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**COMPONENT: EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

**SUBJECT: FIELD TRIPS & PARTIES, PLANNING HOLIDAY/CELEBRATIONS AND PARTY ACTIVITIES**

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** To provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition. Because holidays are important in the lives of our families this will include learning about holidays that our families celebrate and experience. Holiday, celebrations, and party activities will be reflective of the needs of the population served. The activities will meet the individual differences and needs of the particular children and the priorities of the population and community, while carried out in a manner to avoid stereotypes. Children should develop an appreciation for celebration while responding to cultural and religious differences of families.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

Teachers will plan a variety of both onsite and offsite field trips. Field trips should consist mainly of outside speakers who visit the center and share information relating to the theme being studied. This will involve the community as well as generate non-federal share for each classroom. Teachers may also request to take off site field trips as opportunities become available. All off site field trips must be approved by the Education Manager at least one month in advance.

**Teacher Responsibilities:**

- The *fieldtrip authorization form* must be submitted to Education Manager once a month and are due by the 10<sup>th</sup> of month unless unforeseen circumstances/opportunities arise.
- The field trip will be relevant to the curriculum (reflective of needs, interests and cultures of children). Document relevance on Field Trip Authorization form.
- Staff will check that parents have signed permission for field trips. Written permission must be obtained prior to the trip. Any child who does not have written consent will not be allowed to participate.
- Seating chart will be faxed to Central Office (Attn: Transportation Manger), prior to departing the day of the field trip.
- The *Fieldtrip Log* must be completed prior to departing for a field trip and before departure from the field trip site to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Classroom discussion will happen both before and after the field trip to prepare children and assess outcomes.

- Parents and volunteers will accompany field trips to ensure adequate supervision with appropriate adult/child ratios. Ratio will double on all fieldtrips, however, volunteers can be used to meet this requirement.
- The Lead Teacher and the assistant teacher are equally responsible to ensure the children are safe and supervised at all times.
- Education staff is responsible to ensure a head count is done prior to leaving the classroom, upon boarding the bus, when arriving at the destination, periodically while on the trip, when leaving the fieldtrip, and when arriving back to the classroom.
- First Aid kits are to be taken on all fieldtrips.
- Any unspent funds will be returned to HREC. Teachers must **submit receipts and check stubs for all monies and any unspent funds to the Highland Rim Economic Corporation Executive Director**. There are not to be any taxes paid with federal dollars. Lead teachers are responsible for all monies if taxes are incurred.
- Teachers will ensure a backup plan is in place for any off-site special event in the school year.
- Siblings are not permitted in the classroom, but are permitted at off-site events.
- Parents will be notified of details about each field trip. Alternate arrangements will be made for children who are unable to participate.
- Field trips will be discussed at parent meetings, sharing how the field trips integrate into the curriculum, and how parents can be involved.

#### **Transportation/Meals:**

- Teachers must notify the Bus Driver/Cook of the field trip at least two weeks in advance and make any arrangements with the cook to receive a sack lunch if needed.
- There will be one staff member at the beginning of the line and one at the end of the line to ensure the safety of the children when loading and unloading.
- Children who are not enrolled in the program are not permitted to ride the bus on field trips. Any such children attending field trips (via personal vehicles) are the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian for supervision.
- Private vehicles can not be used to transport Head Start children unless the driver is a person authorized on Emergency Card to pick up the child being transported. Any child being transported in a private vehicle should be signed out of the classroom prior to being transported and signed back in at the fieldtrip destination.
- Parents are encouraged to attend field trips; however, they may need to provide their own transportation due to limited seating on the bus.

#### **Celebrations:**

- The celebrations of holidays will follow Federal Law in that the state and church will not be mixed and no religious instructions will be given
- This program will follow the philosophy of our curriculum – The Creative Curriculum- in regards to the celebration of holiday. This philosophy states that the components of children’s everyday lives drive curriculum. Therefore avoiding holidays altogether is not responsive to children’s needs. There may be children in our classrooms that celebrate holidays that are not typically seen or acknowledged in the decorations, advertising and celebrations of the larger community. We have the opportunity to acknowledge something that is valued in each and every family in the program. Holiday observances can be done in ways that are respectful, sensitive and developmentally appropriate.

