>Plan/Free Choice/Cleanup/Recall</b>   |
| 5-10 minutes  | <b>Fast Focus:</b> This brief large group time reinforces the learning for the day. These lessons include many fun math games, songs and often alphabet letter introduction or review.             |
| 30 minutes    | <b>Outdoor time</b>  |

### **Rest Time**

Children attending a program of 5 hours or more are required to participate in a quiet afternoon rest time. This time will be no longer than one hour. Resting is a time for sleeping or quiet, solitary, on-your-own cot play. The room will be darkened, and each child will be encouraged to rest quietly on his/her own cot or mat for this period of time. You are welcome to send your own small pillow, small blanket and/or an item to cuddle with, if you choose. Children who do not fall asleep during rest time are provided quiet learning activities.

### **Food and Nutrition**

Nutrition is extremely important to your child's healthy physical and mental development. Helping our children develop healthy eating habits and offering a diverse set of food experiences while they are young, can lead to life-long benefits. As an important part of our program, it is our pleasure to provide highly nutritious meals and snacks. Our program participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and follows their recommendations for daily nutrition components and portions. Families will not be charged for any meals or snacks that are served as part of the regular school day. It is preferred that all children eat the meals that are provided. Classroom adults also join children for meals and eat the same foods, offering positive adult models of nutritious eating habits. **If your child has any food allergies or other special dietary needs documented by the child's doctor, please discuss this with the program director and teacher.**

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*Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## **Family Opportunities**

Our program strives to create a strong home-school partnership by providing families a variety of ways to be involved. We value family input and feedback and fully understand that communication and positive relationships are keys to successful partnerships. As a parent, you have the opportunity to become involved in your child's education in a variety of ways.

- **Home Visits/Family Conferences**: Preschool families participate in two home visits and two family conferences during each school year (Fall/Spring). The teaching team uses these opportunities to provide program information and individualized activities, promote open communication, ease transitions, develop child/family goals, and review your child's growth, strengths and opportunities.
- **Shiawassee Great Start Family Coalition**: This group is interested in early childhood planning and decision-making in our county. The group meets monthly. It is a great way to learn more about community events, resources and network with other families. Please follow us on social media @GreatStartShiawassee or visit [www.SRES.D.org](http://www.SRES.D.org) to learn more. You can also contact the Shiawassee Great Start Collaborative Director at 989-725-2581.
- **School Readiness Advisory Committee**: This is a county-wide advisory group that meets 1 time per year to review and advise decision-makers on GSRP recruitment, access, enrollment and child outcomes information at the county level. The committee is made up of a diverse group of school staff and parents. If you have an interest in serving on this committee please contact the Shiawassee Great Start Collaborative Director at 989-725-2581

## **Volunteers**

Research shows children whose families are involved in school activities do better in school. Occasionally, staff will specifically ask for family volunteers for special activities like field trips, parties, etc. All volunteers must be supervised by classroom staff at all times. Volunteers attending field trips will be required to have a completed ICHAT form on file and a DHS Central Registry Clearance on file prior to volunteering, as there may be times that the volunteer is not going to be directly supervised by the center staff. This applies to grandparents and other important people that may wish to participate in a child's educational experiences.



## **Transition Support**

Our staff is dedicated to making the transition from GSRP to your child's next classroom as smooth and as positive as possible. You and your family will be guided through the process with information and support from our staff. Your child will have the opportunity to see and discuss the many thrilling things about their next steps. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

## **Attendance**

Our program strongly believes in the importance of regular attendance. Many studies have shown that preschool students who attend regularly are significantly more likely than chronically absent preschoolers to be ready for kindergarten and to attend school regularly in later grades. We would like to help you in supporting good attendance habits in your child. We fully understand that circumstances arise where your child may not be at school. **If your child is going to be absent, it is very important that you call and inform the teacher or office.** You may call and leave a message at any time of the night or early morning.

## **Withdrawal**

It is the expectation that all children enrolled in our program will complete the full school year. However, if you need to withdraw your child from the program, for reasons such as a family move, chronic or severe illness limiting participation, please notify us as soon as possible. If a child has been absent from the program for more than 10 consecutive days without notice, a letter will be sent to you asking if you intend to continue in the program. If we do not hear from you within the time stated in the letter, your child will be dropped from the program and another child on the waiting list will be enrolled.

