



## Hidalgo County Head Start Program

### Policy Council Regular Agenda

**DATE:** May 14, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Discussion/Approval of Hidalgo County Head Start Program Self-Assessment Report

**RATIONALE/NEED:** The purpose of the Self-Assessment is to improve program effectiveness. The Self-Assessment was scheduled to be conducted the weeks of January 27, 2014 thru February 7, 2014; however, the Federal Review was conducted the week of January 27-31, 2014. Since the Federal Review was conducted in January 2014, this year the Self-Assessment was conducted during the month of April 2014 and a slightly modified Monitoring Instrument was utilized to document any findings. The Self-Assessment is a required activity that must be completed and documented every Program year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Administration recommends approval.


**COST:** N/A

**RELATED INFORMATION INCLUDES:** Self-Assessment Report

\*\*\*\*\*

**INITIATED BY:** Nora S. Munoz, Assistant Program Director 

**REVIEWED BY:** Teresa Flores, Executive Director

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:** 



## **Hidalgo County Head Start Program Annual Self-Assessment Program Year 2013 - 2014**

Continuous quality improvement is a central belief of the Hidalgo County Head Start program, with the goal of meeting Performance Standards and moving toward program excellence for serving children and families throughout the county. As part of this process, the annual Self-Assessment provides the program with the means to regularly assess the management systems and program operations in order to continually strengthen the program and the services delivered to children and families.

The Head Start Performance Standards require that at least once each program year, with consultation and participation of the Policy Council, the Grantee Board and, as appropriate, other community members, grantee agencies must conduct a Self-Assessment to determine the Program's effectiveness and progress in meeting its goals and objectives and in implementing Federal Regulations.

By using the Self-Assessment process, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program can assess all aspects of the program's operations and how services delivered to children and families are impacted. The Self-Assessment is an integral part of the program's planning cycle.

The Self-Assessment process involves the collection of information from a variety of sources utilizing a Program designed instrument to determine if systems and services have been implemented and are working effectively. This information is used to identify program strengths, determine areas for further development and plan appropriate strategies to effectively address areas for enhancement. This year, unlike the previous year, the self-assessment was conducted following the Federal review. The results of the Federal review were utilized as an additional data source to comprehensively plan for long term goals and short term objectives. Interviews conducted with parents, Policy Council members, Grantee Board members, community partners and staff, by the Federal review team were analyzed and included in the Self-Assessment process.

The Self-Assessment team, comprised of staff members from across the administrative spectrum, was thorough in their review of the documentation and observations of the centers visited. The information/data gathered did not reveal areas of non-compliance and issues and concerns outlined in the Federal Review were successfully addressed during the Self-Assessment. This information, will assist the departments in planning for pre-service training as well as for service delivery in the upcoming year.

During the process, staff identified many areas of strength. Two areas that stand out are partnerships and literacy. The partnerships are with the local public schools and other entities as the Program joins efforts to make sure that every child who transitions to the schools is school ready. The read aloud initiative (Once Upon a Time) offers many benefits and brings parents and staff together to develop a lifelong habit and perpetual engagement in reading! The staff has provided all the support, guidance and assistance in making a difference for the children and their families and the Program wholehearted believes that the staff has done an outstanding job in developing and strengthening these two areas.

### **Partnerships which Enhance School Readiness:**

#### *Texas School Ready Initiative (TSR)*

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program is proud to be in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency, Region One Education Service Center and the Local School Districts in Partnering for School Readiness Integration. The objective of this partnership is to assist school districts to implement the Texas Early Education Model components, by providing all children with a highly qualified teacher and a high quality curriculum. The program provides all pre-kindergarten teachers with high quality professional development, including on-line professional training designed by C.I.R.C.L.E. (Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Excellence). The first partnerships of this kind began in 2007-2008.

Key principles for the School Readiness Integration Model are to prepare all children to enter kindergarten on or above grade level and be ready to benefit from the full array of public education services. And, to develop and implement a school readiness integration model that is community based and individualized in ways that best serve each community's needs.

Integration refers to concrete efforts to share resources across program sites in a community. For example:

- Employ teachers and other personnel;
- Acquire scientifically research-based curriculum materials;
- Acquire equipment, including computers;
- Enter into integrated school readiness agreements;
- Develop plans and models for such agreements;
- Participate in professional development activities; and/or;
- Establish ongoing student progress monitoring system to guide classroom instruction.

