



# Allegan County Schools

Parent Handbook  
2019-2020



*"These materials were developed with state funds allocated by Michigan Department of Education."*

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# **Great Start Readiness Program Parent Handbook**

**Allegan County Schools  
Great Start Readiness Program**

## **Welcome Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to Allegan County Schools Great Start Readiness Program. We are enthused about your interest in an excellent preschool program for your child. We believe you will find ours a quality program, and that our reputation for a sound curriculum combined with a caring staff will provide your child with an excellent preschool experience.

We are a state grant funded program that was established in 1985 and have been building on that strong foundation ever since. We are continually updating our curriculum and our structure to meet the changing needs of each of our community schools within Allegan County including Allegan, Fennville, Hopkins, Martin, Otsego, Plainwell and Wayland.

These are some of the most important years of your child's growth and development. Through use of effective early childhood practices appropriate for young children, we recognize the importance of these early years and offer you our support.

We look forward to having you join us as we work together in building a foundation for your child's future.

Sincerely

Great Start Readiness Program Staff  
Allegan County Schools

## **What we Believe**

### **Mission Statement:**

To provide opportunities, in cooperation with families, to improve students' cognitive, social, emotional and physical development for success in school.

Allegan Area Educational Service Agency Great Start Readiness Program believes that the early years are the most important years for developing the necessary skills to become successful learners. Our Program is a place where children are valued as individuals and where their social and emotional needs are met. Our program is a place where children are helped to acquire a strong foundation in the knowledge and skills needed for school success.

AAESA GSRP believes that this success can be attained when families and teachers form a partnership to help develop the child's cognitive and social skills, their language abilities, and their interest in learning new things about the world. Young children need instruction to develop the thinking, language and early literacy skills needed for continued school success. Together we hold the key to the future success of our young children.

### **Philosophy Statement:**

The Philosophy of Allegan Area Educational Service Agency's Great Start Readiness Program is that young children learn best through play and hands-on activities and experiences. This program will provide experiences and relationships in partnership with families that will help develop the whole child and support kindergarten readiness. Classroom visits by parents are always welcomed and encouraged. Our program follows the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality and curriculum guidelines set by the Michigan State Board of Education. To give our children the tools to master the standards we use the High Scope Preschool Curriculum Model. All our classrooms meet the current childcare licensing requirements of the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

## Great Start Readiness Program Goals for Children

- ✓ To learn through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas.
- ✓ To become independent, responsible, and confident – ready for school and ready for life.
- ✓ To learn to plan many of their own activities, carry them out, and talk to others about what they have done and what they have learned.
- ✓ To design activities so that concepts and skills are appropriately presented by utilizing a variety of methods and techniques.
- ✓ To gain knowledge and skills in important academic, social, and physical areas.
- ✓ To provide safe, dependable, quality care for children.
- ✓ To enhance children's feelings of comfort and security.
- ✓ To provide a variety of activities designed to enhance the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.
- ✓ To recognize and encourage development of individual interests.
- ✓ To provide a relaxed environment where children feel welcome.
- ✓ To provide individualized instruction and small group activities rather than requiring children to move as a group from one learning objective to the next.

\*Based on Early Childhood Standards of Quality by the State of Michigan Board of Education

## **Program Overview**

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is Michigan's state-funded preschool for eligible four-year-old children with a focus on supporting children's development of school readiness skills. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Office of Great Start (OGS). Research on preschool programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program.

To support learning at home and increase positive child outcomes, programs must provide for active and continuous involvement of parents in the learning process. Through advisory meetings, parents assist to evaluate and make recommendations about the program.

## **Reporting to Protective Services**

Allegan County Schools and the GSRP Preschool program staff is mandated by Michigan Law, Act No. 238, governing all schools and childcare programs to report any suspected abuse or neglect of children in their care.

## **Notice of Program Measurement**

GSRP sites are required to work with the MDE to measure the effect of the state-wide GSRP. Information is sometimes collected about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law. If you have questions about this, contact:

Address: MDE Office of Great Start  
608 W. Allegan, P.O. Box 30008  
Lansing, MI 48909  
E-mail: [mde-gsrp@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-gsrp@michigan.gov)  
Phone: 517-373-8483

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Allegan County GSRP Programs do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or transgender identity), disability, age (except as restricted by State of Michigan licensing and/or as a factor necessary to the normal operation of the program),

religion, military status, ancestry, or any other statutorily protected category (collectively, "Protected Classes") in its educational programs or activities.

AAESA GSRP programs shall not discriminate in its policies and practices and does not tolerate harassment of any kind.

Equal treatment and service shall be available to each child, without regard to the Protected Classes, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age (except as restricted by State of Michigan licensing and/or as a factor necessary to the normal operation of the program), place of residence, or social or economic background, to learn through the curriculum offered in this District.

Educational programs shall be designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

## **Admission/Registration Requirements**

### **Admission/Child Eligibility**

Children must meet criteria based on the MDE and Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). Priority in registration is given to families based on income and the number of risk factors. Students are not selected on a first-come, first-serve basis.

If there are no openings in a class, families can choose to be put on a wait list. After a child starts in a class it is not educationally sound to switch classes.

### **Recruitment Policy**

GSRP funding is provided through a grant from the State of Michigan and distributed by the Allegan education service Agency (AAESA). All families must qualify for this program by meeting requirements set by State of Michigan. Eligibility and selection are determined by using the GSRP prioritization guidelines. GSRP works in cooperation with Head Start and Early Childhood Connections to ensure accurate placement of families. Families that are Head Start eligible must be served by Head Start.

To be eligible for the program, a child must be (4) years old on or before September 1 of the school year. Using the criteria set forth by the Michigan Department of Education, the screening process will determine which children will most benefit from the program.