## **Weather Policy**

If severe weather were to arise, your child's safety is the first consideration. The following is the policy for bad weather conditions:

If Owosso Public School is closed or delayed due to inclement weather, the program will be closed. Please listen to radio stations serving the area for all school weather related announcements.

Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. We go outside for recess daily, weather permitting. A light jacket in the Fall and Spring is highly recommended for those chilly mornings. Snow pants, boots, hats, and mittens can be

kept in your child's locker during the snowy season. **LABEL** all clothing that is brought to school.

## **Illness/Health Plan**

As part of the program requirements, each child will be asked to have on file a current Health Appraisal that is less than 12 months old at the time of enrollment. It is also required that all children be up to date on their immunizations. Support and assistance in connecting with the local Health Department and or a physician will be provided as needed, but the immunization law and health requirements will be strictly applied for the safety and benefit of all. All health records will be reviewed. These documents keep the program compliant with childcare laws and help to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and staff. Each fall we are required to report vaccination information and waivers to the State of Michigan. If your child is not current, you will receive a pre-generated letter indicating what vaccinations are needed and due dates.

As an additional part of our program, we also welcome our local health department here to provide annual vision and hearing screenings as an important service in helping families support the healthy development of their child. Based on those results, the Health Department may make referrals or recommendations to families and provide assistance in linking services between health care professionals and our families.

If you believe your child is ill, we encourage safeguarding the health of all our children by requesting that families follow these guidelines when deciding if a child is well enough to attend. In addition, families will be contacted by phone to pick up the child, if he/she becomes ill at school, which may include exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

Symptom	The child may return to school when . . . .
Fever	Fever registers 98.6 degrees F without the use of medication and the child is acting normally well
Running Nose	Thick, yellow or green discharge clears up
Earache	A physician examines the ears and recommends the child return to school
Rash	A physician determines the cause and recommends the child return to school
Sore Throat	A physician determines the cause and that no strep or communicable infection exists and the child may return to school
Pale or Flushed Skin	Color returns to normal
Red or Watery Eyes	Eyes return to normal and no infection exists

Vomiting or Diarrhea	No further symptoms exists and the child is eating normally without causing upset stomach, vomiting or diarrhea
Draining Sore	Until draining stops
Communicable Disease/Condition (e.g. chicken pox, mumps, ringworm, influenza)	The physician approves returning to school. Please call the lead teacher to report this problem even if the condition first appears during a vacation break.

## **Emergencies/Accidents/Incidents**

In the event of an injury, accident, incident, or medical emergency our immediate concern is to aid the child/children. The family of the child will be contacted. If we are unable to make contact and emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to the hospital specified on your emergency card. Your authorization for the program to take emergency medical measures deemed necessary is part of this agreement. An accident report will be completed and filed per childcare licensing guidelines. Incidents requiring notification to Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), such as building evacuations or children requiring medical treatment, will be reported both verbally and in writing as required.

## **Medication Policy**

Written permission by the parent or guardian AND your child's doctor is the only way we can administer medication to your child. According to Michigan Law (MCL 380.1178), it will only be under the following conditions:

- All medications must be in the original/prescription container
- The dosage must be clearly stated on the front
- The prescription name must be listed on the container and form
- The child's name must also appear on the prescription container.

When the family brings in medication, it must be hand-delivered to the teacher and must be accompanied by the "Medication Permission and Instructions for Child Care Homes/Child Care Center Form," as developed by the State of Michigan Department of Human Services—OCAL-1243. All medications must be logged on this form as well.

Medications are stored in an area that is out of reach of children and accessible only to trained, designated staff.

## **Abuse/Neglect Policy**

Act 238 of the Public Acts of 1975, known as the Child Protection Law, requires that any school administrator, teacher, counselor, nurse, school social worker, or childcare provider, report all cases of suspected physical or sexual abuse or neglect of children less than 18 years old. Therefore, if any staff has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been the victim of abuse or neglect, they must proceed as follows:

- Make an immediate verbal report to the Protective Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Notify the Program Coordinator of the suspected abuse/neglect.
- Within 72 hours, file a written report with Protective Services on the approved form, available from the administrator.

