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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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To:
Ted Coonfield, Board Chair
Marianna Mourelatos, Policy Council Chair
Richard Nitti, Executive Director
Dana Broadway, Program Manager

From:
Laurie Danahy, Education Specialist
Student Learning and Partnerships
Oregon Department of Education

During the 2010-2011 program year the Oregon Department of Education conducted a State of Oregon Accountability Review (SOAR) of the Oregon Head Start PreKindergarten (OHS PreK) program at Neighborhood House. We wish to thank the Neighborhood House staff for their cooperation and assistance during this review process. This report is being issued to the Neighborhood House board chair, policy council chair, executive director and program manager as notice of the results of the SOAR review.

The SOAR process is designed to help the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten grantees determine whether programs are adequately addressing the following areas:

- Population and community needs
- Needs of dual language learners
- Communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment
- Innovative and effective efforts to collaborate with community partners
- Barriers to community collaboration
- Fiscal management
- Enrollment, recruitment, selection, eligibility & attendance
- Enrollment and services for children with disabilities, including collaboration with EI/ECSE providers
- Child outcomes related to school readiness
- Compliance with performance standards
- Other topics of interest and concern

After careful review of documents submitted by the grantee, conversations with program staff and onsite monitoring activities, ODE has identified program strengths and challenges, made determinations regarding non-compliance and identified recommended and/or corrective actions.

- **Strengths** - successful and/or innovative activities, policies, and procedures which demonstrate strong commitment to children, family and community.
- **Challenges** - areas that ODE and/or the grantee has recognized as needing further examination, action, training, or technical assistance.
- **Determinations** – as to whether or not the program is found in compliance with applicable rules and regulations
- **Recommended Actions** – recommended steps to support program improvement
- **Corrective Actions** – required steps to address areas of non-compliance.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Laurie Danahy, the ODE Specialist assigned to Neighborhood House.

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Biennial State of Oregon Accountability Review (SOAR) Report

Grantee: Neighborhood House
Program Manager: Dana Broadway
ODE Specialist: Laurie Danahy

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: ADDRESSING POPULATION AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Strengths

- As a multi-service agency, NH is well positioned to address a wide variety of family needs related to food, shelter, and other emergency/crisis needs. They effectively help families learn about and access community services.
- The program’s self assessment found that “Family Advocates have an excellent working knowledge of the services available in the community and do a great job of working closely with other service providers to assure that family needs are being met.” The ODE reviewer noted evidence of this skill in a Child File, which showed how the family advocate helped a single parent address multiple issues in a timely and compassionate manner.
- Neighborhood House has a history of working with successive waves of immigration in their community. The program maintains relationships with local cultural/linguistic groups and develops advocates within these groups to assist with explaining the program and its services. The OHS PreK program also draws staff from the population they serve and encourage parents to move from volunteer into staff positions.

Challenges

- Demographics of West Multnomah County are fluid, with shifting pockets of poverty due to changes in location/availability of low-income housing. Staff, families, and community partners express concern about the lack of affordable housing. The population shifts have led to challenges in maintaining full enrollment, especially when classrooms with openings don’t match the needs/location of families on the waiting list.
- A new low-income housing project may temporarily displace families that typically enroll in the program. The program is tracking the project closely and working to identify options for supporting families while maintaining full enrollment. When the project is completed, it could increase the number of age/income eligible children in Neighborhood House’s service area.
- The program’s self-assessment reported that case loads for Family Advocates were high. The program revised workloads so that family advocates no longer do initial intakes (including health packet), freeing up their time to work with families on specific needs and issues.

Determination

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and taking a proactive approach to addressing potential issues.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Strength:

- If a classroom has a high percentage of children from a particular language group, the program tries to have at least one staff member who speaks that language. Other staff can also be pulled in to help with translation when needed. The program focuses on providing a language/context rich immersion environment in English throughout the day.

Challenges:

- Over 40% of enrolled children have a first language other than English – and there are multiple different languages within each classroom group.

