Children follow the same development pattern (e.g., they learn to crawl before they learn to walk), but they have different growth rates (e.g., one may talk at age two, another at age three). In DoDEA, your child is viewed as an individual with their uniquely-timed growth pattern. The early learning programs in DoDEA integrate the curriculum lessons with adult and peer interactions to align with the developmental level of each child. All programs and services exhibit a safe and nurturing environment that encourages a child's physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and language development. The learning experiences are meaningful and relevant, helping children to make connections between what is being taught and their own life and experiences. Thus, when you come into a DoDEA early childhood classroom, you'll see teachers using familiar objects and conducting activities similar to those you do at home. Making a connection between school experiences and home helps a child accept the challenges of new learning.

An essential part of early development depends upon a child's opportunity to be involved with his/her environment. Children are encouraged to explore, investigate, and respond to a variety of materials provided in their classrooms and in their home environment. DoDEA's Sure Start Program, prekindergarten (Pre-K) program and Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities are based on a hands-on, interactive, interest-based approach. The DoDEA standards are embedded in the experiences and activities of prekindergarten classroom interest areas such as Computers, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Sand and Water, Library, Outdoors, Music and Movement, Cooking, Discovery, Art and Blocks.

**Developmentally appropriate Preschool classrooms encourage:**

- growth of children's self-esteem;
- their cultural identities;
- their independence;
- individual strengths.
Young children come to school eager to learn and possess an innate curiosity. Preschool children will begin to develop control of their own behavior through the guidance and support of warm, caring adults. Teachers will provide young children what they need to grow socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually through a center-based approach, which is exhibited in the following ways:

- Children have access to various activities and experiences throughout the day, such as block building, dramatic play, picture books, paints and other art materials, exploration with sand and water, music and movement, cooking and table toys such as legos, pegboards, and puzzles.
- Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day.
- Student work is displayed in the classroom (e.g. children's original artwork, their writing with inventive spelling, and dictated stories) to honor their individuality and foster a sense of accomplishment.
- Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence.
- Assessment in the classroom is ongoing, authentic and used for the purpose of planning, addressing individual children's needs and monitoring progress.
- A preschool child's physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language development are advanced through the teaching of the DoDEA College and Career Ready Standards using a balance of teacher and child directed learning along with the adopted curriculum.

Individual early learning classrooms will vary, but all DoDEA early learning classrooms will have one thing in common: the focus will be on the development of the child as a whole.

DoDEA’s Prekindergarten program enrolls all four year olds in the Americas and Guam locations.

DoDEA’s Sure Start program enrolls eligible four years olds in Europe, the Pacific and Cuba locations.

DoDEA's Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD) is provided in the Americas, Europe and the Pacific for children ages three to five years of age who demonstrate a significant difference in actual functioning when compared with the functioning of a nondisabled child of the same chronological age. Eligibility determination is required under special education requirements.

DoDEA does not offer programs for three year olds, outside of Preschool Special Education. For typically developing children, DoDEA Preschool programs begin at age four.

**Prekindergarten (Pre-K) (DoDEA Americas and Guam)**

Pre-K is a partial day, standards-based program that serves all eligible military dependents and families in schools who live on stateside installations with DoDEA Americas schools. Pre-K programs implement a comprehensive curriculum promoting child development and learning in the following domains and content areas: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts. DoDEA Pre-K programs are developmentally appropriate; follow an adopted curriculum, and provide safe, caring, learning environments which engage young children in intentional learning experiences. Current adopted DoDEA College and Career Ready Standards and curriculum materials are implemented in the Pre-K classroom.
**Enrollment Eligibility**

Prekindergarten is a program for eligible military dependents who are currently living on a military installation, stateside or Guam, with a DoDEA Americas school and meet the four year old age requirement (must turn four years old by September 1 of the current school year).

**Sure Start (DoDEA Europe, Pacific and Cuba)**

Sure Start is a full day preschool program that serves eligible military children and families living overseas. In addition to offering a high-quality educational program that reflects best practices in the field, Sure Start also provides health and nutrition, social, and parent involvement services. Close collaboration between families, schools, and the installation community is viewed as essential and a required part of the program. This multipronged approach to the delivery of services distinguishes Sure Start from all other DoDEA programs. Current adopted DoDEA College and Career Ready Standards and curriculum materials are implemented in the Sure Start classroom.

**Enrollment Eligibility**

Sure Start is a program for command sponsored four year old dependents (must turn four years old by September 1 of the enrolling school year). Children qualify for Sure Start based on the rank of the sponsor: E1-E4 or civilian rank equivalent is the first priority, E5 or civilian rank equivalent is the second priority, E6-E7 or civilian rank equivalent is the third priority and E8-E9 or civilian rank equivalent is the fourth priority. Additional selection criteria may be applied, see your local school for information.

**Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD) (DoDEA Americas, Europe and Pacific)**

Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities offers eligible young children with disabilities specially designed instruction, support, and services to meet their identified individualized learning needs. Current adopted DoDEA College and Career Ready Standards and curriculum materials for preschool are used to support the implementation of each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Curriculum and instruction includes focus on development of individual skills such as: expressive/receptive communication, language development, motor skills, and social skill development.

The purpose of special education services is to enable students to successfully develop to their fullest potential by providing a free appropriate public education in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as implemented by DoD Instruction 1342.12, "Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents."

**Enrollment Eligibility**
Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities are provided for children three to five years of age who demonstrate an unexpected delay in developmental functioning when compared with the functioning of a non-disabled child of the same chronological age or have been identified as having a specific disability. Eligibility for PSCD is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process that includes standardized evaluation instruments and is confirmed by observations and professional judgment of early intervention or related services professionals.

Additional information: DoDEA Special Education Services

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