

# **Head Start Program Orientation Transcript**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Education Service Center, Region 20 Head Start Program Orientation. This self-paced module provides a quick overview of the collaboration that exists between the ESC-20 Head Start program and partnership school districts. The course touches on the program's comprehensive approach in assisting children and families, requirements and compliance. Participants will become acquainted with key ESC-20 Head Start staff, their roles and responsibilities, and their relationship with the school district's staff. Finally, to frame the significance of the program, a quick look at Head Start's inception and historical presence is provided.

This course also provides pertinent documents downloadable from the Resources tab. You may want to take a moment to acquaint yourself with these.

## **History of the Head Start Program**

Lyndon Baines Johnson, known as LBJ when President of the United States, grew up in Johnson City, Texas. When he was four years old, LBJ attended a one-room schoolhouse taught by one teacher. Here he would learn to read. From 1926-1930, LBJ attended Southwest Texas State Teachers College to pursue his teaching education. During a private tour of the LBJ Ranch, his daughter Luci Baines Johnson shared that her father felt it a great accomplishment to have been a teacher. Tucked away in his wallet, she said, was a copy of his teaching certificate which he carried throughout his life.

LBJ excelled in student teaching and was assigned to a small, rural school in the impoverished area of Cotulla, Texas. In November 1963, LBJ was sworn in as President of the United States. To the presidency he brought his personal experiences and convictions that led to the War on Poverty.

In 1965, in front of that one-room schoolhouse he had attended, President Johnson signed into law the Elementary & Secondary Education Act, or ESEA. Seated next to him was his teacher Mrs. Kathryn Deadrich Loney. ESEA included the creation of Project Head Start, as it was initially named. President Johnson envisioned a program that would provide a promising beginning for children and families living in poverty. For more than 50 years, this federally funded program has focused on children learning and families improving their quality of life. By 2016, the Head Start program had provided approximately 34 million children with the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological support needed to succeed.

The Head Start logo clearly reflects the vision of Head Start. Designed in 1965 by Peter Masters, the logo gives the program a cohesive national identity. By incorporating blocks, the designer promotes development and growth through toys used in learning. The red, white, and blue colors represent the American flag, and the arrow pointing up symbolizes upward movement.

## **Partners in Education**

To assist in the development of school-ready children in the communities they serve, ESC-20 and 10 local school districts partner together to offer a quality and comprehensive Head Start and Pre-K program. Children ages 3 to 5 years old attend classes in engaging and safe classrooms. One of the many benefits of the partnership model is that both programs capitalize on each other's strengths, thereby providing improved quality educational services for children.

In 1991, the Tri-County Head Start Program began. This initiative is funded for 387 children. The partnership school districts are Bandera ISD (Bandera County), Devine ISD (Medina), Hondo ISD (Medina), Lytle ISD (Atascosa), Medina Valley ISD (Medina) and Natalia ISD (Medina).

The Bexar County Head Start Program began in 2013 and is funded for 480 children. The partnership school districts are Alamo Heights ISD, Somerset ISD, Southside ISD and Southwest ISD.

In partnership school districts, all Head Start children are dually enrolled in the State Pre-K program at the school district and the ESC-20 Head Start program. Each child is a school district child entitled to all the services granted to other grade levels. In addition, children also enrolled in Head Start receive other comprehensive services.

### **What makes Head Start different from the Pre-K program?**

There are various differences between the Head Start and Pre-K programs. Two differences are in their funding and eligibility. Whereas the Head Start program is federally funded, the Pre-K program is funded by the State. As a result, the federal government establishes the eligibility criteria for the Head Start program and the State for the Pre-K program.

For eligibility, the Head Start program considers

- families' poverty income level
- homelessness
- foster care
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The Pre-K program considers

- low income
- language
- homelessness
- military duty
- foster care or adoption
- recipients or nominees of the Star of Texas Award

Other differences occur in the curriculum guidelines and the services each provide. The Pre-K program follows the State Pre-K Curriculum Guidelines and focuses on school readiness through the lens of education. In comparison, Head Start follows the federal Performance Standards, Early Learning Outcomes Framework and Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. Head Start's comprehensive approach focuses on school readiness through the lens of the child's education, nutrition, mental health, dental and health needs, in addition to social services and parent engagement.