### **Enrollment Policy**

Step 1            Parents can access the Birth-to-Five application at [www.hmgallegan.org/preschool](http://www.hmgallegan.org/preschool). This application is completed and submitted on-line to be considered for enrollment in a Great Start Readiness Program classroom. If there is no internet accessibility,

- parents can obtain an application by calling the Early Childhood Office at 269-512-7730.
- Step 2 In mid-May Applications will be sent to the individual programs based on eligibility and program choice request.
- Step 3 Parents will be notified by the agency that their application has been received, and will be notified if additional information notified by the agency that their application has been received, and will be notified if additional information/ documentation is needed to complete the eligibility phase and where/when these documents should be delivered.
- Step 4 Acceptance eligibility is determined from lowest income to highest income. Those children above 250% FPL and having additional risk factors may be considered for Sliding Scale Tuition after September 1st.
- Step 5 Agencies will notify families of their child's acceptance as soon as eligibility has been confirmed. This process will occur throughout the summer. An open house will be scheduled by the GSRP teacher and they will contact you with that date. This is not concurrent with the local school districts open house most times.

The parent/guardian must complete all of the following **before** the child may begin attending the program most of this process is done through our website at [www.hmgallegan.org/preschool](http://www.hmgallegan.org/preschool). Contact the Early Childhood Coordinator at 269-512-7730 with any questions or problems you encounter on the website.

Before an interview is granted:

A. A copy of child's birth certificate or other appropriate form must be presented at the time of application.

B. A copy of the child's updated immunization record must be presented at the time of application. Immunization waivers must be obtained from the county health department if parents choose to not immunize their child. (Children may be excluded from class if health forms are not turned in after 4 weeks of class.)

C. Proof of income which may include:

1. Tax return
2. Paychecks stubs
3. W-2 Form
4. Written statement from employer(s)
5. Signed Income Verification Form or local equivalent

D. Proof of residency which could be:

1. Driver's license
2. Recent pay stub with employee address
3. Utility bill
4. Other recent government issued document listing the address and name of parent or child

At Enrollment, among papers to be signed are included:



E. A child information record (emergency card) must be presented on or before the first day of class, all lines of card must contain information.

F. Signed written permission to seek emergency care, part of the child information card must be presented on or before the first day of class.

G. Within 30 days of enrollment a health appraisal form must be presented signed by a licensed physician or designee stating that a physical evaluation has been made within the preceding 1 year. (Children may be excluded from class if health forms are not turned in after 4 weeks of class.) Forms can be picked up at AAESA Office at the ECC or requested from a teacher.

H. Parent signature that a Parent Handbook has been received.

I. Head Start Waiver (if applicable)

J. Signed Allegan County AESA application form.

K. Free and Reduced Meal Family Application

L. Photo & Video Form

M. Concussion Awareness Form

N. If Parent/guardian wants to volunteer in the school a Clearance form from in compliance with Michigan Licensing and Regulatory affairs (LARA) must be completed and filed with the Allegan County State Department. (A copy of your driver's license is needed to complete)

O. Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect form

## **Tuition**

If you are within the income guidelines there is No fee is charged by the program. Children are enrolled by eligibility guidelines. There may be a small tuition if your income falls beyond the income guidelines set forth by the Michigan Department of Education.

## **Fee Policy**

The Great Start Readiness Program is a state-funded preschool program through the Michigan Department of Education. There is no cost or fee for students meeting the required criteria. See income eligibility chart and sliding fee tuition scale. Families that are eligible for the GSRP program and are over the income guidelines will be charged based on a sliding scale fee schedule determined by the Michigan Department of Education. Upon acceptance into the program families will be informed by the center of the amount of monthly tuition required to be paid and when and

where these payments are to be mailed. After the initial information is provided to the family further account information may be obtained directly from the GSRP Early Childhood Coordinator.

## Attendance

Consistent attendance is one of the most important things you can do to help your child. Research shows that regular attendance may be one of the biggest influencing factors on school success. Family attitudes toward school are very powerful. These early experiences will lay the groundwork for future habits. Our staff is committed to having all children in school daily. Teacher will try many strategies to encourage attendance and to follow up with families where attendance becomes infrequent. After multiple strategies over an extended period with no result, the family will be notified on the child's withdrawal of the program if the slot is needed for families on the waiting list. Regular attendance is encouraged and expected for all children. It is the family's responsibility to contact their child's teacher prior to or the morning of if their child will be absent.

- Staff will call 30 minutes after the start of the day if your child is not at school.
- Staff will call the family after 3 consecutive absences.
- If attendance is irregular and the family does not contact the school, a conference will be held to talk about any challenges that may prevent the child from attending. (This includes consistent late arrival, late pick-up)

## Withdrawal/Dismissal Policies

If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw a child from the program, the teacher must be notified **in writing with an exit form**. Please try to inform your child's teacher in advance, if possible, if you will be withdrawing your child. This helps us to ensure a smooth transition for the child and to gather any items and work that should be sent home. Once a child has exited from the program, their place may be given to another child from the waiting list. Any family wishing to return after exit must complete the application again and could be added to the wait list, if applicable. A follow up from the Director of the program may be attempted to determine the cause of withdrawal.

A child may be withdrawn from the program by the Director of Early Childhood Services for the following reasons:

- Failure to provide the required registration documentation listed above.
- The Director/Family together determine GSRP is not the best placement for the child and a better placement is found.
- Failure to follow school policies per the GSRP Parent Handbook.
- If a child misses two consecutive weeks of school, unrelated to illness, s/he may be dropped from the program and the spot will be given to the next child on the wait list if a reasonable solution cannot be found.

