

## **Self Assessment 2021**

**Introduction:** Duluth Head Start serves preschool aged children in 7 out of Duluth's 9 elementary schools. With the school district as our grantee, we are positioned well to bridge the gap between home and school.

### **Methodology:**

We are shifting the timeline of our Self Assessment to the end of the year, versus March, when it has historically been done. This gives us an entire data set to use which seems more in line with what we are charged to capture.

Data reviewed: DRDP results: Year end 2021; Program Information Report (PIR); Parent Engagement; Attendance; Staff and Parent Surveys

Team: Planning Team: (representation from each site and job role; parent); Becky Crane, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator

### **Key Insights:**

2020-2021 was an unusual pandemic year.

**Model Changes:** Following our school district model, we offered programming in three different modes: Hybrid, Distance, and Full In Person.

**Hybrid:** Half of the class came Monday and Tuesday, we cleaned on Wednesday, the other half came on Thursday and Friday.

For half day sessions, the am class came Monday and Tuesday, we cleaned on Wednesday, the pm class came on Thursday and Friday. Sessions were lengthened to 5.75 hours. Class sizes were capped at \_\_\_\_.

\*Half day sessions remained in Hybrid the full year, as we continued to feel that mid week cleaning would keep potential transmission of Covid-19 down. We also felt it important to maintain a consistent routine for the classes that often have our youngest children.

**Distance Learning:** There was an approximate month of distance learning. Families were provided with tablets and hot spots if needed, and teachers met virtually with children and posted lessons on the SeeSaw platform. Attendance was challenging to track as there are different ways of accessing SeeSaw: a parent account and a child's account. Additionally, we had a full Distance Learning class that operated the entire year with virtual programming.

**Absences:** There were more absences than a typical year. Quarantines and Isolation due to positive Covid-19 tests, meant that kids were not in school as they would be in a typical year.

**Enrollment was low:** Many families opted to keep children out of preschool with pandemic rates climbing in our community. Many classrooms experienced smaller class sizes. Very few behavior concerns were brought up as a result.

**Parent Engagement:** To keep transmission down, parents were not allowed to enter schools. All parent engagement happened offsite or virtually. For some families this was a great option, but for others it was not engaging enough. It takes a special skill set to engage with families virtually.

### **Topics and Questions for Self Assessment:**

- 1. Are students making adequate progress across all domains and demographics?**
- 2. How are we maintaining our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion?**
- 3. Are families engaging with our program in ways that create meaningful change in their lives?**
- 4. Are teachers feeling supported as they navigate challenging behaviors in their classrooms?**

### **Progress on Goals:**

#### **School Readiness**

- Despite less time in the program, students made very good progress. Students with IEPs made significant gains across all domains.
- Demographically, students of color, while making great progress, remained lower than their white counterparts, particularly in the area of cognition, with Black and Mixed Race students scoring below 50% in this area.
- Students in half days made similar gains to students in full days, despite only being in school two longer days per week.
- Head Start eligible three year olds scored above 82% in four out of five domains. The fifth domain, self regulation, scored 77%.
- Head Start eligible four year olds scored between 64 and 75% in all domains. (VPK and School Readiness funded children scored between 75 and 81% in all domains).
- Females scored better across all domains.

- Head Start eligible students on IEPs made significant progress, moving up 20-49% in all domains.
- Smaller class sizes due to limited enrollment, coupled with more lengthy absences had teachers identifying fewer behavior concerns.

### **Equity Team**

- Parents on the Equity Team felt that students of color need to see teachers of color at school. We have very low staff turn over, but this was expressed over and over. Every effort will be made to have people of color in leadership roles in classrooms.
- Parents on the Equity Team also encourage the use of books and materials that reflect the racial makeup of the class.

### **PFCE**

- Many Family Strengths Surveys were completed in the fall, and around half were completed in the spring.
- Most families were looking for crisis assistance
- Most families hear about our program through word of mouth.
- One third of families felt they did not receive information that helped them understand their children better.
- Close to half of families did not make connections with other families
- Parents were not allowed in school buildings to reduce the spread of Covid-19

### **PIR**

- 34% of students are overweight or obese in the fall.

### **Staff Survey**

- Staff seemed to appreciate holding virtual staff meetings.
- Smaller class sizes seemed to result in fewer challenging behaviors.
- The times challenging behavior was most common was during transitions and teacher directed large groups.
- Aggressive behavior, running away, and high volume yelling and crying were the top challenging behaviors.

- Keeping an online platform like SeeSaw allows teachers to easily share photos with families and the program to share program wide information with families.

## **Recommendations**

### **School Readiness:**

The Social Emotional Domain saw the lowest scores in the DRDP. This will continue to be an emphasis in classrooms, particularly as the classroom experience as we know it was interrupted multiple times due to Covid-19 in the 2020-21 school year.

Continued monitoring of the achievement of all sub groups will be important as we work to achieve success for all.

We must also determine if our current process of monitoring rate of growth is sufficient, or if we should also have target goals within each domain.

### **Equity Recommendations:**

Closing the opportunity gap needs to be an ongoing goal for our program, to assure that all our preschool students have similar experiences as their peers.

Diversifying our staff in any way possible should continue to be a focus as vacancies occur. If we are not drawing a diverse pool of applicants, we need to access diverse representation from community partners in any ways possible, to provide connections and role modeling critical to students and families of color.

### **PFCE Recommendations:**

Each site needs to offer a menu of options for families to participate in, and determine at the site level, how to best reach families. For some sites, that may be a Family Night, for others small groups of families gathering for coffee and conversation.

When parents are allowed to fully participate, we will need to spend time rebuilding the Parent Committee to advise and steer the direction of family engagement at the site level.

Data tracking in this area will continue to be improved. Close monitoring of data going into Child Plus will help us identify where additional procedures need to be implemented.

Concerted effort needs to be given to make sure all families are given information that helps them understand their child better, and that they have opportunities to connect with other families.

**Health and Wellness:**

With teacher burnout and stress a serious concern, we need to respond to concerns teachers are sharing, and do what we can to best support them.

We need to support Health and Wellness with students, families, and staff by continuing to partner with the YMCA, and other local organizations with similar health and wellness goals.

Respectfully submitted to the Governing Board and Policy Council for approval on April 5, 2022. As we shift this process to June, a second self assessment will be completed at that time for the 2021-2022 school year.

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Signature of Governing Board Chair

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Signature of Policy Council Chair