- The program’s self-assessment found there was “no specific documentation that indicates the demonstrated progress of English Language Learners toward the acquisition of English.” The Program Manager and her leadership team have addressed this challenge and the program now has two tools to measure children’s progress in learning English: the Bilingual Early Language Assessment (BELA: <http://www.cpsd.us/bela/index.htm>) and the Receptive/Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (<http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=015-8006-81X&Mode=summary>). In addition, the program is looking at ways to disaggregate child outcome data both for dual language learners as a group and for specific language subsets.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and taking a proactive approach to addressing potential issues.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: COMMUNITYWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Strength:

- The program’s 2010-2013 Strategic Plan now clearly identifies the organizations core values and provides concrete goals and objectives that reflect the program’s priorities.

Challenges:

- While the format and content in the September 2010 Community Needs Assessment is informative and well presented, some of the data is out-of-date, referencing 07/08 and 08/09 surveys and data. Updated information will help the program understand and respond to the changing needs of the community.
- As identified in the section on addressing population and community needs, the program’s service area is experiencing changes in demographics and location of the families living in poverty. Continuous monitoring of changes affecting the community will be required in order for the program to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of the families they serve.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and will closely monitor population shifts within their service area.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE EFFORTS TO COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Strengths:

- Morrison Child and Family Services, funded through a Portland Children’s Levy grant, provides the program with free mental health support in the classroom (Dinosaur School) as well as parenting classes (Incredible Years, Advanced Incredible Years and Balancing Lessons).

- As noted in the “addressing community and population needs” section, the multiple services available through Neighborhood House support the children and families enrolled in the program.
- Staff from Portland Public Schools Head Start, Child Care Improvement Project, and Friendly House Childcare participated in the program’s self-assessment process.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Challenge:

- With four different Oregon Head Start programs providing services in Multnomah County, and four more programs in neighboring Washington & Clackamas counties, there are both challenges and opportunities related to collaboration. Neighborhood House staff have initiated efforts to communicate with OHS PreK neighbors. ODE is encouraging all Portland metropolitan area programs to collaborate on issues of common concern and interest.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Strength:

- The Program Manager reports having a good working relationship with the new fiscal officer. In response to concerns raised in the program’s self-assessment, the fiscal officer has provided training to policy council and has developed new reporting formats to be used with governing bodies.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE (ERSEA)

Challenges:

- The program’s Community Assessment estimates there are 160 Head Start eligible children in West Multnomah County. Neighborhood House currently enrolls 149 children, or 93% of the estimated eligible children in their service area. This makes it challenging to maintain a robust waiting list. The program’s waiting list in the spring included 15 age and income eligible children, showing that the program is being diligent in finding and recruiting families.
- During the fall of 2010, NH left several enrollment slots open in response to a directive from the state legislature, which was contemplating potential budget reductions. There were some delays in finding eligible children when the program started to refill those slots. Some families on the waiting list were not interested in or able to enroll their child at the location where there was an opening. The program also found it challenging to fill slots when a child care partner closed.

- As mentioned earlier, changes within Neighborhood House’s service area, particularly the closure and reconstruction of a low-income housing site, will continue to make recruitment and enrollment challenging.
- The program’s self-assessment identified challenges in ERSEA related to planning, ongoing monitoring, and recordkeeping. This challenge is being addressed by the program’s improvement plan and through specific procedures outlined in the program’s new “Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting plan.” Implementation of the ChildPlus electronic data and information system has also increased the program’s ability to track ERSEA activities efficiently.
- The program’s average daily attendance during the 2010-2011 program year was around 81%. The program’s “Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting plan” now has specific guidance around monitoring attendance, determining the causes for absences and helping families recognize the importance of regular attendance.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and taking a proactive approach to addressing potential issues.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: ENROLLMENT AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING COLLABORATION WITH EI/ECSE PROVIDERS

Strengths:

- According to the program’s 2009-2010 Child Outcome Report, children with disabilities (identified as having an IFSP) made the greatest average gain of any group.
- The program’s partnerships with EI/ECSE providers results in integrated services to children with special needs.
- There has been program-wide training and implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). When the program realized that parents were unsure of the program’s approach to behavioral issues, they put plans in place to use the PBIS Parent training modules.

Challenge:

- The program’s self assessment identified ongoing monitoring (lack of specificity) and record-keeping (overly compartmentalized) challenges related to disabilities services. The program’s new “Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting plan” outlines specific procedures related to monitoring disabilities services. The implementation of the ChildPlus electronic data and information system has also increased the program’s ability to track disabilities services more efficiently.