- Inconsistent attendance with monthly attendance less than 50% may result in drop from the program.
- Consistently picking up or dropping child off late to class. Teachers will hold a conference with the Parents/Guardians to facilitate plan that will work for all parties. Failure to comply with plan after the conference will result in dismissal from program.
- Withdrawal from program- these will be in rare, extreme cases where it is determined that, after exhausting all strategies and supports (i.e. asking for a behavior consultant, referring for psychiatric visits, consulting with child's pediatrician, working with special education providers, inviting in a social worker) the child's needs can be better met in another setting. Children will not be excluded because of the need for additional medical or behavioral support, assistance with toileting, or other issues that can be supported through professional development of staff, providing resources to families, changes in the learning environment or daily routine, etc. (See Attendance Policy)
- Exclusion due contagious illness, a child may be excluded from the program until a doctor gives permission to return to school.
- Exclusion may occur for a child without an immunization record, medical waiver, or certified non-medical waiver on file may be excluded after families are notified for 2 weeks about this requirement, unless student is in a dose waiting period.
- If a parent/guardian verbally abuses or physically harms another child, another parent/guardian, or a staff member

All families will be notified in writing of termination and will have the opportunity to appeal to teaching and/or administrative staff.

If the program is found to be inappropriate for an individual child, a parent/teacher conference will be held to determine other options.

The last day a child can be added to the class is prior to the Schools' Spring Break which occurs the first full week of April.

## **Staff**

### **A. Teaching Staff**

1. Teacher: Bachelor or master's degree and current Michigan Teaching certificate with an Early Childhood Specialist (ZA) Endorsement. Responsible for planning, supervising and implementing the classroom program.

2. Associate Teacher: Bachelor's degree with: a CDA, or Associate of Arts in Early Childhood/ Preschool Education or Child Development, or one hundred twenty (120) clock hours of documented formal childcare education offered by approved training organizations and approved by Michigan Department of Education Staff. Responsible for assisting in planning, supervising and implementing the classroom program.

3. Third teachers: Highschool diploma or equivalent and experience working with young children.

#### B. Criminal History/Unprofessional Conduct

1. All staff complete a criminal history statement, this information is then sent to the Central Records Division of the Michigan Department of State Police.
2. Information is sent to the Department of Human Services to check for any history of child abuse or neglect.
4. Prior to employment, Allegan Educational Service Agency performs a comprehensive FBI fingerprint check of all candidates.

#### D. Health

1. All staff working directly with children must have a TB test.

#### E. CPR/First Aid

1. All staff working directly with children complete a CPR course bi-annually or as required by child day care licensing.
2. All staff working directly with children complete a First Aid course Bi-annually or as required by child day care licensing.

## TRANSPORTATION

If you provide transportation, **DO NOT** drop your child off before school starting times. For safety reasons, please bring your child into the building and make a staff member aware of his/her arrival by signing your child in and out daily. **The teacher will have a sign in/out sheet that you will have to initial and put a drop off time and pick up time! Do not drop your child off at the curb or school door!** Our classrooms are housed in public school buildings, but School personnel are not responsible for our GSRP children! Only the GSRP teachers will be responsible for our students. **IMPORTANT** - Your child **cannot legally** be released to anyone, for any reason, without prior written consent. The names of people who might pick up your child can be added to the Child Information Card at any time. Teachers will ask to see a picture ID especially for the first couple weeks of school in order to pick up children. If applicable, custody paperwork will need to be submitted when releasing children. Adults 16 years of age and older and have a photo ID, that are on the Child Information Card are the only people allowed to drop off or pick up students from school. Anyone under 16 will not be allowed to sign a child in or out of any of our GSRP classrooms!

- No children are permitted to walk home.
- Children who enter or leave the program via the school bus or Dial-A-Ride will be signed in or out by a staff member.
- Late pick up at the end of the scheduled session, after 5 minutes without notification of a late pick up, the staff will contact parents. If, and when, after all attempts to reach

parents has been exhausted and staff have waited at least 15 minutes then, staff will begin calling person's designated as emergency contacts on the child's enrollment forms. If contact with parents and emergency contacts has been exhausted and no pickup can be arranged, staff are required after a reasonable period of time to contact local Public Safety Officers.

- A parent with sole custody must supply legal documentation of custody arrangements before requesting the exclusion of the non-custodial parent.

Transportation when possible will be furnished to those who need it. Transportation Policy Transportation is not guaranteed. If transportation is provided by Allegan County Public Schools for preschool children, in most cases children may be picked up from their home. However, another pick-up and drop off point may be needed due to the bus safety laws and scheduled stops, especially when located within the city. Michigan State Laws are very specific as to the length of time preschool-aged children can be on the bus (60 consecutive min.), and the required distance between stops. I also understand that if changes are made to the original pick-up or drop -off information, transportation may not be available. Additional transportation information and releases may be needed prior to school.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITY**

To meet state law, parents/adult (over 16 years of age) must accompany their child to the bus and physically help the child up the steps. Parents/adult (over 16 years of age) must meet the bus when the child returns home and physically help them off the bus.

## **STAFF RESPONSIBILITY**

The program staff will meet the bus and physically help the children off the bus. At the end of the session, staff will take the children to the bus and physically help them up the steps.

## **Bus Rules**

- Stay in your seat.
- Have a quiet voice.
- No touching other children.
- Listen to and follow the directions given by the bus driver.



**If your child will be riding a bus, please discuss these safety rules with your child and talk about why they are important.**

## **Safety and Emergency Policies**

### **Weather Related Closure, GSRP and Preschool Programs/Delays**

Preschool will be cancelled if your local school district is closed. Your local TV and radio stations will report these closings and delays. There may also be days where the school or classroom is closed due to illness. Please make sure your teacher has your current and up-to-date contact information so that if there is a closure or delay you can be reached immediately.

