The 2020-2021 Self-Assessment was conducted by a team of program staff that varied by years of service and position. The Self-Assessment process was facilitated by the Project Director, Lindsey Burkhardt.

Self-Assessment process:

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| **May 2021** | Each staff member received a survey at the end of the program year site meeting. Staff were asked to reflect on the 2020-2021 academic year. Staff were asked to record what went well, what could be improved, and one change they’d like to see. The program received 37 completed surveys. |
| **September 2021** | Thoroughly reviewed the Self-Assessment process with the leadership team at management meeting. Educated program staff on the purpose of the Self-Assessment and the process that will be used, this was done via Program Newsletter and email to all program staff. |
| During the Board of Director’s meeting, explained to members the process, timeline, and the importance of their involvement in the Self-Assessment Committee. Invited members to join process. |
| During Policy Council meeting, explained to members the process, timeline, and the importance of their involvement in the Self-Assessment Committee. Invited members to join process. |
| Examined data trends from the 2020-2021 program year survey data from May surveys with leadership team. |
| **October-December 2021** | Surveys sent to the following to continue gathering data for the 2020-2021 Self-Assessment: Board of Directors, Policy Council members, program parents, community partners. Survey sent out to all staff to gather additional information on specific component strengths and areas of need by component area. |
| Worked to organize a Self-Assessment Committee. Once this group was created, all survey data was shared with committee members. |
| Several Self-Assessment Committee meetings occurred during the month of November & early December. These meetings focused on identifying strengths, discussing trends, and determining areas of improvement. |

In September of 2021, we began the process by educating staff, Policy Council representatives, parents, the Board of Directors, and community partners of the Self-Assessment process. We sent out surveys to all stakeholders (staff, Policy Council representatives, parents, the Board of Directors, and community partners) to reflect on the previous school year and identify strengths and areas of improvement. Program staff were also surveyed in May of 2021 to gather critical data from the year while it was fresh in their minds. From there, follow up questions were sent to staff in October 2021 to narrow the focus of the data gathered in May. The data was collected and aggregated. The next step involved bringing the Self-Assessment Committee together to review the data, identify trends, and reflect on findings.

The Self-Assessment Committee was created. Our program invited all staff to participate and encouraged their involvement. We had a total of 14 committee members which included a variety of staff. We were fortunate enough to have at least one representative from each site. We had representatives from Head Start and Early Head Start. Staff consisted of the Leadership Team, Teachers, Co-Teachers, Family Support Staff, Teacher Assistants, and Site Supervisors. Policy Council and the Board of Directors were invited to participate in this process, as well.

At our initial meeting, the Self-Assessment Committee worked to identify the overall program strengths. While reviewing the data, the committee noticed trends within the staff surveys. Identified strengths were: staff relationships, working as a team, flexible, virtual trainings, smaller class sizes, classrooms staying open, and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Family data had much positive feedback as well. Families felt that program staff had a connection with them and that the program did a great job in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and kept children safe. Comments included: “*Very well during pandemic at keeping kids in classroom.  Phenomenal job ensuring kids could keep their routine!”* and *“Head Start had always had a warm welcoming and has given my children a safe place to learn. I feel like each child feels noticed and special when going to school.”*

During the second Self-Assessment Committee Meeting, the committee dug deeper to review data by component areas specifically. During this meeting, we comprehensively examined data by component area to further explore trends and areas where improvement was needed.

Below you will find the overall component area strengths and identified areas of need.

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| **Education Component** |
| **Strengths:** The top identified strengths for the Education component was the ability to have lower numbers due to the pandemic and that the teachers were invested. It was identified that staff relationships and working together was a strength, also. |
| **Areas of Need:** *No needs identified in this area for the Self-Assessment Action Plan.* Planning time and behavior support were identified as a need during the 2020-2021 year. This was determined to be a need by program administration after the 2021 academic year so we worked to restructure our Behavior Support system to add in additional staff. Another proactive step the program took was to review the Paraprofessional position. We determined the vast importance of this position and added an additional dollar to their hourly rate and also upped each Paraprofessional position to 35 hours a week. **Due to the staffing crisis across the country in early childhood, we are currently struggling to fill these positions.** Program administration are actively recruiting on an ongoing basis. |

