

Self Assessment 2023-2024

A series of meetings were held in the fall and winter of 2023 to look at our program systems and goals to determine how well our Head Start program is meeting both performance standards and making progress toward our identified goals.

Performance Standards are reflected upon by each coordinator in their given area and strengths and weaknesses are identified.

For each grant goal, including School Readiness, a separate meeting inviting select staff, parents and community members was conducted and a series of meaningful questions are asked to provide our program with insights on what next steps might be taken to strengthen the identified goal area.

Results of these meetings are shared with the Planning Team and Policy Council before a final report is written. From the final report an action plan for the following year is created identifying five action steps to focus on in the following year.

Systems and Compliance

We looked closely at our Enrollment and Recruitment Systems due to our status of being under enrolled. We wanted to make sure that our own processes weren't limiting families' access to our programs. Based upon this information, we created action plans for both Enrollment and Recruitment.

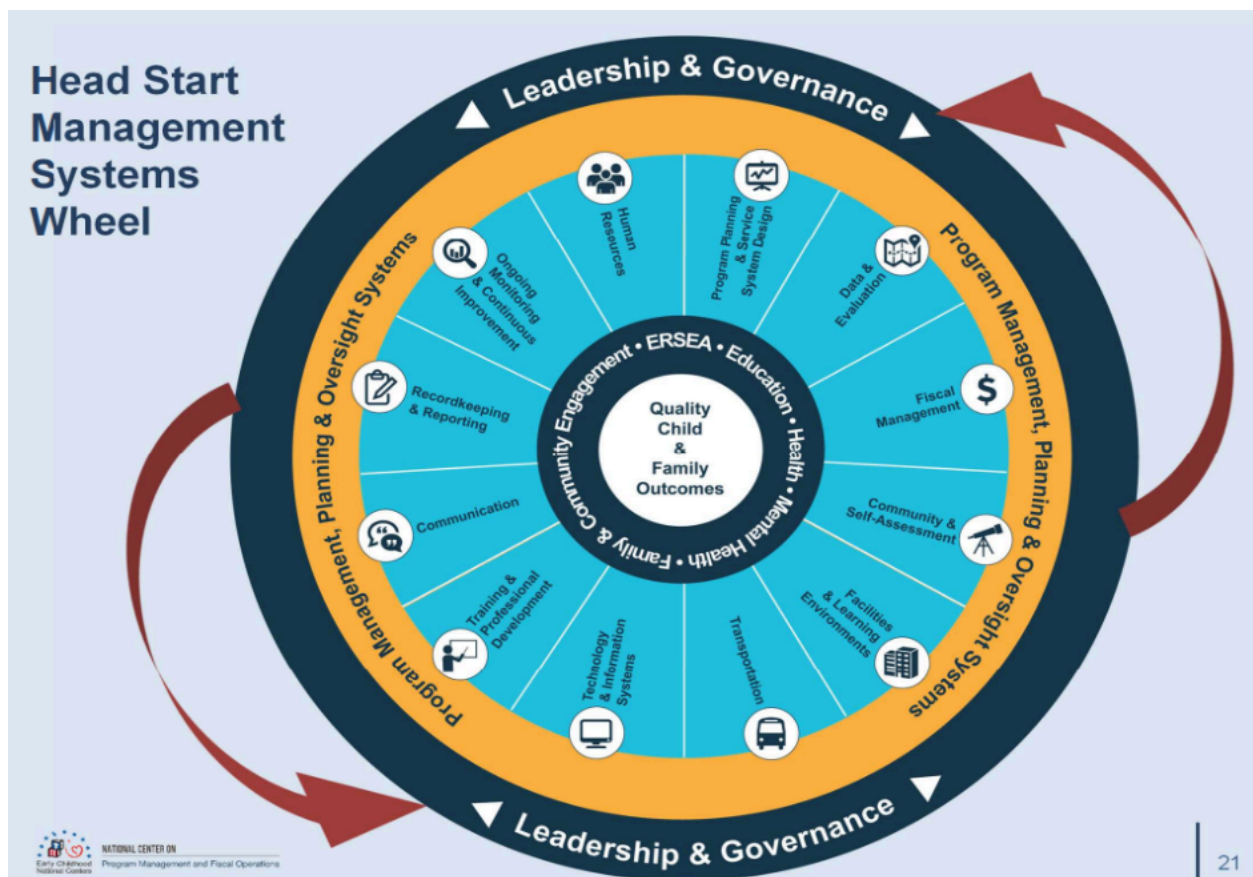
We have maintained 90% enrollment for most of the program year. Limitations include extremely high needs in classrooms creating environments that feel unsafe for staff. While we have maintained full staffing within our classrooms, we have had vacancies in positions designed to give an additional layer of support in classrooms (float paraprofessionals, ECSE paraprofessionals).