### **Incidents**

The center shall submit all reports required by the State of Michigan childcare licensing as required in R:400.8158. Incidents include but are not limited to; a child left unsupervised, a fire, physical discipline of a child by a staff or volunteer or alleged inappropriate contact. These incidents require an immediate notification of the parent/guardian, administrator of the program and a verbal report to DHS within 24 hours.

### **Emergency Closures**

We will close if a state of emergency exists or if conditions prevents us from providing childcare in a safe and orderly environment. We will follow emergency procedures and contact families using phone numbers from their child information records. We have procedures posted to reunite families with their children if we must evacuate or close due to an incident, emergency or severe weather. Parents will be notified by the classroom teacher and/or by e-mail of the evacuation and the location and time when they can pick up their child. If the center must evacuate all children will be transported by Public School Bus.

### **Emergency Drills**

The GSRP staff and children practice emergency procedures for safe evacuation and/or sheltering children in place. Emergency procedures for the GSRP centers are posted in every classroom. Other necessary drills will take place during the year.

Fire drills will be performed quarterly and everyone, including parents or visitors in the building must evacuate using the posted emergency routes.

Tornado drills will be performed at least twice per/year and held in April and October.

### **Crisis Management Plan**

Each district has their own crisis management plan in case of a needed evacuation that could be caused by gas leaks, chemical spills or another type of potentially threatening situation.

Detailed plans are kept in the classrooms regarding where the children will go. An individual plan will be created, if needed, for accommodations of children with special needs. If a school/classroom needs to evacuate the children, our staff's priority is the safety of your children. If an evacuation were necessary, children will be taken by the classroom staff along with the Child Information Cards to an appropriate evacuation area designated by the school district. The local school districts notification system may contact families by phone to notify them of an emergency. Depending upon the nature of the emergency, families will be notified through the system where the children will be going. Teachers will have their phones with them to be in contact with families during this crisis. A check will be made prior to the staff leaving the classroom and once they arrive at the evacuation area to make sure all children are accounted for. Children and staff will stay at the designated evacuation area until the students are released by the principal or law enforcement. Upon returning to the classroom, attendance will be taken once more.

## **Medical Emergencies**

In the event of a medical emergency or serious accident, the parent/guardian and physician 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 Child Information Card. Your authorization for the classroom to contact your family physician and to take emergency medical measures deemed necessary is part of this agreement.

## **SCHOOL INFORMATION**

### **School Calendar**

GSRP classrooms follow local district calendars for holidays and school closures. Your child's teacher will provide you with a calendar regarding important GSRP dates at the beginning of the school year. In general, GSRP classrooms run full days Monday through Thursday. Your child's teacher will make sure you are aware of the program start and end times.

### **What to Bring**

Your child should carry a backpack or bag to school **DAILY**, labeled with his/her name. It is great for carrying artwork, treasures and important information concerning school. Be sure to check your child's bag and classroom papers **DAILY** for important information. During the first home visit the teachers will let you know what they would like your child to bring.

### **What to Wear**

Your child is more likely to feel comfortable to enjoy the preschool experience if she/he is dressed in play clothes. Children will be painting, cooking, playing on the floor, on the playground, and in sand and water. Comfortable, closed-toe shoes with rubber soles such as

sneakers work best. Children often have problems with the pea gravel and wood chips from the playground getting in their sandals during recess. Classrooms often get quite warm even in the winter so please dress your child in layers.

Please do your best to anticipate changes in the weather. We go outside to play every day except when weather conditions are unsafe (including in the winter). Children should always come with appropriate clothing for outside play.

All clothing should be marked with your child's name including coats, boots, shoes, mittens, hats, etc. No matter how unique you may think your child's hat or snow pants are there is often at least one other like it.

## **Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play and fresh air are important for the healthy development of children. Except for extreme temperatures, all children will play outside daily. If the child is well enough to be in school, he/she is well enough to take part in all normal activities, including outdoor play. There are no staff members scheduled to care for children who cannot go outside due to illness or lack of appropriate clothing.

In hot weather, teachers will adjust the time outdoors, adjust the activity level, and will provide water for play and drinking. In cold weather, teachers will make sure children are appropriately clothed for wet and cold and will adjust the time accordingly. When the outside temperature is above 85 degrees or below 27 degrees, teachers will refer to the Child Care Weather Watch as a guide and use their judgment whether children can play safely outdoors or should remain indoors.

## **Toys**

The center will supply toys and equipment appropriate for your child's age. Special toys can be very comforting for children when they're away from home. These toys are special and are not always shared, so we suggest that they be put into the child's locker upon arrival. We will get them throughout the day as they are needed. Teachers will not be responsible for these toys therefore, if your child is willing to leave these toys in the car for the ride home that is the best bet. Nap items, such as stuffed animals or dolls, can be kept in the locker, also. Please make sure your child's First and Last is clearly labeled on any items left at the center.

## **Field Trips**

Each year our classrooms plan field trips throughout the year. We may take a bus or walk to our trip locations. Parents are welcome and encouraged to join us on ANY OR ALL these special trips. Field trip permission slips will be required to sign per trip.

From time to time, teachers may choose take advantage of sunny weather to enjoy an unplanned walking excursion around the school building or block, in the event this does happen



a notice sign will be posted in the classroom window to notify parents where to find their children should they arrive at the center before the children return.

## Meal Guidelines

Mealtimes are an important time for children in the program to develop social skills and learn about nutrition. All GSRP programs eat family style and the staff sit and share this experience with the children. The staff encourage children to talk with each other, use language to request items and describe foods, try new foods, learn what it feels like to be full, explore where food comes from, understand what constitutes healthy foods and choices, open containers/packages and take care and clean up their own items when they are done.

