Introduction

Poudre School District Early Childhood Education (PSD ECE) provides comprehensive services for Early/Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Tuition-Based and Early Childhood Special Education funded students. Preschool services are provided in 34 classrooms in 21 district elementary schools, and 9 classrooms in 5 community childcare centers. Early Head Start services are delivered for 16 children in four classrooms in a community childcare center, and family homes in weekly home visiting. PSD ECE has built its capacity to deliver services to 1,111 preschool and 108 Early Head Start students; however, in the 2020-2021 school year enrollment is low because of COVID, and we are serving 704 (233/275 HS slots) in preschool and 101/108 slots in Early Head Start. This year, we have added virtual, remote, and hybrid service delivery as methods to reach our families during the COVID pandemic.

Methodology

We conducted self-assessment in three parts. First was the evening self-assessment event which families and community partners attended during the time we usually have our November Policy Council meeting. Before the meeting we sent the attendees the data presentation and reflection questions. At the meeting we gave the presentation, provided individual reflection time for attendees to provide their answers to the reflection questions in an electronic survey, facilitated small group discussions, and asked for final, prioritized recommendations through a final electronic survey. Interpretation services were available, surveys were offered in both English and Spanish, and this meeting generated 26 responses in both languages. Second, we sent the same questionnaires out by text message to all families in the program, generating an additional 37 responses in both English and Spanish. Finally, on December
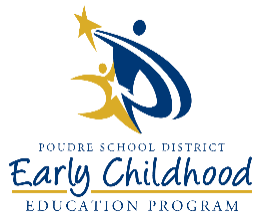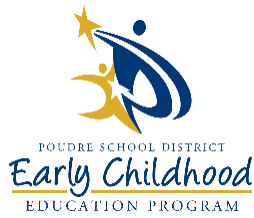
4, 2020, we presented the self-assessment information to all the early childhood staff. We followed the same meeting format as in November, with access to the presentation ahead of time, individual reflection, a discussion, and final prioritized recommendations. We used the same questionnaire and got responses from 76 of our staff members from our central office, home visiting and preschool educators, and community partners.

This year we focused on questions related to service delivery during the pandemic. We focused on three categories of questions using the Head Start Management Wheel: Guiding Questions During a Pandemic document from ECKLC. How will we move ahead? How will we use our resources? How will we know if our plans are working?

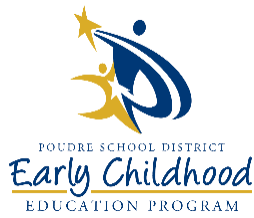**What we learned and what actions will we take?**

Since March 2020, the COVID pandemic has acted as a far-reaching community assessment. It surfaced and confirmed needs we knew we had and magnified them as we and families navigate the unfolding circumstances and changes. Many of our key insights and the recommendations to work on will have lasting positive effects on our two grant goals over time.

Key Insights and Discoveries	Innovations and Recommendations
Health and Safety • COVID County health guidance and district decisions about safety have changed over time and required roster and service changes. The changes have created stress for families, partners, and staff. • Local childcare centers have successfully remained open. • Individual and/or classroom quarantines make it difficult to establish routines for families, partners, and staff.	Health and Safety • Continue to ask the district to include Early Childhood data on the data dashboard reporting on the school district website. • Communicate widely about the successes of both in-district and center partner classrooms which remain open by following the safety protocols put in place by the County and the District. • Communicate benchmarks that would indicate a district-wide shift in services ahead of time.

Access to Technology • The District provides iPads and MiFi connectivity to all enrolled families who need them, and the time it takes to fill technology requests is shorter now than it was at the beginning of the year. • Technology is one way that the needs and inequities of ECE families have shown clearly in self-assessment. • Because of technology barriers, access to preschool is more difficult in the remote/hybrid environment for under-represented families. Home visit access has remained stable. • Even with devices in hand, for families who lack of technology knowledge or speak languages other than English, there are delays to preschoolers accessing instruction. Home visit access has remained stable.	Access to Technology • Create a distribution and collection plan that makes the process easier for families to request and receive devices. • Offer supports such as classes, seminars, demonstrations in person and online content to help families use technology and develop technological literacy. • Direct families to ECE bilingual personnel who have received technology training to better assist families whose language is not English. Advocate for bilingual District hires in service areas. • Create and better-distribute more extensive multi-lingual content for families to access the devices and learning content.
Access to Transportation • With the pandemic, current health department guidelines limit the number of children per bus to allow for social distancing. • To limit the number of bus riders, the District is qualifying very few children for busing. Only students with categorical qualifiers or an Individual Transportation Plan with their IEP are routed. • At self-assessment, families and staff report that they cannot access the transportation support they need. • COVID has also caused routes to be canceled without notice if the driver needs to quarantine. • Parents are confused by the messaging about their transportation.	Access to Transportation • Explore alternatives to district transportation. • When restrictions are reduced/lifted, return to routing of all HS funded students. • Consider offering a remote alternative when transportation is a barrier to attending class and technology barriers will not limit engagement. • Continue to place students at or as close to their neighborhood school as possible to limit the need to transport children long distances. • Continue to offer remote socialization events which are increasingly well-accessed by families. • Continue to advocate for same length of day at each elementary.
Service Delivery • Full day, full weeks, and full years is the service delivery preference for families. ECE staff have varying opinions about full days for young or differently abled children. • Full day options fill more quickly, meet family work schedules, build strong relationships with students/staff, and have better	Service Delivery • Continue to seek additional slots from sources that give families access to full day programing. • Begin planning for Prop EE, which will add universal preschool slots for 4-year-olds starting in 2023.

attendance than our half day programs. However, there still are families who enjoy half day options. • This year a virtual-only option has been added, so that families can participate in service delivery the same way all year. Currently, students from every funding source participate in virtual-only classes, and home visiting occurs virtual only. • Delivering remote/hybrid instruction has allowed preschool to continue and generated sufficient assessment data to make us successful with the first benchmark deadline. • For families not in virtual-only, the constant change is difficult on both families and staff.	• Make decisions about virtual classrooms moving forward. Conduct a needs assessment and use that information to decide if/how many virtual classrooms will continue into the next year. • Learn about funder regulations and develop policy around the use of remote instruction for student absences beyond COVID. • Minimize change to support staff and families through transitioning times from remote to in-person instruction. • Create a plan to monitor the social emotional needs of students and families using student assessments and program service data.
Communication • Communication consistently surfaced in the self-assessment results from all groups. With continual changes during the pandemic, the need for people to understand what the next steps are is critical. • We had feedback from the parent group that there was too much communication and they were fatigued and exhausted by the constant contact. • We had feedback from the parent group that we had too little communication, and the messages that were sent out often have different information in them and they were unsure about which ones were accurate. • A feeling of confusion was shared from staff and family groups.	Communication • Working with the District Communications department, develop a communication plan regarding what decisions are communicated centrally (district or Fullana) and what decisions are communicated locally (building level). • Ensure wide distribution and understanding of the District In-Person Education Philosophy statement that will be released in December. Reference it in follow-on communications. • Collect and analyze data regularly (monthly) from our family and staff satisfaction survey that is collected after interactions between families and staff members, or staff members and staff members.

Conclusion

The self-assessment was very needs-focused, and it reaffirmed our work within our two goals: Student Achievement and Access.

While many of the ideas and suggestions have a pandemic focus that is compelling, it highlights that we are on the right track in our goals and helps us plan for next year's goals, measurable objectives, and expected outcomes.