

READY, SET, GROW!

Board of Directors/Owners Statement of Understanding

Ready, Set, Grow! Project is an accreditation facilitation organization and we are funded by the Plough Foundation. Early childhood accreditation is awarded to programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In order to achieve accreditation, programs have to engage in a voluntary, rigorous self-study, make improvements, be visited by an assessor, and be reviewed by a national commission and judged to be in compliance with the high quality standards set by NAEYC.

Part of the preparation for accreditation is to ensure that the center's director meet all of the Program Administrator qualifications. Among these is that the director has to have had nine credit hours in leadership and management of early childhood programs. RSG! will support the director in taking these three classes, purchase all the books, and pay application fees to the U of M. Seventy-five to 85% of the tuition may be paid for through a scholarship from TECTA provided the director attends an orientation of 30 hours.

The director must also have had a concentration of course work in early childhood education or a closely related field and NAEYC has identified several pathways to achieve this particular requirement. RSG! will guide the director through these requirements and provide networking opportunities.

During 2009-2010 period RSG! will offer support in beginning the accreditation process, depending on the readiness of the center. Centers will be able to apply for funding through NAEYC and TECTA to pay for self-study materials. Our staff will help directors plan timelines, understand criteria, and the accreditation process.

NAEYC accreditation standards are substantially more comprehensive than licensing standards. While the accreditation process examines the total program, emphasis is placed on the quality of interactions among teachers and children and quality of the program's curriculum—what really happens to the children throughout the day. Accreditation helps families identify high-quality programs. The Ready, Set, Grow! initiative was created to help more programs achieve the highest level of quality in Shelby County. If selected, program resources and funding will help a center with a variety of program and facility needs to meet the accreditation

As the center completes the accreditation self-study and makes improvements it is the responsibility of the center's board or owners to consider how to effectively find and utilize other resources (from parent fees, fund-raisers, other grants, etc.) so that additional elements supporting program quality are in place. In order for accreditation standards to be met and sustained, the center has to have many effective administrative practices and systems in place. Some of the accreditation standards, particularly around staffing, may have financial implications to a center if they are not already in place. We estimate the accreditation proves to be done in 2010-2012.

It is not necessary for a center to fully meet every NAEYC standard in order to get accredited. Each center is looked at as a "whole program", whereby weaknesses in one area may be offset with strengths in another. Centers must meet at least 80% of the assessed criteria in each of the ten standards. Therefore, a commitment to meeting every NAEYC standard is not required to participate in Ready, Set, Grow!. RSG is a crucial link to the accreditation process, yet our current funding focuses upon education and beginning the self-study. *However, center leadership should understand that there may be financial implications to meeting NAEYC standards at their center that will not be met by Ready, Set, Grow! program funding.*

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Examples of these types of standards:

10.E.07—Staff are provided space and time away from children during the day. When staff work directly with children for more than four hours, staff are provided breaks of at least 15 minutes in each four-hour period; 10.B.12—The maximum recommended staff-child ratios for children 12 to 28 months is 1:4; for children 2½ to 3 years old the ratio is 1:9; and for 4 and 5 year olds the ratio is 1:10.

Please sign the following statement.

We are committed to creating and sustaining a high-quality early childhood program. We recognize that we may need to develop and/or differently use financial resources beyond the Ready, Set, Grow! funding to meet the spirit and letter of the accreditation standards at the end of self-study and improvements plan 2010-2012. Furthermore, we understand that the director of our center is required to attend a course of study at the University of Memphis from August, 2008 – December, 2009. As well teachers and assistant teachers will need to be supported as they increase their educational qualifications. We understand that accommodations may need to be made to enable our staff to pursue these studies, and agree to be supportive of our staff's efforts.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESIDENT OR CENTER OWNER

DATE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (if applicable)

DATE

CENTER DIRECTOR

DATE