Safe Delivery of Preschool Students has been successfully implemented this year despite many challenges faced by our transportation department. Students were only dropped off with adults

authorized by parents to receive children and bus concern forms were utilized by parents, staff, and drivers if things were not going as planned.

Internal monitoring has provided evidence that active supervision is in place at all sites and that classrooms are implementing both Creative Curriculum and the Pyramid Model to fidelity.

Better aligning our systems with the Head Start Management Wheel is one thing we would like to add to the monitoring system. Planning regular meetings with the school district departments identified in the wheel would help us better understand and be understood by departments that operate almost entirely from the perspective of a K-12 school district.



PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

I. School Readiness

To align with Duluth Public School's World's Best Workforce Plan, our overall school readiness goals are worded similarly to others found in this plan.

2022-2023 Goal: By Spring of 2023, 85% of 4 year old children who participate in Duluth Public Schools preschool programs will score within the "End of the Year Before Kindergarten Range" in 4 out of 5 domains as measured by the Desired Results Developmental Profile. Domains include Approaches to Learning, Social & Emotional Development, Language & Literacy, Cognition, and Physical Development. Growth across all demographic groups will be monitored.

Percent of Students Who Scored within the End of the Year Before Kindergarten Range in 4 of 5 Domains	2022-2023
All students	84.75
American Indian	92
Asian	>98
Hispanic or Latino	84.25
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	*
Other Indigenous Peoples	*
Black or African American	79
White	90
Two or More Races	79
English Learner	>98
Special Education	72.5
Free/Reduced Priced Meals	86.25

I. Grant Goal: High Quality Inclusive Classrooms: Navigating Trauma through Collaboration with Early Childhood Special Education.

We engage in Professional Learning Communities with Early Childhood Special Education. PLCs this year have been happening at sites with teams that selected a program wide goal to work toward. We identified goals in the areas of reading, math, and social-emotional development.

By May of 2024

- 77% of children will increasingly develop strategies for regulating feelings and behavior, becoming less reliant on adult guidance over time.
- 85% of children will show an increasing awareness of all the sounds that make up language (phonological awareness), including the ability to manipulate them in language
- 90% of children will show an increasing ability to add and subtract small quantities of numbers

*as measured by the Desired Results Developmental Profile

Our program also identified a goal both derived from and measured by the Pyramid model. Using indicator 33: Individualized intensive interventions will be provided to all teaching staff and used by staff to reduce aggressive behaviors from 50% of all Behavior Incident Reports to 40% of all Behavior Incident Reports by May of 2024.

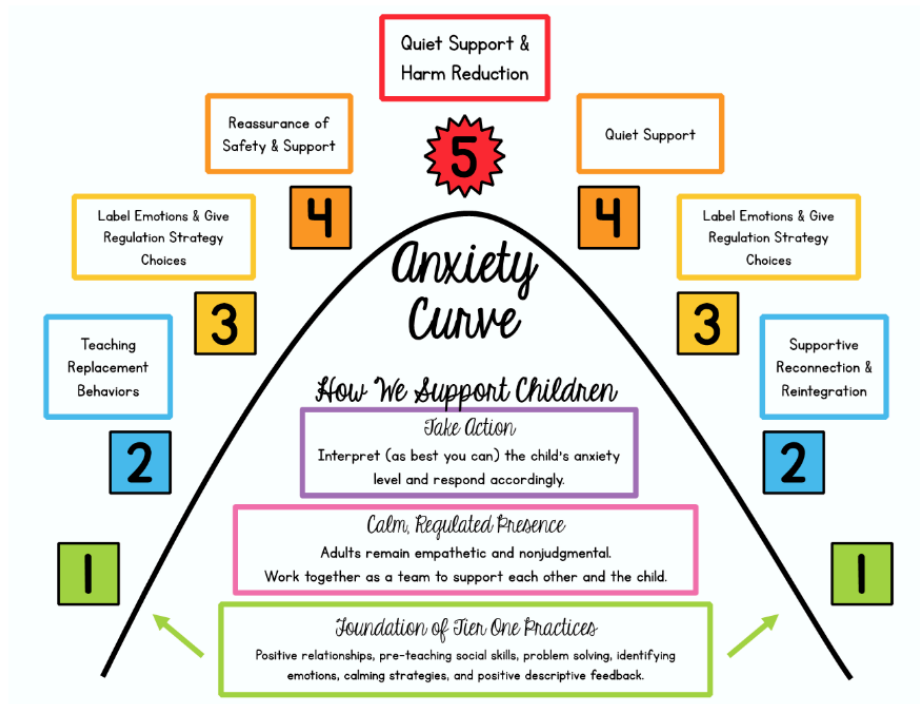
This goal specifically targets what we have referred to as the INGS: Hitting, Biting, Kicking, Throwing, and Spitting. Last year we had 1,039 incidents involving those behaviors in our classrooms. It was the first year we had reliable data that spanned the entire school year.