- Decisions about holiday and cultural events should first and foremost mirror the decisions made about everyday classroom experiences. These experiences should reflect the needs, strengths and interests of the children and families. It is important to provide developmentally appropriate curriculum all year long. All activities need to be **INCLUSIVE – a child should never be kept home because of activities being done in our classrooms.**
- Teachers are encouraged to consider that there are many ways children can experience various holidays other than through eating food, making decorations or gifts, and having parties. Celebrations should center on what children can learn from introducing them into the classroom. Some examples include:
  - a. Families may celebrate the same holiday in different ways.
  - b. Different families may celebrate different holidays.
  - c. Not everyone celebrates every holiday.
  - d. What my family does is valued at school.
  - e. We can all learn about different holidays and how they are celebrated.
  - f. There are special feelings associated with holidays; they are more than costumes, food, and parties.
- It is important that holiday information is accurate and not trivialized. Working with families is a good way to help this happen. It is also important that teachers look at all holidays that families celebrate – not just those that fall in the winter time.
- In the teacher’s initial home visit with the family, he/she collects information about families’ observances, traditions, and preferences which can help in planning a culturally sensitive and meaningful program throughout the year. Individual decisions about which holidays will be included will be made every year and other times of the year when children and families leave or enter the program.
- If children in our classrooms do not celebrate any holidays, we will work with the family to come up with a plan for meeting their child’s needs so they are not left out. Even the most experienced teachers can lose sight of developmentally appropriate objectives and practices. On the other hand, teachers concerned about how to meet the needs of their very diverse student populations cannot choose not to celebrate holidays at all. Because the components of children’s everyday lives are what drive curriculum in a Creative Curriculum classroom, not celebrating holidays is not responsive to children’s needs. Teachers need to work with the families in the class to find the appropriate balance year to year.
- The following information from Creative Curriculum is provided to guide teachers in observing this policy appropriately:
  1. **Make sure celebration activities do not become the whole curriculum.** Holidays should have no more significance or emphasis than any other subject that is explored in the classroom at any time during the year.
  2. **Remember that preschool children, with their limited understanding of time concepts, may not remember what their families did last year and may have difficulty thinking about celebrations that will take place several weeks from now.**
  3. **Think about other ways to respond to what children notice about the observance.** For example, many objects children notice – pumpkins, gourds,

lights, candles, decorated trees – can become materials for scientific investigations rather than holiday-related activities. These can be made use of in learning opportunities.

4. **Think about ways to involve family members.** Invite family members in to talk about their family customs and to share special objects related to the observance or holiday.
5. **Preserve the regular routines of the classroom.** Remember that holidays can be over stimulating for young children. Following the simple routines that they have learned in the classroom can be comforting.
6. **Keep activities simple and low-key.** With this in mind, look for books that describe different practices. Learn songs (non-religious) from different cultures and about traditions. Consider what related objects can be made available for children to explore in interest areas.
7. **Incorporate open-ended activities that give children choices about what they make and how their creations are used.** For example, Julie Bisson, in her book Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs, suggests an art activity like making homemade wrapping paper that can be used for holiday gifts or at any time of the year. She also mentions making candleholders with play dough or clay. Her point is that these products can be used differently by children in different families. With this approach, it may not be necessary to find alternative activities for children who, because of their religious beliefs, may not participate in holiday celebrations.
8. **When in doubt, remember that “less is more”. Listen to the children.** Respond to a child who talks about Santa Claus a lot by showing him books about Santa Claus without having the whole class focus on Santa Claus for the month.
9. **What may be most important to the children is that the teacher remain calm and relaxed at this time of year. Then teachers can respond to the questions children ask about and build holiday activities and celebrations that do not take over but that acknowledge children’s own experiences and respond to their interests and those of their families.**