

**THE ALABAMA PRE-K CHILD AND FAMILY**

The First Class Pre-K program does not discriminate against any child or family based on race or color, national origin, religion, class, gender, disability, or income. The First Class program encourages diversity in each of its classrooms. Any First Class grant recipient found to discriminate will be immediately defunded from the First Class program.

The intent of the program is to provide state supported, high quality, voluntary pre-K for Alabama's 4-year-olds whose parents chose for them to participate.

**CF 1 *Pre-Kindergarten Child*****CF 1.1 Age Requirement**

Children must be four years of age on or before September 1, based on acceptable documentation, such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries. Children who are 5 years of age and are eligible for Kindergarten **may not** enroll in Alabama's First Class Pre-K program.

**CF 1.2 Residency Requirement**

The child must be an Alabama resident and maintain residency while enrolled. For purposes of this program Alabama resident is defined as a child who resides in the state of Alabama, with proof of residence required (e.g. current utility bill). School systems may restrict residency to their school districts, but a written policy adopted by the local Board of Education must be in place in order to restrict enrollment.

**CF 1.3 Required Health Information**

Upon admission into First Class, the pre-K provider shall ensure that evidence of age-appropriate, up-to-date immunizations (blue card) or signed religious beliefs affidavits against such immunizations are maintained on-site for each child.

**CF 1.4 Children with Special Needs**

States and local school districts are required by federal law to educate preschool age children with special needs in typical early childhood programs alongside children who do not have special needs to the maximum extent appropriate. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires programs to include children with disabilities in pre-K classrooms side-by-side with their typically developing peers (Appendix Q.) See DECE website for referral process.

**CF 2 *Parent/Family Involvement Expectations***

First Class Pre-K programs shall provide meaningful opportunities for families to be involved in their child's education. First Class programs shall develop a comprehensive plan for family involvement to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. An annual calendar specifying the ways parents may earn hours and the number of hours earned specified is due October 1<sup>st</sup> and will be reviewed by the First Class Monitor. This calendar should be given to all pre-K families. A calendar outlining family involvement opportunities should be shared monthly with your First Class Pre-K families and your First Class Monitor.

Family participation in the OSR First Class Pre-K program is expected. Families are responsible for completing 12 participation hours each school year. Examples of ways to participate are attending the family orientation, completion of the ASQ-3, attending field trips, volunteering in the classroom, attending parent conferences, attending enrichment meetings, participating in IEP meetings and completing take-home activities. Teachers must specify the amount of time a parent will earn when working with their child on a project at home. When the project is returned to school, the teacher will document the amount of time the parent has earned and record it in the parent involvement log (see Appendix M). Children may **not** be dismissed from OSR classrooms due to lack of parent involvement.

### CF 2.1 Parent Programming

The following are examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:

1. Home visits, including home visitation programs such as HIPPY, Parents as Teachers;
2. Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;
3. Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;
4. Parent education; Parent cafes
5. Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program;
6. Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular service day.

### CF 2.2 Family Orientation

All OSR programs are required to have a family orientation meeting within the first 20 working days of the school year. However, OSR recognizes the importance of having an orientations prior to the start of school and encourages programs to conduct them in this manner. A list of topics to discuss at this meeting is found in Appendix L. Parent attendance at orientation is mandatory and must be documented on the Family Involvement Sign-In Sheet (Appendix K).

### CF 2.3 Parent/ Teacher Conferences

At least two individual conferences per year between the lead teacher and parent/guardian are required. The first conference should be held after the October GOLD checkpoint but prior to December 15<sup>th</sup>. The second conference should be held after the May GOLD checkpoint and prior to May 31st. Both conferences should be documented in each child's on-site file by using the Teaching Strategies GOLD Family Conference Form.

## CF 3 Student Attendance

### CF 3.1 Procedures for Student Attendance

Regular attendance ensures pre-K children benefit from participating in a quality early education. Regular attendance is a school readiness skill, in addition to a good measure of parent engagement. Pre-K providers are required to formulate written procedures for addressing issues regarding attendance and tardiness. These procedures should be shared with families during orientation. They will also be reviewed on site by the OSR Monitor. **Daily attendance records should be maintained on-site and include the dates when a child is absent and the dates/times when a child arrives late or leaves early.** The attendance procedures should specify actions to be taken by the pre-K provider if attendance issues become problematic. For example, the procedures could require a phone call to parents after three unexcused absences or tardies; a letter to parents from the director after six absences or tardies; a parent conference after eight or nine absences; referral to the First Class Coach after 10 absences.

The goal of the attendance policy is to assist families in establishing and maintaining regular school attendance patterns.

### CF 3.2 Chronic Attendance Issues

**Chronic tardiness** is defined as late arrival or early departure more than 2 days per week. A definition of tardiness should be developed by the provider. A five to ten minute drop off time is an acceptable part of a tardiness definition.

**Chronic absenteeism** is defined as missing more than 4 days per month without medical or other reasonable explanation. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism may also be defined by an established regular attendance pattern(s), e.g., if a child is late every Monday or absent every Tuesday or leaves early every Friday.

