



2020/2021 Self-Assessment Report

Head Start of La Porte County



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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Head Start of La Porte County, now operated under Paladin, Inc., has been a staple in the La Porte County community for decades. The program is center and home-based and is currently dispersed among 2 on-site locations in Michigan City, Indiana including a Michigan City Area Schools site and Paladin’s Imagination Station Child Development Center. The program is funded to serve 189 children, of which 165 receive full day on-site services. This self-assessment covers the program’s second year of operations.

CONTEXT FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Head Start of La Porte County conducts self-assessment annually in accordance with Head Start Performance Standard 1302.102(b)(2) to evaluate progress towards program goals as well as to influence future strategic planning.
2. During the month of June, 2021, the program conducted 6 self-assessment workshops to address each program goal. During these assessment workshops, participants reviewed data gathered over the year relating to each program goal. In addition, each group reviewed progress toward compliance and/or excellence relevant to a Head Start Program Performance Standard related to each goal.
3. Each goal and set of data were presented to each specialized self-assessment team to conduct further analysis.
4. Each self-assessment team, including administrative staff, members of the governing body, and community partners, were tasked with evaluating the data presented to them in their specialized groups in order to collaborate, analyze, and recommend.
5. Data sources reviewed include community partner data, family services, child and family outcomes, children’s development, health, literacy, school readiness, and program quality data.
6. Discoveries and recommendations from each self-assessment team will be used to inform program planning and continuous improvement.

II. METHODOLOGY

The annual Self-Assessment is a five phase process, encased by a pre and post phase.

1. Pre-Phase – Review of Program Data
2. Phase 1 – Designing the Process
3. Phase 2 – Engaging the Team
4. Phase 3 – Analyzing & Dialogue

5. Phase 4 – Recommendations
6. Phase 5 – Preparing the Report
7. Post-Phase – Program Planning

Pre-Phase – Review of Program Data

Dates	Action	Purpose
4/2021-5/2021	<i>Self-Assessment Planning Meetings</i>	Collect & prepare program data and determine focus areas for Self-Assessments

The pre-phase consisted of the collection and preparation of program data aligning with our five-year program goals. Each department manager collected data to outline any progress made towards the goals, and utilized sources such as ChildPlus reports and participation records to present to the management team. Team leaders also prepared 1-3 Head Start Performance Standards for their team to review and analyze. Considering self-assessment areas of focus, the team decided to complete a self-assessment on progress toward each of our 6 program goals, as follows:

Goals	Focus Areas
Increase healthy lifestyles and well-being for children, families, and staff in our service area	Evaluate the program’s effectiveness in providing a rounded staff wellness program, promoting healthy lifestyles through targeted educational engagement opportunities, and remediating lead related issues in our service area.
The quality of Early Childhood Education programs will increase in La Porte County	Evaluate the program’s progress towards earning NAEYC accreditation at all of our centers, increasing the number of qualified staff in our service area, and engaging in professional development opportunities with community providers to increase the baseline knowledge of best practices.
Increase literacy in our service area	Evaluate the program’s effectiveness in promoting family cultures where reading is central to home learning experiences, increasing accessibility of quality literature to families, and supporting adult and dual language learners through an ESL program.

Instill a culture of reciprocal partnerships in our service area where agencies work in concert to meet community needs

Evaluate the program’s effectiveness in increasing the number of active partnerships and joint engagements throughout La Porte County

Improve healthy family functioning in our service area

Evaluate the program’s effectiveness in increasing family engagement by providing a wide range of opportunities that address family’s self-identified needs, increasing employment levels of primary caregivers in our service area, and improving positive parenting strategies in our service area.

School readiness goals

Evaluate the program’s effectiveness in enhancing children’s language/literacy development; mathematic development and scientific reasoning; self-regulation and problem solving; small and gross motor control; social and emotional development; and critical thinking skills.

Phase One – Designing the Process

Dates	Action	Purpose
5/2021	<i>Presentation of Self-Assessment Plan to the ECE Committee (BOD Designee)</i>	Gain approval of self-assessment plan

During phase one, the Self-Assessment plan and timeline were established and approved by the Policy Council and Early Childhood Committee. The plan included 6 separate cohort meetings to assess each program goal and relevant Head Start Performance Standard. Each group was specifically established to contain individuals with special interest, skills, or experience in the accompanying subject area they were reviewing.