The young child needs food for growth and health. The foods that he/she eats must be carefully chosen to provide the essential nutrients needed to build a strong body. The foods selected for the young child can help him/her develop positive food habits laying the foundation for good health throughout his/her entire life. In addition, snack foods between meals should contribute to the child's daily nutritional intake and help the child's body grow strong and healthy.

Accommodations will be made for children with most allergies or common dietary requirements. Parents and teachers will work together to determine how to meet these needs. There is a form that you will have to fill out if you choose to bring food in from home due to dietary needs. If the program cannot meet a child's requirements, the parent (with teacher consultation) will provide food like what is offered on the classroom menu.

Children will receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack.

Mealtimes can provide these opportunities for the child:

- To enjoy food and the sociability associated with it
- To eat foods that contribute to meeting his/her nutrient needs
- To taste new foods to see how they look, feel, smell and taste
- To develop a willingness to try new foods
- To develop coordination using appropriate utensils
- To develop language through conversation with others
- To develop concepts such as shape, color, texture and weight

We encourage good nutrition to meet the nutritional needs of young children. Shared meals are an important part of the program and whenever possible, children can learn to enjoy a wide variety of foods in a communal setting. If children do not like the food served, teachers will consult with parents to find food choices that may be more like home food. We ask the children to try everything. If they don't like it, they will not have to eat it.

Families are not allowed to send in food for their children simply because the child does not like the food served. Please consult with the teacher if you have questions.

Hydration of the body is important for learning! Children will either have access to water for drinks in their classroom or scheduled opportunities to get drinks from the school drinking fountain.

## **Rest Time Policy**

Programs that operate 5 or more hours must have quiet/rest time. The rest time will be at least 45 minutes and no longer than one hour, while accommodating for the individual needs of children. Quiet activities will be provided for children after 20 minutes of resting and that do not sleep. Children may bring their own blanket and stuffed animal to assist them in resting. Children will assist with setting up and cleaning up as their abilities allow. Soft music will be played, the lights will be turned off and staff will provide a comforting, supervising presence while children rest. Each child will be provided one mat to rest on.

Mats/cots will be sanitized in accordance with licensing rules.

## **Instructional materials**

Parents/Guardians may inspect all instructional materials used in evaluating, surveying, or analyzing students.

## **Screening & Assessments**

Each GSRP student will be screened in all areas of development in order to monitor individual developmental levels in fine and gross motor skills, language concepts, self-help, and social skills. Children will be screened within two weeks of starting school using the ASQ-3 (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) screener. A parent questionnaire will be used to gather information about the child's background, self-help and social development. If a child has suspected delays, parents will be notified, and he/she will be referred to the Student Assistance Team. Parents will be notified of each evaluation done and be a part in creating the plan as deemed necessary.

Children's progress will be assessed continuously throughout the year using a variety of formal and informal assessments. Allegan AESA GSRP classrooms use the High Scope Preschool Curriculum alongside the Child Observation Record (COR) assessment tool. The COR consists of anecdotal notes written by the teachers as they observe children working and playing throughout the day. Parents and guardians will receive a copy of the Parent Report generated for the Child Observation Record which consists of samples of a child's classroom activity as well as information telling where the child is at developmentally in each skill area.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held in the fall and spring of each year. A parent may request an additional conference or meeting with teaching staff at any time.

## Referrals and Support services

Referrals for Child and Family Needs We strive to meet the individual needs of all children in the program. To determine each child's needs, the program conducts screenings within the first two weeks of the child's first day of school to assess children's developmental, behavioral, and language development.

If these screenings - as well as information gathered from observations or provided by parents, doctors, or other specialists - result in a concern about the child's development or functioning, we will begin a process to follow up on that concern, including further evaluation if needed.

In case of a suspected disability (including moderate developmental delays or concerns), parents or teachers may request an evaluation. This may include but not limited to submitting a Build Up Michigan referral. Upon placing the referral from the parent or teachers, the school district where the parent lives have 10 school days to inform the parent in writing of the intent to evaluate, and seek consent. Evaluations may only take place with written parental consent.

Once all information is gathered, it is reviewed with the parents. If the results recommend an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a meeting will be scheduled with parents and other personnel involved. Any additional services to be provided and who will provide such service will be determined at this meeting. Most of the time these services are provided by the local districts and not our GSRP Staff. Your child's teacher, administrator, and the school district team will work together throughout the year to ensure that the IEP is being implemented with fidelity, including the use of special modifications and strategies to support your child in being a fully participating member of the classroom community. If a local district staff member is to carry out the support services, they will sign your child in and out of our GSRP program while they are in their care.

If your child enters the program with a documented special need, the documentation will need to include a notation that GSRP is a suitable setting considering the needs of the child. Families may also need services unrelated to special education. To provide this support, families are asked to provide information related to the child's life experiences and current living situation. If there is a non-educational need that your family has, please notify a staff member. Staff will seek the resources you need and follow-up accordingly.

## Curriculum

Allegan GSRP Centers use the HighScope Curriculum a proven, research-based curriculum for learning. Highscope emphasizes adult-child interaction, a carefully designed learning environment, and a plan-do-review process that strengthens initiative and self-reliance in children. Teachers and students are active partners in shaping the educational experience. Through active participatory learning children have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas to achieve powerful and positive outcomes. The HighScope Curriculum integrates all aspects of child development; this approach enhances each young person's growth in the foundations of academics as well as in social-emotional, physical, and creative areas.

The HighScope Curriculum parallels the five dimensions of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals Panel.