The biggest TSR partnership continuously in operation since November 2007, is the Pre-K Early Start Program with the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District. This was a specially funded pilot project for three years, and then the district continued to support and implement it after the pilot ended. State Certified teachers are employed by the district to serve as the lead teacher in our classrooms. The district teachers collaborate and cooperate with the Head Start classroom teachers and center staff to provide a minimum of four (4) hours of instruction to our children. The district also provides the state adopted curriculum and materials and staff development. A principal is also employed to support and supervise the staff and work with each of the staff in the six centers. In 2013 this partnership received the H.E.B. in Excellence in Education Award in Early Childhood Education in the state of Texas. Out of 40 applications submitted by school districts, this partnership received the distinction of being # 1 in the state! Funds from this award were utilized to provide a home library for the children in these centers.

There are several other TSR! Partnerships with the following entities: McAllen Independent School District, Teaching and Mentoring Communities Program, Work Force Solutions, Valley View Independent School District and La Joya Independent School District.

### *Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI)*

In June 2012, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program began partnerships with the Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District, the Mercedes Independent School District and the McAllen Independent School district to participate in the Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI). Districts submitted competitive grant applications and were funded for a five year project. The purpose of the grant is “to improve school readiness and success in the area of language and literacy for disadvantaged students in targeted school districts, including their associated Early Childhood Education (ECE) Center providers, who will use the model of Literacy Lines to implement the Texas State Literacy Plan.” Nineteen classrooms participate in the project and specific funds are allocated to the Head Start Program from the grant to provide support and assistance such as instructional supplies and materials and equipment. Extensive staff development and coaching is provided to Head Start staff by the districts. One such district has also provided tablets for the teachers and the students to facilitate the instructional process. Eighteen classrooms participate in TLI. The goals of TLI are the following:

- Increase the oral language and pre-literacy skills of participating preschool children.
- Improve the performance of participating K-2 students on early reading assessments.
- Increase the percentage of participating students who meet or exceed proficiency on the state English language arts assessments in grades 2 through 12.

- Increase the use of data and data analysis to inform all decision making in participating districts, campuses, classrooms and early learning settings.
- Increase the implementation of effective literacy instruction through Literacy Lines.

### *Pre-School Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD)*

The McAllen Independent School District assigned a PPCD unit to the A-I Head Start Center. This year ten severely disable children are assigned to three Head Start classrooms. The purpose of this collaborative program was to mainstream ten severely disable children from the District who meet the Head Start criteria and to prepare them to be school ready. One district special education teacher and two assistant teachers are assigned to plan and to collaborate with the Head Start staff to serve these children.

## **Hidalgo County Head Start’s Literacy Initiative:**

### ***Once Upon a Time***

In 2012-2013, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program sought to expand parent and staff engagement in reading to our children by implementing the “Once Upon a Time Read Aloud Initiative.” Staff received training on reading to children and parents were encouraged to read to children at home. Each classroom was equipped with a small lending library for parents to check out books. The books were translated to Spanish so that all parents could participate in the process. A guidance sheet was prepared and glued on the inside cover of each book to assist the reader to guide the reading, focus on vocabulary and assist in the development of higher order comprehension skills. This year the initiative was expanded and was included in **the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework**. In the classroom, thirty (30) minutes per day is set in the daily teaching schedule for teachers to read every day. A goal was set to train at least one parent from each household by December to read to his/her child every day for approximately 15 minutes. The Policy Council Parents and Alternates were trained to read to their children during the Governance Training in October. These parents then assisted in training other parents. A Thanksgiving luncheon was provided to all parents at the centers so that they would be trained in reading to children. Dr. Seuss hats were made and T-Shirts were purchased for the trainers to use during the training. Parents are expected to check out books each week and read to their child. Central office administration staff also read to children during each mayor holiday in the Head Start Calendar.

There are many benefits that can be derived from reading to children including cognitive development, pre literacy skills, general knowledge and vocabulary development, creating a love for reading , to mention a few. For parents, it creates the perfect opportunity to bond with their children in a unique and for a very significant purpose.

While we continue to focus on the Program's strengths, we will strive to continue to improve in areas that reflect our commitment to School Readiness.