Phase Two – Engage the Team

Dates	Action	Purpose
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5/2021	<i>Invitations and Detailed Information Sent to Self-Assessment Teams</i>	Invite and orient team members to the process and focus areas
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Phase Three – Analyze & Dialogue

Dates	Action	Purpose
6/1/2021	<i>Virtual presentation/meeting – data presentations</i>	Review and discuss Self-Assessment and program data
6/9/2021		
6/10/2021		

During the self-assessment meetings, administrative staff presented all data aligning with each goal and performance standard. Participants collaborated and dialogued over the course of each two-hour sessions to dissect the data presented and discuss the program’s presence in the community.

Phase Four – Recommendations

Dates	Action	Purpose
06/2021	<i>Recommendations and Debriefing</i>	Community makes recommendations based on discoveries and reports to admin staff

Phase four required each participant to record recommendations based on their discoveries. These reports were aggregated by administrative staff and will be used to inform future program planning.

Phase Five – Preparing the Report

Dates	Action	Purpose
6/2021	<i>Draft Self-Assessment Report</i>	Discoveries and recommendations from participants were compiled into a comprehensive report.

Phase five entailed the writing of the final Self-Assessment report, which included a compilation of all of the discoveries and recommendations of all participants, as well as strengths and areas for improvement.

Post-Phase Planning

Dates	Action	Purpose
6/23/2021	<i>Cabinet Meeting</i>	Present compiled report to the Policy Council, ECE Committee, and BOD. Make programmatic strategic decisions, complete program planning and develop improvement plans

Results from the Self-Assessment will be reviewed by the administrative team, Policy Council, ECE Committee, and BOD to inform programmatic decisions and guide program planning for continuous quality improvement.

III. SELF-ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Discoveries and recommendations produced from each Self-Assessment are outlined under the 6 goals. The administrative team will utilize the information to make decisions about program operations that will seek to improve service delivery and close any identified gaps in the program’s overall performance. Each recommendation is followed by the category it seeks to address/enhance.

1. Increase healthy lifestyles and well-being for children, families, and staff in our service area

- *Discovery: Promoting healthy lifestyles*
- *Recommendations:*

- Offer a YMCA scholarship for staff and families
 - Conduct surveys on home lifestyles, including a nutritional & physical assessment
 - Offer on-site yoga, exercise, and cooking classes for families
 - Consider hiring a P.E. teacher
 - Involve parents on site for classroom physical activity
 - Utilize new outdoor classroom as much as possible
 - Consider CATCH kids program
 - Use a pre and post survey to collect data
- *Discovery: Remediate lead in our service area*
 - *Recommendations:*
 - *Work closely with the health department*
 - *Increase parent awareness during in-person encounters*
 - *Help parents to identify risk factors (dust, paint, etc)*
 - *PNW Extension has grants available for lead remediation*
 - *Work with Jody for a survey in the fall 2021*

HSPSS Review

- *1302.46 Family Support Services for Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health*
 - (a) *Parent collaboration: Programs must collaborate with parents to promote children’s health and well-being by providing medical, oral, nutrition, and mental health education support services that are understandable to individuals, including individuals with low health literacy*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Provide information to families on mental health services*
 - *Partner with a chef to teach families how to cook*
 - *Survey families regarding their biggest health challenges in the past 18 months. Discover what is most important to families; meet them where they are; use language they can understand*
 - *Utilize the family interest survey to identify needs, and brainstorm how to meet family needs if they are non-responsive*
 - *Utilize the Health Assistant to set a primary focus on educating families; invite parents in for lunch, outdoor play, gross motor time*
 - *Hold engagement events with vendors that reflect our philosophy on nutrition, use incentives. Survey families on best days/times for events. Hold events at other places that are centrally located and easy to access for families*
 - *Emphasize and share our wins! Share stories from employees, families, and children on social media/newsletter*

2. The quality of Early Childhood Education programs will increase in La Porte County

- *Discovery: NAEYC Accreditation & Increasing quality of ECE providers*
- *Recommendations:*

- Higher level providers to mentor lower-level providers in our area through a collective group
- Advertise incentives to becoming PTQ rated
- *Discovery: Community Professional Development*
- *Recommendations:*
 - Participate in local IAIEYC chapter
 - Offer Master's level coaching to partner CDA applicants
 - Agency to be certified by CDA council
 - Partner with Geminus and Ivy Tech to offer online CDA classes
 - Post an ECE programs interview on Ivy Tech's website
 - Schedule campus visits at local colleges to talk about ECE programs
 - Add to CIP to be perceived as a resource and partner
 - Hold provider fair for either recruitment or peer collaboration
 - Call potential partners rather than email
 - Partner with MCAS to offer childcare to their employees