Family Advocates are working to increase connections between families from 10% to 30% and the use of Ready Rosie, our research based Parent Education curriculum with messages delivered via text, from 10% to 30% as measured by Parent Survey.

PLC groups are meeting regularly and have expressed how beneficial it is to spend some time reflecting on challenges together and then to work on ideas to help move the dial forward on the selected goal. We look forward to seeing results at the end of the year.

Other topics this Self Assessment team discussed are how to best support staff when significant challenging behaviors are happening in classrooms. Having ECSE staff and our Mental Health staff in classrooms to model language and strategies was identified as the most beneficial response in a staff survey.

Our Pyramid Implementation team has also created program wide Professional Development describing how to best support children at various points along the Anxiety Curve.



The PD created has been so well received, we plan on answering the Call for Presenters for next year's National Head Start Association Conference to present it to colleagues from across the country.

Capacity

One major concern for our program is the sheer number of students on IEPs. We recognize this as a community need. We know that our program does very well with this group, however the need to have typically developing students is a major component of a high quality inclusive classroom, which leads to regular conversations about how best to navigate this situation. It is a conversation built on the word CAPACITY.

Early Childhood Mental Health Focus Group

Having had a 47% increase in Mental Health Referrals in the 2022-23 school year, we held an Early Childhood Mental Health Focus Group and invited community experts including staff from Amberwing, Northwoods, the Northland Foundation, and district staff from a variety of departments. One common theme expressed was the importance of parent education and support. When children's mental health is suffering it is often because their family is struggling. This parent-child dyad is where energy must be focused to have the highest impact. We are still working our way through recommendations based upon this focus group, but we felt a need to let our community know the changes we have seen. The higher number of referrals has again occurred this year, with 47 children being referred for therapeutic services outside our program. For children with the most serious behavioral concerns, there are 8 spots available at Northwoods Little Learners program for preschool children who are not able to be successful in a typical preschool program. Those 8 spots have been full since December, so there is virtually nowhere for families to turn when their children need intensive support due to severe behavioral needs. This remains an unmet community need.

Grant Goal: Walking the Talk of Equity

Oshki-Inwewin, our preschool with a focus on Ojibwe language and culture continues to draw families from across the district. Families are pleased with this option that let's families know we see and honor the culture they come from. We have expanded some Ojibwe language into all of our classrooms and are providing some nutrition experiences including wild rice and maple sugar, which lend themselves well to discussing traditional Ojibwe culture.

While we feel we have been responsive to the Native American community, we can't help but ask ourselves what are we doing to recognize and honor Black culture in our program?

We continue to work to make connections within communities of color to best support and encourage family connections to these same organizations.