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| **Health & Nutrition Services** |
| **Strengths:** One of the identified strengths was how diligent our program was in prioritizing children’s health. Another identified strength (consistent with the previous Self-Assessment) for the Health Services component were the ongoing partnerships. |
| **Areas of Need:** *No needs identified in this area for the Self-Assessment Action Plan.* |

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| **ERSEA & Family Services** |
| **Strengths:** One of the most commonly identified strengths from the 2020-2021 year were the flexibilities around lower classroom numbers. In addition, another noted strength was the communication with our families (more families/teachers were utilizing the Seesaw platform), and lastly we saw minimal turnover in children enrolled in the program. |
| **Areas of Need:** *No needs identified in this area for the Self-Assessment Action Plan.* |

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| **Mental Health & Disability Services** |
| **Strengths:** In the area of MH/Disability Services, a noted strength was the connections to community partners and making referrals. We are fortunate to have good relationships with Early Childhood Special Education in all of the communities in which we serve. We have other service providers who come on-site to provide services to children enrolled in our program. |
| **Areas of Need:** A commonly noted area was more support for children who have behaviors. This was determined to be a need by program administration after the 2021 academic year so we worked to restructure our Behavior Support system to add in additional staff. We also revisited the Behavior Support Plan process in depth to determine what was working well, and what areas we needed to improve. **Due to the staffing crisis across the country in early childhood, we are currently struggling to fill these positions.** |

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| **Human Resources, Program Management, & Governance** |
| **Strengths:** The greatest noted strength was that the program handled the COVID-19 pandemic well with continual updates and revisions to our program Response Plan. The program adapted the Response Plan as changes occurred in the communities in which we served. |
| **Areas of Need:** It was identified that an area of growth should be regarding Personnel Policies specific to new hires, this includes: *reference checks, background checks, sex offender registry checks, federal fingerprint checks, child abuse and neglect checks.* Although the program works hard to ensure compliance, there is no clear system to document clearance of new hires. |

The Self-Assessment Committee is confident that the strengths and areas of improvement listed above are accurate and reflect the results of the survey data.

One key strength that we feel is important to highlight is the program’s flexibility during the 2020-2021 academic year. Our program resumed in-person services for Early Head Start in June of 2020 and in August for all program staff. This occurred after closing March-May when the pandemic hit the state of North Dakota. Upon returning, our program invited staff to attend Pre-Service in-person or virtually. Program administration felt allowing staff a choice would be the best way to move forward while navigating our way through the ongoing pandemic. Throughout the year, the program utilized Loom as a way to connect and communicate with all staff with regular program updates and information. We were collaborative in finding ways to connect with families and engage them when they couldn’t be in the classrooms. Our program worked hard to come together and support staff, children, and families.

Throughout the surveys, it was noted that there were some workplace culture concerns. As a committee, we felt it was important to focus on culture and create a plan to promote connection and further our School Family approach. A few of the comments that caught the attention of the committee included: *“More positivity from staff- some staff tend to focus on only negative things which really drains other staff”, “I’d like to see changed: People coming in willing and ready to work with positive attitudes”,* and *“Negativity towards others”.* Although there were many positive comments from staff about the culture, the committee felt these comments needed to be taken seriously and added as a focus area (regardless if it was a specific site or program issue).

Another area noted by the Self-Assessment Committee that needed attention was for the program to create strategies in efforts to streamline site function across the program. Throughout several surveys, a trend was identified that needed to be addressed in regards to the overall role of the site supervisor, creating fair expectations across all sites, and ensuring communication is consistent across all sites. This was an area the committee spent the most time brainstorming, reviewing data, and determining how to improve this vital piece of the program. Survey comments included: *“the site supervisor/supervision format”, “sites have same boundaries for events”, “more consistency between sites”.*  Due to the noted trend across surveys, the Self-Assessment Committee determined to include this as a focus area.

On Page 7, the 2020-2021 Self-Assessment Program Improvement Plan can be found which was written based on overall findings.