HSPSS Review

- 1303.1 Teaching and the Learning Environment
 - (b) *Effective teaching practices. (1) Teaching practices must:*
 - (i) *Emphasize nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security; are communication and language rich; promote critical thinking and problem-solving; social, emotional, behavioral, and language development; provide supportive feedback for learning motivate continued effort; and support all children's engagement in learning experiences and activities;*
 - (IV) *include developmentally appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts, and physical development that are focused toward achieving progress outlined in the HS ELOF*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *This performance standard is being successfully met within our program, but was shared with our participants to absorb and discuss the meaning of "quality" care, and how this meaning may differ from provider to provider. The recommendations given above were given with the details of this performance standard in mind.*

3. Increase literacy in our service area

- *Discovery: Promote reading & increase accessibility*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *For families: facilitate a "reading day" during the week; send home a book list in English and Spanish; encourage families to turn the closed captioning on at home; create program where families write stories and children draw pictures then read to class*
 - *Offer more incentives for reading program at HS*

- Offer free books/audible subscriptions/ABC Mouse subscriptions
 - Place books everywhere on-site; construct a free book box outside of all sites
 - Create a “Book Grandma” area at each site
 - Create a reading area for children in the piazzas
 - Host a book fair with opportunities for free books
 - Host a reading night where families wear pajamas and, bring blankets, and go to different spots throughout the building to read together; offer snacks
 - Internally: set goals for parent participation. Offer PD for staff to learn about other cultures. Put grant match materials in children’s folders with in-kind sheet
- Discovery: Supporting adult learners and individuals who are DLL
 - Recommendations:
 - Internally: Set a focus and staff member responsible for enhancing DLL services
 - Partner with Ivy Tech to offer staff basic Spanish courses
 - Enhance cultural art in the building
 - Host a cultural family night
 - DLL reading night hosted by dual speaking staff
 - Onsite adult literacy sessions
 - Facilitate a virtual book club; offer technology to families to participate
 - Celebrate families’ literary accomplishments

HSPSS Review

- 1302.31 Teaching and the Learning Environment
 - (b)(2) For dual language learners, a program must recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths and implement research-based teaching practices that support their development. These practices must:*
 - (ii) For a preschool age dual language learner, include teaching practices that focus on both English language acquisition and the continued development of the home language; or,*
 - (iii) If staff do not speak the home language of all children in the learning environment, include steps to support the development of the home language for dual language learners such as having culturally and linguistically appropriate materials available and other evidence-based strategies. Programs must work to identify volunteers who speak children’s home language/s who could be trained to work in the classroom to support children’s continued development of the home language.*
- Recommendations:
 - *This performance standard is currently being met by the program executing our curriculum in English and Spanish (representative of our current population), labeling all centers and materials in English and Spanish, maintaining 3 bi-lingual staff members in our program, participating in a dual language PD webinar, and celebrating a DLL week virtually and on-site with classroom activities and postings. Our recruitment and enrollment materials are available in English and Spanish, and our virtual learning*

platform, Learning Genie, automatically translates all posting and readings into other languages for families. The above recommendations will be applied to enhance our compliance towards this HSPPS.

4. Instill a culture of reciprocal partnerships in our service area where agencies work in concert to meet community needs

- *Discovery: Strengthening LEAs*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *In-person meetings w/parents, kindergarten teachers, and HS teachers during summer transitions*
 - *Kindergarten teachers and HS teachers shadow one another*
 - *Conduct meetings w/all pre-k and community reps to collaborate and support one another*
 - *Extend LEAs to private schools*
 - *Re-examine kindergarten readiness grant from Early Learning Indiana*
 - *Collaborate w/all school systems when planning special education services*
 - *Train with special education departments on developmental vs. behavioral*
 - *Continue virtual tours of schools*
 - *Survey HS and kindergarten teachers on needs for support*

- *Discovery: Giving back to the community*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Explore opportunities to provide early childhood information to parents: press releases, website*
 - *Make information easy to access*
 - *Review “vibrantlpcounty” to discover community needs*
 - *Create a Paladin award (spotlight) to give to businesses that are child/childcare friendly*
 - *Host Volunteer Days for families where we: make something to deliver to senior centers, pick up trash at the beach, plant food or flowers at a community location or business*

- *Discovery: Creating new partnerships*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *County park departments, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Family Advocates (CASA, visitation program), Geminus agencies (Early Learning Connections, Community Partners), Blue Chip, American Licorice, Minority Health Coalition, Swanson Center, Franciscan Health, LP Beacon Hospital, Fly High Youth Services, MC Housing Authority, employers*
 - *Push out to the community who we are*
 - *Speak at area service clubs/organizations (Rotary, Jaycees), then link with members on programs, volunteering*
 - *Meet with LEAs annually*
 - *Invite level 3&4 providers to kindergarten roundup to collaborate*