- Approaches to learning
- Language, literacy, and communication
- Social and emotional development
- Physical development, health, and well-being
- Arts and science: mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts.

Studies found that children from a high-quality classroom using a HighScope curriculum:

- Showed higher social responsibilities
- Demonstrated higher employment rates and annual earnings
- Had higher educational achievements
- Took more responsibility with their family

The HighScope Preschool Curriculum not only helps young children excel in language and cognitive learning but also promotes independence, curiosity, decision-making, cooperation, persistence, creativity, and problem solving—the fundamental skills that help determine success in adult life. This comes through positive adult-child interactions, a child-friendly learning environment, a consistent daily routine and assessments that show what level of development a child is at. More information is available at [www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org).

## **COR**

The Child Observation Record (COR Advantage 1.5) is the assessment tool that is used with the HighScope Curriculum. The COR looks at early childhood development from infancy through kindergarten in eight content areas:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- English Language Learning (when children's first language is not English)

Each child is assessed on their individual strengths through teacher observation, pictures, portfolio pieces and their own reflective processes. Daily anecdotal notes based on child observations will be recorded and scored in the online COR assessment tool. Teachers will create a child development report at least twice a year to share with parents at a conference. The results of all assessments will be shared with guardians and kept confidential without express consent from guardians.

## Photos

Photographs will occasionally be taken of children to display in the rooms or share with families. From time to time these pictures are used for publication in local newspapers, classroom newsletters, posted in classes or shared on electronic applications with the classroom families, etc. If for any reason you do not wish to have your child photographed, please sign the appropriate form.

## Handwashing Policy

Hand washing is probably the most critical element in reducing the spread of germs. It is important to teach children the importance of hand washing early in life to help them develop healthy habits. Children will be required to wash their hands before eating, after using the restroom, when returning from outdoors, and other times as determined necessary by the teachers. Staff also follow this policy and wash their hands before any food preparation.

## Illness

We make every effort to keep abreast of new information relating to infectious and communicable diseases and local health issues through the Allegan County Health Department. The center will take the necessary precautions to contain and prevent the spread of contagious illness or diseases. However, the center cannot guarantee that contagious illnesses or diseases will be completely contained or will not spread to other children. Parents must recognize that, while in care, it is possible that a child may be exposed to contagious illness or disease. Attendance is very important to us; however, we are also very concerned about the spread of illness. We serve many children, and when germs are brought into the classroom, they spread quickly. No child, staff member or volunteer will be permitted to be transported by bus or attend if acutely ill and/or has a fever, severe cough, diarrhea, rash, or head lice within the last 24 hours. Some diseases will require your child to be excluded from school until a release is written by a doctor. If your child is displaying any of the following symptoms, he or she should not attend until they are 24 hour symptom free without the use of medication. These symptoms may include but are not limited to:

- Fever (temperature of 100° or higher or even less when the child feels ill)
- Earache
- Any skin eruption or rash
- Sore throat
- Watery or red eyes
- Any draining sore
- Upset stomach the night before or prior to arrival time
- Chest cough – 24 hours from when cough stopped
- Diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Nasal discharge or discharge from eyes or ears (yellow or green)

- Strep throat, Scabies, Scarlet Fever, Meningitis, Eye discharge and or Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) and/or other communicable diseases (most require medicinal treatment of 24 hours prior to returning.)
- Lice – See below
- Chicken Pox – until sores have dried up

Parents should exercise every precaution and keep their child home should other unusual symptoms occur.

If a child is sick throughout the night, please keep him or her home to rest. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children, staff and volunteers healthy.

If your child contracts a communicable disease, please notify us as soon as possible. Parents of other children will be alerted to exposure to the disease. Your privacy is assured.

Please do not send your child to preschool if he or she is ill. They will not be able to stay. Parents/guardians will be contacted when their child becomes ill at preschool. You will be expected to pick them up immediately. Please make arrangement before school starts for this situation! If a child becomes ill during class, sick children will remain away from other children in the classroom while waiting for pick up. If you cannot be reached, within 10 minutes we will start to call people on your emergency contact list. We require that you or the emergency contact person/s pick your child up within 1 hour of the teachers contacting you that your child is sick.

## Lice

Because of the proximity of children in school we occasionally have students with head lice. It is the district practice that a child with head lice must be excluded from school until one treatment at home has occurred. A student may come back to school provided the parent/guardian documents the treatment and upon examination by the school's designee that any remaining nits are farther away than ¼" from the scalp. It is recommended that all nits be removed. Teachers and the ECC office will have information about safely treating head lice. The Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Health, Allegan County Health Division, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support these practices.

Upon returning to school, **a parent/family member must accompany the child to the school office to confirm no live lice are found before returning to class. The child may not ride the bus back to school until confirmation that no live lice are found.**

For more information please ask your child's teacher.

## **Medication**

Teachers do not administer medication except in medical emergencies and on an individual basis with a doctor's order. Parents must provide a written permission slip and medication must be in its original container with a pharmacy label. The label must include: the physician's name, child's name, type and dosage of medication and administration instructions. Please report all allergies to your child's teacher so we can plan together on how to best keep your child safe.

## **Family Involvement**

Children who are successful in school have strong and positive interconnections between family, school, and community. Parent involvement in the learning process strengthens learning at home and is directly linked to positive child outcomes. We value parent involvement in a variety of ways including sharing notes/or anecdotes of children's learning, partnering with parents to establish child development goals, providing opportunity for parents to visit the classroom, and weekly newsletters.

Communication is the key to successful parent involvement. The purpose of frequent and informal interactions is to strengthen the partnership between home and school. Staff and parents should update one another about children's recent experiences and program activities by:

## **Open Door Policy**

You are welcome to visit the center at any time and are encouraged to do so when your schedule permits.