## **Discipline/Guidance Policy**

Young children are just learning how to get along in a group. The role of the teacher is to help children learn acceptable ways to achieve the goals they seek. Teachers teach children about which behaviors to maintain or avoid and which alternative behaviors may be more successful. The overall discipline policy in our program aims to help children learn to develop internal behavior controls and self-regulation. The staff uses specific strategies to help children move towards self-control. Young children need a safe, positive and consistent environment. In order to provide this for all children, the staff in our program keep student behavior expectations developmentally appropriate. The program wide expectations for all children that are taught, modeled and reviewed are: Be respectful, be safe and be a team player. You will see these posted in our classrooms with these representations:



Be Respectful



Be Safe



Be a Team Player

Other positive guidance techniques include:

- There are many choices available
- Staff members set clear limits for children's behavior
- A consistent daily routine is established
- Staff model, teach and provide practice for respectful ways to interact with others and use materials
- Staff members plan for transitions

- Staff work in partnership with families to meet children's individual social, emotional and behavior support needs

If a dispute or conflict arises, staff members will use the following conflict resolution steps:

- Approach the situation calmly
- Acknowledge the feelings of all children
- Gather information about the conflict
- Restate the problem
- Ask for ideas for solutions, and choose one together
- Be prepared to give follow-up support

The use of physical punishment is not permitted in our program by anyone, including a family member, guardian or parent. Please understand that each situation is different as is each child. Although we have a discipline policy and trained staff who strive to support and protect all children at all times, there are times in which the classroom teacher may notify parents of problems that cannot be resolved or continue on a daily basis. It is our goal to work in partnership with families, to develop strategies and plans that work toward the best possible outcome for the child.

### **Dispute Resolution Policy**

We strive to work in a positive partnership with all our families and strive to practice good problem-solving skills. However, there are times when a concern or complaint about your child's program may arise. If you have a concern, the best place to start is with your child's classroom teacher. Talk about your concern with him/her to find a solution. If an agreeable solution cannot be found, please address your concern with the program administrator. If necessary, the complaint can be brought to the Noah's Ark Board. Finally, if still unresolved the complaint can be brought to the Shiawassee RESD Early Childhood Contact. The SRES, as GSRP grantee, has the final authority in the resolution of all GSRP related disputes.

### **Licensing Notebook**

Our program maintains a LARA licensing notebook of all inspection reports, special investigations, and all related corrective action plans. This notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours. Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from the past two years are available on the Michigan Childcare website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).


## Calendar/Hours of Operation

Our Lions and Parrots GSRP Classroom operates Monday through Thursday from 8:30am-3:30pm



# Noah's Ark PreK Calendar

2025 - 2026 School Days



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### 2025

#### September

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
★	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

#### October

M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

#### November

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

#### December

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

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### 2026

#### January

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

#### February

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27

#### March

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

#### April

M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	


#### May

M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

#### June

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	★	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			


### Program Expectations



Be Respectful



Be a Team Player



Be Safe

### Important Information

<b>August</b> 20 Open House  <b>September</b> 8 First Day of Preschool  <b>October</b> 31 No Preschool / No Childcare  <b>November</b> 26 - 28 No Preschool 27 - 28 No Childcare	<b>December</b> 22 - 31 No Preschool 24 - 26 No Childcare  <b>January</b> 1 - 2 No Preschool 1 No Childcare  <b>February</b> 16 No Preschool/ No Childcare  <b>March</b> 30 - 31 No Preschool	<b>April</b> 1 - 3 No Preschool 3 No Childcare  <b>May</b> 25 No Preschool / No Childcare  <b>June</b> 4 Last Day of Preschool
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**\*No Childcare available January 2nd as this will be Staff Professional Development**

I understand that the policies describe important information regarding the preschool program for which my child is enrolled. If at any time, I have questions regarding these policies, I will consult a staff member.

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the policies contained in the Family Handbook.

I agree to follow all rules, procedures, and policies listed in the Family Handbook.

As a parent/guardian I understand the importance of the family-school partnership and agree to participate in two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences during the school year.

I agree to keep emergency cards up-to-date and notify the staff of any changes to my address, telephone, emergency or work information.

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Child's Name

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Parent/Guardian Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Date