5. Improve healthy family functioning in our service area

- *Discovery: Family & Volunteer Engagement*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Host cooking nights, family mystery night, etc.*
 - *Host interactive events, virtual field trips*
 - *Send out one skill per month for parents to learn*
 - *Conscious Discipline training for parents*
 - *Elect each classroom a “Class Parent/Grandparent, etc”*
 - *Reach out to senior centers or retired teachers*
 - *Focus outreach on volunteerism*
 - *Look for student volunteers from La Lumiere or Marquette*
 - *HS to volunteer in the community (reciprocal)*
 - *Acknowledge volunteers monthly*
 - *Intentionally track father/male engagement*
 - *Encourage families to volunteer a certain number of hours each month*
- *Discovery: Parent Employment*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Share available positions through parent apps, flyers in backpacks, newsletters social media, website*
 - *Partner with community agencies for on-site CDA training, CDL prep course, Servesafe training, certifications, etc*
- *Discovery: Positive Parenting Strategies*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Continue Nurturing Parenting course*
 - *Post positive parenting tips on social media*
 - *Rename case conference “team meeting”*
 - *Include ELOF info in newsletter*
 - *Include partners in behavior plans*

HSPSS Review

- *1302.50 Family Engagement*
 - (a) *Purpose. A program must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children’s learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program that may leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.*
 - (b) *Family engagement approach. A program must:*

(1) Recognize parents as their children’s primary teachers and nurturers and implement intentional strategies to engage parents in their children’s learning and development and support parent-child relationships, including strategies for father engagement.

- *Recommendations: While our program has always focused on intentional family engagement strategies, we have historically had difficulty maintaining the level of family engagement that we strive for. Using the recommendations above, we intend to create and implement a strategic, program-wide plan to engage parents and foster higher levels of participation in order to better meet this performance standard.*

6. School Readiness Goals

- *Discovery: Language Development*

- *Recommendations:*

- *Use consistent common language in the classroom (“My friends, your friends”)*
- *Train annually on extended conversation, conversations between peers, enriching vocabulary, using complete sentences, open ended questions, back and forth exchanges, singing, syllable clapping, and games*
- *Enhance the focus on social rules within classroom interactions*
- *Read to children during mealtime*
- *Provide books at all centers and throughout each site (indoors and outdoors)*
- *Continue DLL week w/family engagement piece*
- *Send home “positive language” ideas sheet to families*

- *Discovery: Literacy*

- *Recommendations:*

- *Ensure the use of “environmental prints” in classrooms and throughout each site*
- *Include writing materials and activities indoors and out*
- *Implement classroom activities such as letter hunts, rhyming activities, interactive books w/reading ex. Books w/character tiles to illustrate sequence*
- *Work with family services to execute family story writing and reading programs for parents*
- *Use written language during literacy activities (“Sharing Ideas Through Writing” from Cox Campus)*

- *Discovery: Mathematics Development*

- *Recommendations:*

- *Use Jack Hartman to incorporate math into music*
- *Create and utilize outdoor classroom math area*
- *Increase the number of manipulatives in classrooms*
- *Purchase more math related books*
- *Utilize transition times to teach math with singing, counting*
- *Use watering plants to teach math*
- *Utilize Family Engagement packets with activities*

- *Discovery: Social Emotional Development*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Intensify hands-on training for staff, including Conscious Discipline training for new materials*
 - *Include learning through music in lesson plans*
 - *Include activities that promote self-worth*
 - *Push for participation in Nurturing Parenting classes, provide social emotional resources for parents*
 - *Continue the use of individual sensory bins*
 - *Have children model when teaching new skills*
 - *Purchase more social emotional books*
 - *Collaborate with school counselors from local school systems for strategies*
 - *Resources: Wonders Grove videos, PBS, Pins and Nettie, Akili and Me*

- *Discovery: Physical Development*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *New playground and outdoor classrooms*
 - *Create gardening schedule for classrooms*
 - *Send a monthly calendar with physical activities/healthy habits home to families*
 - *Create obstacle course indoors and outdoors*
 - *Use Jack Hartman music*
 - *Send short videos home modeling physical activity (workouts)*

- *Discovery: Cognitive Development*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Reinforce cognitive development tips during family engagement*
 - *Utilize transitions*
 - *Use open ended questions, reviewing and repeating, and teaching children schedules*
 - *Individual items boxes to reinforce personal responsibility*

IV. CONCLUSION

Head Start of La Porte County will continue to aim for high performance and high-quality service delivery by using the results of this Self-Assessment to inform decision making and continuous improvement planning. The suggestions devised from this assessment will be used to determine appropriate actions to include in our CIP, and will be implemented and tracked this coming school year, wherever possible.