## **Lunch Visits**

Parents are welcome to come and join the children for lunch in the classroom. Please remember when you bring your lunch to model nutritious eating patterns for the children.

## **Daily Communications**

Parents are encouraged to touch base with the staff upon arrival or pick up, please also feel free to contact staff via phone or email. Most Staff have multiple ways of communication which can involve text messages or Apps that you can see your child's progress through the day. Make sure you are aware of the best means of communication with your child's teachers.

## **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are scheduled in both the fall and spring. You or a teacher may request a parent/teacher conference at any time. Open communication will help the staff to best meet your child's needs. Scheduled conferences can help the staff to best meet your child's needs. A

scheduled conference allows for more confidentiality and detail than daily conversations permit.

## **GSRP Home Visits**

Home visits are a time for the teacher to meet with you in your home to discuss your child. Your child's teacher will contact you to schedule at least two home visits during the school year. GSRP begins each school year with an initial visit to answer any questions the family may have and to help ease the transition into the classroom before the first day of class. The school will also host an "open house" before class formally meets. The final home visit will be scheduled at the end of the year. A home visit is to ensure that the teachers are meeting the child in the most comfortable space for the child. Usually children are very hesitant about meeting new people and being themselves in a new unfamiliar space. We want to make sure that you and your child feel most comfortable when we meet for conferences and home visits. If you are not comfortable meeting in your home the teaching team can meet you at a neutral location like a library or the school.

## **When Communicating**

Both parents and caregivers are expected to handle themselves in a professional and respectful manner. In the event that the parent and the center have different philosophies in the caregiving of a child, all attempts will be made to positively and openly discuss these differences and agree upon a solution.

## **GSRP Parent Advisory**

The advisory committee annually reviews and makes recommendations about: Collaboration with and involvement of community volunteer and/or social service organizations in addressing all aspects of educational disadvantage; collaborative recruitment and enrollment process to assure that each child is enrolled in the program most appropriate to his or her needs and to maximize the use of federal, state, and local funds; approved curriculum; nutritional services utilizing federal, state and local food program support as applicable; health and developmental screening process; referrals to community social service agencies, as appropriate, and more.

The home-school partnership is a very important part of the GSRP preschool experience. Family members can be involved in many ways this year: attending parent-teacher conferences, reading with your child, attending family events, visiting the classroom, etc... Your child's teacher will share additional ways throughout the year.

It is not required for you to volunteer in the classroom; however, it is a valuable time for you to see how your child interacts in the group setting. You are an important part of the preschool experience. If you are able and would like to help in the classroom you may do so at any time after a central registry clearance form is filled out and clearance has been received. **Visitors should report to the office to sign in prior to visiting classrooms.**



**Families are a very important part of the GSRP Classroom. Family members can be involved by taking part in any of the following activities:**

- Read and/or contribute information to the weekly newsletter
- Make play dough
- Attend two Home Visits with staff
- Attend two parent/teacher conferences with staff and share information concerning your child's development
- Read to your child daily
- Play with your child
- Talk to your child about everything
- Listen to your child and ask questions to help him/her expand his/her ideas
- Volunteer to help in the classroom anytime
- Go on field trips with your child's class
- Attend family events
- Be a class representative to the Advisory Committee
- Visit the classroom
- Encourage your child to do writing at home
- Take dictation for your child at home
- Encourage your child to count and sort objects at home
- Call and write notes to staff frequently to express concerns, ask questions or just keep in touch (Parent input is always welcome)
- Fill out the parent observation instrument
- Take some time to allow your child to use scissors and other tools to create his/her own art

## **Family Involvement**

Volunteers Parents, grandparents or other caregivers and special friends are always welcome in the classroom, given that they have submitted GSRP's background check form in advance of the visit.

Volunteers may wish to bring an activity for the children, read a story, share a talent, or participate in activities underway. Please coordinate any special activities in advance with the staff. If you wish to drop in and play with your child or observe in the room, you are welcome to do so.

On your day to visit, please make arrangements for your other children to stay at home or with a caregiver. You will be asked to participate in our activities. This takes no training and no preparation, just come and spend time listening to the children, playing with them, and helping them to discover the wonderful world around them. If you are unable to visit, please extend an invitation to another important person in your child's life.

Together, we will work as a team to provide the best education possible for your child. If you are unable to work or play in the classroom, please indicate that you would like to be involved at home and accommodations can be made to honor that request.

## **Clearances of Volunteers and Staff**

To protect all children, Allegan County GSRP classrooms follow Michigan “Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers,”.

Before staff and volunteers may have contact with children in a childcare center, the staff or volunteers shall provide the center with documentation from the Department of Human Services that he or she has not been placed on the central registry for substantial abuse or neglect.

All staff shall have a Michigan Department of State Police criminal history record check, a department of human services check for a history of substantiated abuse and neglect as well as a criminal record check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. All checks will be complete prior to working in any GSRP classroom.

All volunteers including parents that help within the classroom, shall be required to have been screened and provide the documentation indicating the volunteer has not been convicted of a listed offence and has been granted clearance by the Department of Human Services to work with and around children. The documentation of that screening shall be kept on file at the center and updated yearly.

Volunteers must sign a self-certification form regarding abuse, neglect, and criminal convictions annually.