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and taking a proactive approach to addressing potential issues.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: CHILD OUTCOMES RELATED TO SCHOOL READINESS

Strength:

- 82% of Head Start children progressed one or more steps on the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum. Greatest growth was shown in children’s first year in the program. The program’s Child Outcome Report for the 2009-2010 program year stated that “Based upon the general trends in the Creative Curriculum data and strategically correlated cc.net objectives, approximately 95% of 4 -5 year old children are exiting the Head Start program ‘Ready for Kindergarten’.”

Challenges:

- The program's self-assessment identified several issues related to classroom instructional support, especially as evidenced through the program's use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The CLASS tool assesses classroom interactions that are linked to positive child outcomes. The self-assessment found that ...
 - Many classroom conversations were teacher-directed and did not lead to peer discussion/interaction.
 - There were few complex questions asked and there was limited follow-up questioning.
 - During transitions, staff tended to be more reactive than proactive when working with challenging behavior.
 - Learning objectives were not always apparent and connections were not made between experiences.

The program's Improvement Plan documents plans for additional training on instructional support in the classrooms and the development of classroom action plans to include improvements in instructional support. The Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting Plan now states that CLASS observations will be conducted annually for each teacher, with an accompanying report of strengths, weaknesses and a recommended supportive action plan.

- The program's self-assessment found that ongoing monitoring of education and child outcomes lacked specificity and recordkeeping was compartmentalized. These issues are now addressed in the "Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting Plan".

Determination:

No areas of non-compliance were found. Program is aware of challenges and taking a proactive approach to addressing potential issues.

Recommended Action:

The ODE Reviewer recommends that the program provide focused training and support for teacher's based on individual and aggregated data from CLASS observations. Particular attention should be paid to helping teachers increase their skills in the Instructional Support areas of Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling.

Corrective Action:

None required.

REQUIRED MONITORING TOPIC: COMPLIANCE WITH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (ESPECIALLY AS REPORTED IN THE GRANTEE'S SELF-ASSESSMENT)

Strengths:

- The program did a very thorough self-assessment that clearly identified potential areas of non-compliance. The program's improvement plan outlined specific steps to address each area of concern and the program manager has documented the completion of action steps.
- One of the overarching problems identified in the self-assessment was ongoing monitoring and reporting. Once the issues were identified and understood, the program moved quickly to implement an electronic data management system. Staff were able to demonstrate to the ODE reviewer how the system is used across components to improve their ability to track and monitor program activity. The program also has a new, detailed ongoing monitoring and reporting plan that provides purpose statements, supporting citations, policies, and specific practices for each of the component areas (Family & Community Partnerships, Health/Nutrition, Education/Disabilities, Education/Transition/Mental Health, & Transportation) as well as overall program design and management.

Challenges:

- The unfenced site at Turning Point presents an ongoing challenge. The staff uses temporary fencing and strategically places adults so that child safety is monitored; however there remains a need for highly vigilant

supervision just to make sure children remain in the area. The outdoor area has additional challenges, as residents of the housing community use a covered structure on the playground for barbecues (with the risk of hot surfaces) and for smoking. Exposure to second hand smoke and/or the remnants of tobacco products presents an additional hazard. Staff members perform daily safety checks prior to children coming out, however the openness of the playground to the larger community makes it difficult to insure the setting is safe and healthy at all times.

- Communication between policy council and the Neighborhood House Board was identified as an area of concern in the program's self-assessment. Joint training on the roles and responsibilities of the governing board and policy council would be helpful, as would the development of an efficient process for the Policy Council to bring items before the board. The program manager should continue to work with Neighborhood House administration to enhance the program's shared governance plan.

Area of Non-Compliance:

- Last year's Neighborhood House Annual Report did not include all of the required information regarding the Head Start program, as outlined in by Head Start Act Administrative Requirements and Standards - Sec. 644. [42 U.S.C. 9839] (a) (2).

Determination:

- The program is actively addressing the concerns and potential areas of non-compliance found in their self-assessment. However, because a new annual report has not yet been issued, the program is currently out-of-compliance with the requirements for annual reports.

Corrective Action:

- Neighborhood House staff will review requirements for annual reports and insure required elements are contained in the next report, which will be sent to ODE with the program's 2011-2012 grant materials.

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST OR CONCERN

Strength:

- The program manager's recent experience with federally funded Head Start is helping Neighborhood House meet the state's expectation for state-only funded programs to adhere to the same standards and expectations for jointly funded programs.