### CF 3.3 Dismissal Due to Chronic Tardiness or Chronic Absenteeism

Providers are required to document efforts to assist parents/guardians of children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early in improving attendance. A meeting with the parent/guardian should occur to determine the reason(s) for the problem and identify ways to resolve the problem. Inability to resolve the problem after documented interventions should be referred for dismissal consideration. Please send a written request for dismissal to the First Class Regional Director. The following information should be included:

1. Number of school days so far in the year
2. Number of days the child has been absent and/or
3. Number of days the child has been tardy
4. Information regarding parent conferences to discuss tardiness and/or absenteeism and ways that were discussed to increase attendance and/or decrease tardiness

**The program may only drop the child from the class roll if approval is granted and received, in writing, from the First Class Regional Director.**

**Consecutive Absenteeism** is defined as not attending class for 10 consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable explanation. Children who are consecutively absent **must be dismissed** and removed from the OSR roster. OSR approval should be requested in writing and sent to the First Class Regional Director. The following information should be included in the request:

1. Dates the child was absent from the program
2. Date teacher/director contacted parents with concerns
3. Date of documented parent meeting to discuss the absenteeism (if meeting was held)
4. Last date the child attended the program (this will be the dismissal date)

**The program may only drop the child from the class roll if approval is granted and received, in writing, from the First Class Regional Director.**

### CF 3.4 Attendance expectations for children receiving special education services in locations other than the First Class Pre-K classroom

Occasionally, it will be necessary for children to receive special education services outside of the pre-K classroom. They may be provided in other sites in the community such as Head Start centers and elementary schools. It is acceptable for children to be absent from the pre-K program to receive these services as long as they are in attendance for at least 75% of the school week. The pre-K teacher should have documentation from the parent or

local school system stating where the services will be provided (location), the frequency of the services (number of days per week) and the duration of the services (30 minutes, an hour etc.) The teacher should also document the actual amount of time the student will be absent to ensure that the child will be in attendance for 75% of the school week. This information, along with a copy of the child's current IEP, should be kept on file in the pre-K classroom.

#### **CF 4 Discipline**

##### **CF 4.1 Student Discipline**

No employee shall use any form of corporal punishment (which includes but is not limited to paddling, striking, pulling, pushing, swatting, placing hands on, or hitting) as a method of discipline in the First Class program. **No** use of time-out will be allowed. Examples of appropriate practices include: redirection, encouragement, problem solving, effective planning, calming strategies and smooth, engaging transitions.

##### **CF 4.2 Individualized Student Interventions**

Parents are required to sign a Parent Contract (Appendix D) upon enrollment of their child into the First Class Pre-K Program. OSR recognizes that there is a broad range of abilities considered developmentally appropriate for 4- year-old children. Once children have an appropriate amount of time to acclimate to the classroom environment, typical differences in behavior and skills will be apparent. If a teacher notices a child has significant behavioral, developmental or health issues, individualized interventions may be necessary. Information from the parent-completed ASQ-3 combined with information from the GOLD assessment may be used to substantiate the need for a parent conference to discuss a referral to the local school system's special education program for services and supports.

#### **Programs must follow the procedures outlined below regarding modified attendance**

##### **CF 4.3 Procedures for Modified Attendance (requires prior approval)**

In some instances it may be necessary to have a student attend a modified school day to be successful. Examples may include a child who is extremely disruptive or difficult to manage during certain parts of the day. A child may have a hard time transitioning to school in the morning so it may be suggested that he temporarily come in 30 minutes after school starts in order to miss all of the chaos that goes on with lots of children arriving at the same time. If naptime occurs at the end of the day and a child is very disruptive during that time, he may temporarily be allowed to end his day prior to naptime.

Modified attendance (i.e. less than 6.5 hours of instructional time a day) requires prior approval from the First Class Regional Director. Modified attendance should be used in conjunction with child specific interventions and documented responses to the intervention. A referral for special education testing should also be discussed with the parent and documented. Programs must contact their First Class Coach and Regional Director to discuss requests for modified attendance and the submission of the necessary documentation detailed below. Requests for a modified day should include the following information:

1. Specific reason(s) a modified day is being requested.
2. Interventions already implemented to help the child benefit from the program, including any immediate suspensions.
3. Information including all documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes documenting ongoing involvement with the parents, including the discussion regarding a special education referral.

4. Behavioral documentation and instructional observations of the child supporting the modified attendance request
5. Documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel (if the child has an active IEP,) results of implemented interventions, and status of special education referral if applicable
6. Documentation of consultation with any other outside resources (i.e. child's pediatrician, counseling services, or local school system, etc.)
7. A written schedule including the length of the child's proposed day, proposed daily schedule including times and the activities during this time period and the justification for the proposed schedule
8. A written plan describing how the child's attendance will be increased over time to the typical 6.5 hour day.

#### **CF 4.4 Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Development**

Preschool expulsions and suspensions have long-term implications. The U.S. Department of Education and The Department of Health and Human Services warns that "young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as ten times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not" (ED/HHS, 2014, p.3).

First Class OSR Pre-K supports interventions for promoting social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children. Universal Interventions include:

- Positive adult/child interactions
- High quality supportive environments
- Program Guidelines
- Classroom guidelines
- Ages and Stages parent completed questionnaire (ASQ-3)
- Coaching support
- Family/Teacher Conferencing

Secondary Interventions may include:

- Targeted social/emotional supports (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA))
- Referral to Help Me Grow (2-1-1)
- Special Education specialist consultation
- Family/Teacher Conferencing

Occasionally a child may exhibit serious social/emotional/behavioral concerns. In severe instances when a child is in danger of harming himself/herself or others, he/she should be moved to a safe area to prevent the escalation of the behavior. Once the child has regained control and the situation has been diffused he/she may return to the classroom. Parents should be immediately notified concerning the incident and a conference should be scheduled. If behavioral concerns persist alternative services and resources to assist the child and the family should be pursued. Your First Class Regional Director can provide information concerning community resources and support.