Increasing Representation

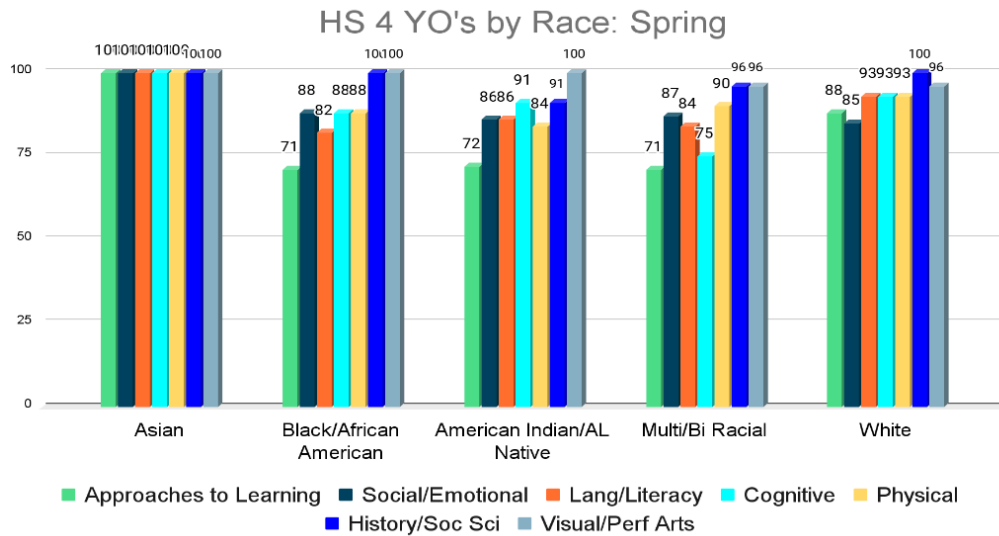
Our BIPOC Artist in Residence program has provided 10 weeks of art in most full day classrooms providing classrooms with experiences led by people of color. This was one way to increase representation of people of color in our classrooms.

We are also working on a staff recruitment video as we anticipate 2 teaching positions to open this year due to retirements. We see this as an opportunity to diversify our staff.

Closing Opportunity Gaps: We continue to close opportunity gaps with nature based programming, streamlined scholarships to the Duluth Children's Museum, and Safety Around Water classes for 4 classes each fall at the YMCA. This partnership also provides us with Day Passes for every Head Start family.

In two Self Assessment meetings the idea of swim lessons for parents came up. Statistically, people of color are more likely to drown because they have not had access to swim lessons. The YMCA has agreed to offer swim lessons for Head Start parents next year, with childcare provided.

Achievement Data by Race



Anti-racist Book Club: 8 people participated in last year’s book club where the book, “White Fragility: Why it’s so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism” by Robin Diangelo was read and discussed. This year’s title will be “My Grandmother’s Hands”. Our Inclusion Coordinator began offering these book studies to only preschool staff, but this year she is offering the class to any interested teacher through News and Views, the school district PD program.

IV. Grant Goal: Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health, Wellness, and Safety

Nature Based programming and our partnership with the YMCA discussed previously also impact this grant goal.

Providing staff and parents with wellness opportunities have become the focus of this grant goal. Intentionally including connection and fun into staff meetings, and providing staff with opportunities to connect outside of the work day has been key to this grant goal. Our Health and Wellness Committee provides opportunities for social connection, creative experiences, and monthly health challenges. Last year, up to 24 staff participated in monthly wellness challenges, up to 35 people attended Social Club, and up to 18 staff participated in craft events. We also had up to 8 staff participate in the Yoga club.

Health Data: At the end of the year last year 87% of children were up to date on Dental exams, 83% were up to date on Well Child Checks, and 100% were up to date on Immunizations.

Safe Delivery of Preschool Students (Transportation): Last year we had an unsafe incident where a child was dropped off without an adult present. This was reported to the Office of Head Start and resulted in a Deficiency for our program. Since implementing the Safe Delivery of Preschool Students Plan, we have seen bus drivers following the protocol and feel that despite the transportation department being understaffed, our children were safe on buses.

Safety in Classrooms where student aggression is prevalent:

All staff are trained in

- CPI (Crisis Prevention Interventions)
- Circle of Security (attachment parenting with a classroom angle)
- Pyramid Model (which includes access to a Practice Based Coach)

We have on staff:

- 1.75 FTE social workers in our program who are available to model and support interventions
- Float paraprofessional that can provide extra classrooms support or cover absences

Preschool Support Team: consisting of Ed Coordinator, Inclusion Coordinator, Mental Health Coordinator, and Director will come and meet with any team requesting support for how to navigate challenging behaviors.

A. Self Assessment Area: Parent Family and Community Engagement

Four Family Advocates attended a national conference on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement this year to connect with each other and to be inspired by other Head Start programs' success stories for how to re-engage families following the pandemic.

Since then, they have provided opportunities for families to connect at City Wide events at the Zoo, Bayfront Park, and school sites. We have targeted Father and Father Figures for events at the YMCA, the North Shore Scenic Railroad.

Family Advocates more commonly work with individual families helping people find their way through crises, connecting them to community services, and helping parents set goals and take steps toward them.