## **Head Start and State Pre-K Funding and Effort Model**

One of the many benefits of the partnership model is that both programs capitalize on each other's strengths, thereby providing improved quality educational services for children.

This image illustrates how the State Pre-K program and the federal Head Start program work together to provide comprehensive services that address the children's individual needs.

In a traditional Pre-K education model, the school district provides services for

- counseling
- health
- child nutrition
- special education
- transportation
- education from State-certified teachers and qualified assistants

For every child dually enrolled in Pre-K and Head Start, the school district receives one half day Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funds from the State.

The school district also receives funds from the ESC-20 Head Start program for every child dually enrolled. These funds partially fund the teachers and assistants assigned to work with the program. Because teachers and assistants are partially funded by the program, each signs a "time and effort" statement twice a year to verify their work effort in Head Start.

The Head Start program's comprehensive approach provides added value. Head Start staff coordinates counseling, health, nutrition and special education services while also providing

- Medical and dental follow up services
- Parent engagement opportunities and resource support
- Classroom learning materials and professional development
- Classroom support for instructional / educational services.

- Safe classrooms and outdoor play areas for children. The school district may also provide materials or funds since the class is also a Pre-K room.

In addition, Head Start provides classroom supplies for each child enrolled in the program. Parents are not requested to bring any supplies other than a change of clothing for the child, a towel or small blanket for rest time, and a backpack or carry bag.

## **Compliance**

Staff responsibilities derive from the federal Head Start Performance Standards. These standards guide everyday implementation and compliance. During the five year funding cycle, programs undergo five federal monitoring reviews to ensure compliance is met and maintained. If a federal review identifies a deficiency in or during the five year funding cycle, the program is in jeopardy of losing the grant. Loss of grant funds means loss of classrooms, services and employment. These losses are at the ESC-20 and partnership school district levels.

The Staff Monthly Responsibility Schedule serves as a structure for planning, completion and documentation of tasks and services required by the Office of Head Start. Each month is outlined with the responsibilities and due dates for the teacher, assistant and the Family Services Associate.

To help teachers and assistants understand their roles, the program has a Roles and Responsibilities document that staff reviews and signs annually. This document details daily routines and compliance duties.

It is critical that all levels of staff keep strict confidentiality of child and family information and records. The family services associate keeps the child's file in a locked file cabinet in the Parent Center on campus and the teacher stores the child's record in a locked file cabinet in the classroom.

Another area of compliance is keeping the adult: to child ratio as established by the Head Start Performance Standards. Each classroom is required to have two full-time staff assigned— a teacher and a teacher assistant.

Children must never be left alone without adult supervision or with one adult in the classroom. The adult: child ratio of 2:(to) 20 or 1:(to)10 must be maintained at all times. Volunteers must never be left alone with children.

Staff cannot step away from their group without adult coverage to replace them first. Active supervision of children in the classroom and outdoor play area is essential. Teachers and assistants should be actively engaged with the children through conversation while in the classroom and on the playground.

### **A Team Approach**

Case management is used to ensure that Head Start staff work collaboratively to give complete attention to the individual needs of the child and family. The desired outcomes of case management is that the child be ready for Kindergarten and the family be engaged in the education and health care of their child.

It takes a team approach to provide the required services and support to families that are outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards. In order to complete all of the required compliance areas, the ESC-20 Head Start program employs key staff who work collaboratively with school district staff.

### **Meet the Team**

As a classroom teacher, my assistant and I are the front line personnel. We know the children's typical behaviors, their health and emotional status.

During the school year, Head Start teachers conduct two home visits to get to know the family in a comfortable setting and engage them in their child's learning. Teachers also conduct two parent-teacher conferences to discuss the child's learning progress. During these meeting with parents we share their child's assessment data and might suggest ways the family can help the child at home.