All visitors and volunteers including parents, shall not have unsupervised contact with children. The requirement by the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Division of Daycare Licensing is in place to help provide safer, better quality childcare and preschool programs for children. Posting as sited in Rules R.400.8125

## **Licensing**

Each GSRP site maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports 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 Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

## Confidentiality

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and caregivers, while ensuring they access high quality preschool care and education. We aim to ensure that all parents and guardians can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

To ensure that all individuals working and volunteering in our preschool classrooms can do so with confidence, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents have access to the records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except when it affects planning for the child's needs.
- Any concerns/evidence relating to a child's personal safety are kept in a secure, confidential file and shared with as few people as possible on a 'need to know' basis.
- Personal information about children, families, and staff is kept in a secure location.
- Parent permission will be sought before individual photographs of the children are taken to display.

## Pest Management

Parents will receive 48-hour advanced notification of pesticide applications. Letters will be sent home with students and notices will be posted at the center entrance and on classroom parent boards.

Per childcare licensing rule R 400.5940 (9)

- Advance notice must contain information about the pesticide, including the target pest or purpose, approximate location, date of the application, contact information at the center, and a toll-free number for a national pesticide information center recognized by the Michigan department of agriculture. (800-858-7378)
- Liquid spray or aerosol insecticide applications may not be performed in a room of a childcare center unless the room will be unoccupied by children for not less than 4 hours or longer if required by the pesticide label use directions.
- Parents or guardians can also request to be notified by first-class U.S. mail. The notification must be postmarked at least three days before the application.
- The Integrated Pest Management notification and requirements do not apply to the following:
  - Common products such germicides, disinfectants, sanitizers, and antimicrobials.
  - Bait pesticide formulation.
  - Gel pesticide formulation.

# Guidance and Discipline Policies

(additional center policies available upon request)

## Discipline Policy

Behavior management is the joint responsibility of students, parents, and center staff. Staff encourages self-control and appropriate social behavior in children. Positive methods of developing these behaviors are used in the center. When children are given meaningful choices, know the rules, have helpful and caring supervision in an enriching environment, the need for discipline becomes less.

Staff help students work through Conflict Resolution steps and children are encouraged to use a problem-solving approach:

- \*Staff will observe. If adults interfere in problem solving too often or too soon, children will come to rely on adults to solve problems.

- \*Staff will approach and be available to model problem solving and negotiation skills. Staff will suggest alternatives that the children can try. Staff and children together will resolve the problem.

- \*If children are unable to resolve a problem without adult assistance, staff may choose to implement a “break,” where a child or group of children may need to separate from the group or the activity for a few short moments. Children in “break” will be given a choice of sitting quietly or participating in an activity such as reading while calming down and thinking through alternative behaviors. The adult and child will talk about the decision to rejoin the group when the child is ready.

Positive guidance techniques will be used to:

- ◆ Help children become aware of their behavior and the consequences
- ◆ Develop rules to protect the safety of children, protect property or help children learn to respect the rights and feelings of others
- ◆ Develop consequences that are natural or logical
- ◆ Make accommodations to the learning environment or daily routine that will help each child to be successful within the program.

If a child develops a pattern of inappropriate behavior, the staff member, parent and child will meet to develop an individualized action plan for the child. It is our goal to work with families to help each child develop self-control and to keep all children safe.

In every case, discipline is viewed as a positive, solution-oriented process in which children learn appropriate behavior without damage to their physical or psychological wellbeing. AAESA and Allegan County GSRP does not permit, nor will it tolerate under any circumstances, the use of abusive or degrading disciplinary methods including the following: Spanking/hitting, shaking, biting, pinching or other forms of corporal punishment; Exclusion from outside time, gross motor experiences or daily learning experiences; Restricting a child’s movement by binding or

tying; Inflicting mental or emotional punishment (humiliating, shaming, threatening); Confining a child in an enclosed area such as a closet, locked room, box or similar cubicle.

Conflict Resolution will be handled in the following manner:

- approach social conflicts calmly, stopping all hurtful actions
- acknowledge the feelings of children involved in the conflict
- gather information from children on the problem
- restate the problem so that all parties understand
- ask children for ideas and solutions, encouraging them to choose one together
- give follow up support as children act on their decisions

## **Bullying Policy**

It is our goal to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all our students. This policy protects all students from bullying/aggressive behavior regardless of the subject matter or motivation for such impermissible behavior. Bullying or other aggressive behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties, including, parents, guests, contractors, vendors, and volunteers, is strictly prohibited. This includes written, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse, including hazing, gestures, comments, threats, or actions to a student, which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm, reasonable fear for personal safety or personal degradation. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment or bullying is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior.

## Grievance Policy

Parents and/or guardians of enrolled children should first express their complaints, concerns, and grievances with the classroom teacher. Parents are encouraged to bring any issues to the teacher's attention so that we may find a successful resolution between both parent and teacher. If your grievance cannot be successfully resolved with the classroom teacher, please contact the GSRP Early Childhood Director, Lindsay Sichta, at Allegan Area Educational Service Agency at 269.512.7700.

Your comments, ideas, and questions are always welcome. You are your child's first teacher and we look forward to partnering with you to make this an amazing year of growth and excitement for you and your child. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

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*We are looking forward to having you and your child participate in this terrific program. We have a very exciting year ahead. Many plans are underway for learning and growing together. We are all genuinely interested in the success and happiness of your special child!*

## GSRP Sample Daily Schedule

8:35-9:00	Arrival activities
9:00-9:20	Breakfast
9:20-9:40	Large Group
9:40-10:00	Small Group
10:00-10:10	Planning Time
10:10-11:05	Work Time
11:05-11:15	Clean-up
11:15-11:25	Recall
11:25-12:05	Lunch
12:05-12:45	Outside
12:45-1:30	Rest Time
1:30-1:50	Large Group
1:50-2:00	Planning Time
2:00-2:50	Work Time
2:50-3:00	Clean-up
3:00-3:10	Recall
3:10-3:20	Snack
3:20-3:25	Prepare and Depart School