Utilizing the Parent, Family and Community Engagement tool to target a goal area would help to narrow the focus of efforts and fortify use of the tool itself, as well as the data collection associated with the tool.

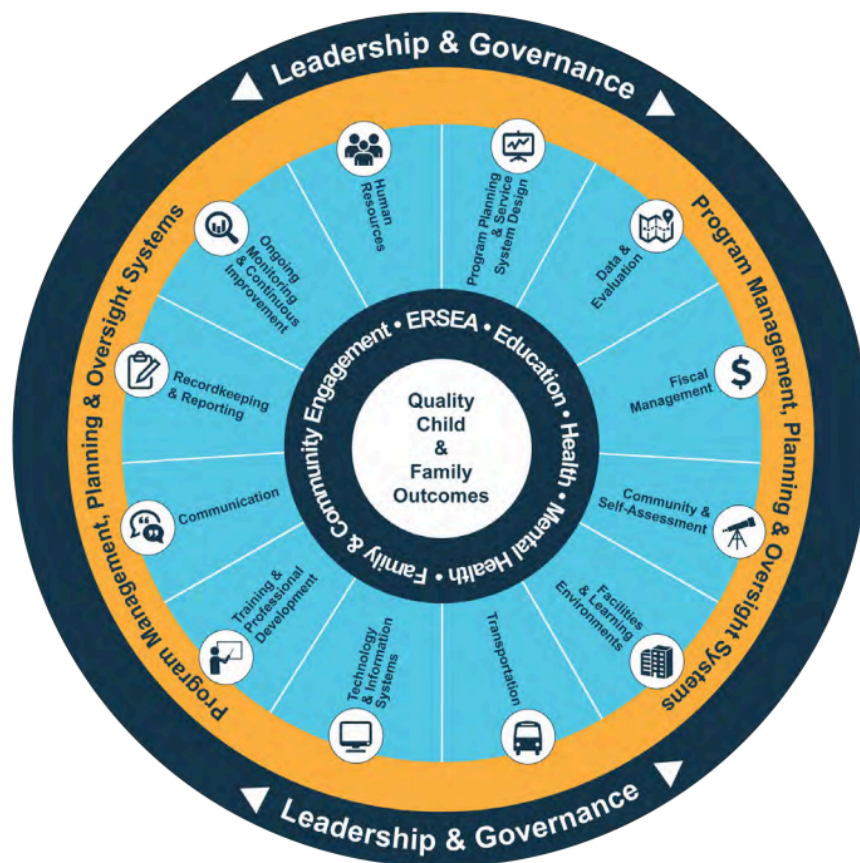
B. Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance

Our program has been under enrolled since the pandemic. This has had us placed on an Under Enrollment Plan by the Office of Head Start. Last year, Head Start enrollment suffered primarily because our half day programs were not filling. We converted two of those half day programs to full days and have been at 90% enrolled for most of this school year. We have not reached 100% because teachers are struggling with challenging behaviors in the classroom and asking us to hold off on adding new students. Safety of staff and students are considerations, as well as staff retention. In response to this we have increased the hours of our second Mental Health Coordinator by 25%. Currently we have one full time and one .75 Social Workers working in our program. Both have the necessary credentials to provide therapy to children below the age of five.

We have also done a deep dive into our Enrollment and Recruitment processes to make sure that our own systems were not part of the issue. We found places where improvements could be made and we created action plans for both of those areas.

Recommended Course Corrections and Continuous Quality Improvement

1. We will fully blend all funding streams to better balance classrooms and offer more families served by Duluth Preschool the most desirable option: full day, five day.
2. We will work closely with the Early Childhood Special Education Department to provide services to children in a variety of program options.
3. We will increase the capacity of Family Advocates to collect and use data on progress in all seven of the Family Engagement Outcomes (family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, families as lifelong learners, family engagement in transitions, family connections to peers and community, and families as advocates and leaders)
4. We will systematically dive deeper into the Head Start Management Wheel, prioritizing Human Resources in the coming year. With new training offered from the National Head Start Association, we feel we can improve orientation and onboarding of new staff.
5. We will provide swim lessons for Head Start parents at the YMCA, with childcare provided.



This 2023-2024 Self Assessment Plan has been presented and approved by the Head Start Governing Board and the Head Start Policy Council.

Jill Lofald, School Board Chair

Scott Longaker, Policy Council Chair