In the classroom, I use the online tool Teaching Strategies GOLD to monitor the children's progress three times a year. These data reports are used during the home visit or at the parent-teacher conference to inform parents about their child's progress and to engage them in their child's education.

My assistant and I always use positive guidance and treat the children with respect by using nurturing tones and behaviors. Discipline management approaches are never punitive, or used to humiliate or isolate the children.

Children are never spanked, excluded, suspended, or expelled from school.

I maintain a daily schedule visibly posted in the classroom. It helps me establish routines and promotes the educational objectives of the program. Some of our daily activities include large and small groups, learning centers, and child-teacher initiated activities.

My lesson plans include all the required areas identified in the State Pre-K Curriculum Guidelines. They reflect the individual needs of the children as well as the theme, or concepts, being developed. I keep my lesson plans current and accessible.

One important characteristic of our Head Start classroom is that my assistant and I sit with the children during breakfast and lunch meals and engage them in conversation. The three-year-olds eat their meals in the classroom in family style until they are ready to transition to the cafeteria with the four-year-olds. A snack is provided in the classroom in family style for all of the children.

Children with food allergies are listed on a poster visibly placed in the classroom and cafeteria. The poster provides the staff and volunteers a quick reference and awareness of the safety needs of the children suffering food allergies.

Head Start limits children's access to foods of little nutritional value. While parents and guardians are not requested to bring items for holiday parties, they are asked if they would like to donate something of their choice.

After meals, we closely supervise the children as they brush their teeth. Children are provided a toothbrush and toothpaste. We also supervise the children when they wash their hands before meals and after toileting.

For children who are not yet toilet trained, we help the parents and guardians design a toilet training action plan that we all agree on.

My assistant and I are also First Aid and CPR trained and certified. Our classroom is equipped with a First Aid kit that is routinely restocked. We wear back packs with First Aid supplies each time we leave the classroom. Whether going outside to play or to eat at the cafeteria, we are ready to administer minor First Aid or CPR immediately, regardless of the location.

In the classroom, the interior is designed so that I can see the children at all times. My assistant and I keep all of the areas clean and uncluttered. Tall furniture is placed against the wall to avoid falling over. We make sure that electrical plugs are kept in electrical outlets always. Small items that could be potential choke hazards are prohibited in the classroom. Gloves are kept on hand in the event that bodily fluids need to be handled or cleaned up.

My assistant and I are required to follow the adult to child ratio established by the Head Start Performance Standards, that is one adult per 10 children, and 2 adults per every 20 children. Children are never left alone without adult supervision or with only one adult in the classroom.

**As a facilitator,** I work in the areas of nutrition, health and dental, safety, and transportation services. I collaborate closely with the school nurse, child nutritionist, and the facilities and transportation staff to coordinate the services the children need.

**I work as a specialist.** My job entails collaborating with teachers, assistants, counselors and special education staff in the areas of education, wellness, and disabilities services.

- If a child needs support for social or emotional growth, the teacher, parent or guardian may refer the child to the campus counselor for areas of emotional or behavioral concern. Any referral or counseling service is documented in the child's wellness, or "blue folder" and kept in the classroom.

- If a child requires personal needs to be met for their educational success, the teacher, parent or guardian may refer the child to get a special education assessment for documented areas of concern. Documentation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) services delivered by the teacher are kept in the child's disabilities, or "yellow folder," which is kept in the classroom.

My work as a **Family Services Associate** is key. I am assigned to a campus and work directly with the families. If needed, I can provide social service referrals. I closely document any needs the child or family might have. I strive to build supportive relationships with parents or guardians that promote family engagement. Before my position as a Family Service Associate, I too was a Head Start parent. Others in my position are either



current or former Head Start parents or guardians. Because of my first-hand experience and my extensive knowledge of community resources, I am equipped to understand the needs of the families.

As a **class monitor**, I am available to give the Head Start teachers, and in some cases the assistants, a 30-minute daily break.” My role is critical in helping the classrooms stay in compliance with the adult: child ratio of two adults per 17 or 20 children. Additionally, the Head Start program offers me the opportunity to be trained for a Child Development Credential (CDA), which would qualify me to be a classroom assistant someday.

In my role as a **Coordinator**, I work in multiple areas, program design, enrollment, eligibility, compliance, governance, and coordination of services. My responsibilities require that I work closely with campus principals and other key administrators.

## **Professional Development**

Teachers, assistants and class monitors are required to review certain training topics each year. Many of these topics are developed as online training modules that can be accessed 24/7. Find these at the ESC-20 Head Start program website under Staff Courses.

Staff who have been in the program at least one full year need to complete the Essential Components of the Head Start Classroom module annually.

Staff who are new to the program need to complete all of these modules: Bloodborne Pathogens, Child Abuse, Chronic Illness, Family Style Meals, Fire Safety, Hand Washing, Tooth Brushing, Playground Safety, and Terrific Transitions.

Teachers and assistants are required to develop a Professional Development Plan and complete and document 15 hours of professional development each school year. The plan should reflect goals for the improvement of instruction based on data from CLASS observations, Teaching Strategies GOLD, observations or personal growth choice. The Head Start Education Specialists assist teachers and assistants with planning their professional development.

## **Opportunities for Parents or Guardians to Engage**

The Head Start program offers multiple opportunities for parents or guardians to engage and encourages them to volunteer. Where appropriate, volunteers can assist the classroom staff in daily educational routines and learn more about child development. To become a volunteer, parents or guardians must clear a criminal history background check, have the approval of the campus, and attend volunteer training. Volunteers sign in every time they volunteer and keep a written log of what they do in the classroom. Volunteers should never be left alone with children.

Parents can also network with other parents and learn parenting strategies through the Love & Logic Parent Curriculum and Training Program. Family Service Associates are trained in the curriculum and deliver this training to parents.

Parents are encouraged to engage by working with Head Start staff to learn about their child's overall health, as well as being involved with their child's dental and medical follow-up services.

To assist with this, ESC-20 Head Start staff developed a series of online modules that provide nutritional information to parents and teaches children healthy eating habits. Parents or guardians can access these online modules 24/7 for useful information that impacts their daily lives. These modules can be found at the ESC-20 Head Start Program page under Parent Courses. Here are some of the featured topics.

- Child Development & Child Discipline
- Managing Your Money
- Eating Healthy on a Budget
- Child Abuse & Violence Prevention
- Healthy Relationships
- Emergency Preparedness
- Employment Success
- And a variety of other topics on nutrition, health and safety

The Head Start program also offers parents leadership opportunities through program governance, an essential part of the program. The parent's or guardian's engagement in the program helps solidify the direction that the program takes in continuous improvement of learning and services.

For example, the Policy Council offers parents or guardians an opportunity to implement their leadership skills. Much like a school board, the Policy Council is a decision making group made up of parents, guardians and community members. Parents or guardians are empowered by making decisions regarding the Head Start program's design and implementation. Each school district is represented on the Policy Council.

Much like a PTA or PTO, each campus has a Parent Committee. The Parent Committee is a decision-making group made up of parents or guardians who are empowered to make decisions regarding the program at the local level.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Head Start program must meet the requirements of the Office of Head Start as set forth in the Performance Standards. These standards function as a framework for the daily work of staff, families, and communities. They serve as guides to ensure that President Johnson's vision of over 50 years ago remains strong.

While many years have passed, the spirit and heart of Head Start remains the same. This spirit is clearly illustrated in this excerpt of President Johnson's 1969 State of the Union message to Congress.

"I hope it may be said, a hundred years from now, that by working together we helped make our country more just, more just for all of its people, as well as to insure and guarantee the blessings of liberty for all of our posterity. That is what I hope. But I believe that at least it will be said that we tried."