

2022 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT & PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

I. Introduction

a. Program description

Head Start Community Program of Morris County (HSCPMC) partners with families to provide comprehensive support for child development and school readiness, from prenatal to kindergarten ages, for the community's most vulnerable children. The vision of our program is to empower diverse families and strengthen communities. The program has a 57-year history of supporting at-risk children and families in Morris County, with its main site located in the heart of Dover. With the award of a second Head Start/Early Head Start grant in September 2019, which is now consolidated with our original grant, we provide free child development services for a total of 199 children through centerbased Head Start programs, and 109 infants, toddlers and pregnant women through center-based and home-based Early Head Start programs, serving a total of 308 individuals. School district collaborations for Head Start/public pre-k services at the Dover site includes five Dover Public Schools classrooms and one Wharton Public Schools classroom. In addition to the Dover site, the program's 17-year collaboration with the County of Morris supports a site with six state-of-the-art classrooms at the Robert C. Grant Head Start Center (RCG), formerly the Central Avenue Complex, in Parsippany. A fourclassroom collaboration at the RCG provides Head Start/public pre-k services for Morris School District. One satellite classroom at Duffy Elementary School in Wharton also provided community pre-k services in the public school building, as part of an extended partnership with the school district.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the program served its full funded enrollment in-person, with occasional brief pivots to virtual services for classrooms impacted by positive COVID-19 cases. Policies and procedures were developed, in accordance with guidance from the Office of Head Start and New Jersey state regulatory agencies, to support continuation of services during COVID-19 outbreaks. A concerted effort by staff and administration worked to address the challenges of the pandemic with



creative and practical solutions, focusing on health and safety as a continued priority for the program in order to provide in-person services.

b. Context and Methodology

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, HSCPMC continued to make progress on program goals and objectives. Data to assess progress was obtained from multiple sources, including ongoing monitoring, health and safety/facilities reports, child and family outcomes, management systems, staff and parent feedback, the prior year's Self-Assessment Report and Program Improvement Plan, and review of outcomes on grant application goals and objectives. Identified areas of focus were examined to address systemic issues and develop innovative approaches to improve quality. With a strength-based focus, the 2022 self-assessment provided a key framework for program management, planning and oversight.

We were able to conduct much of the self-assessment data gathering and analysis process using technology, a process which has evolved since 2020, responsive to the pandemic. Platforms to support sharing of data included Zoom, Google Documents and Google Meet, Survey Monkey, and Creative Curriculum Cloud. Staff, parent, and community partner surveys provided key information for community assessment and self-assessment. The leadership team, Board of Directors, and Policy Council (including Parent Committee) reviewed Ongoing Monitoring reports which shared data on Program Governance and Leadership; Management Systems; Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment & Attendance (ERSEA); Comprehensive Services; Fiscal Management; Environmental Health and Safety; and School Readiness Outcomes, along with PIR data. Progress on goals and objectives was examined through these lenses. Data was also reviewed from external monitoring by the Office of Head Start in 2021. Quantitative data in aggregate, along with qualitative data, were examined from multiple sources including professional development records; TSGOLD; Creative Curriculum Fidelity Tool; and CLASS/ITERS/ECERS/TPOT observations. Inquiries were supported by reference to standards and documents including the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework; Head Start Program



Performance Standards; NJ Birth-to-Three Early Learning Standards; and NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, as well as the Goals and Objectives in the Head Start/Early Head Start Application.

The self-assessment timeline was spring 2022. During May 2022, the HSCPMC leadership team met to plan the self-assessment design, review training materials and raw data, and manage team assignments. During May and June, self-assessment data was reviewed and discussed via Zoom meetings with staff (June 7), the Health Advisory Committee (May 23) the Policy Council (June 21 and 28), and Board of Directors (May 24 and June 28). The self-assessment team participating in these meetings was comprised of staff, parents and Policy Council members, members of the Board of Directors, and community representatives.

The process for Self-Assessment involved five key steps: 1) Gather and analyze data on key issues; 2) Identify program strengths; 3) Highlight progress on grant goals and objectives; 4) Identify opportunities to improve services to children and families; and 5) Develop plans and strategies for continuous improvement.

Team members looked at outcomes data and discussed strengths, challenges, trends and solutions. Recommendations were compiled for development of this final report to guide planning for program improvement and share with stakeholders.

II. Key Insights: Successes and Opportunities for Improvement

Noted strengths of HSCPMC over the 2021-2022 program year included the continued delivery of safe, high-quality, in-person services despite ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic which began early in 2020. Health and safety systems developed over this two-year period in response to the pandemic were reinforced with training on policies and procedures, and reviewed through regular ongoing monitoring. Safety and security continue to be an ongoing focus, in terms of pandemic-responsive systems along with structures and processes to ensure that facilities are secure. Staff reported feeling satisfied that the program was implementing health and safety measures to protect children, as well as adults working with the program. Thanks to CARES ACT funding provided



through the Office of Head Start, substantial infrastructure, technology, and materials investments in the program supported safe, responsive services.

Our School Readiness goals around strengthening systems to support children's school readiness in alignment with the HSELOF, NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, and NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards were an area of strength. Outcomes data from Teaching Strategies GOLD reflected overall steady progress by children in the program, with most children below widely held expectations at the fall checkpoint, showing growth at mid-year, and the overwhelming majority within or exceeding widely held expectations at the final checkpoint in spring. In terms of learning environments, CLASS and ECERS (conducted in partnership with public pre-k staff) assessments pointed to consistently high-quality environments. For Early Head Start, ITERS assessments were paused due to the pandemic-related restrictions on classroom materials and staffing challenges. ITERS checklists were used to ensure ongoing focus on quality, and EHS CLASS assessments also guided continuous improvement. The CLASS instrument was administered in all classrooms by Reliable staff from the educational leadership team. CLASS Reliability for educational leadership was achieved/maintained and members of the team also completed training in the Creative Curriculum Fidelity tool. The positive outcome of our coaching focus on the Instructional Support domain of CLASS was evident, with scores in this domain surpassing national averages. Additionally, another School Readiness goal was achieved in that Inter-rater Reliability in Teaching Strategies GOLD was a standard achieved / maintained by all instructional staff.

The outcomes examined led us to a deeper exploration of three specific issues where opportunities for improvement are sought: 1) Retaining and supporting a highly-qualified workforce with a focus on staff wellness; 2) Supporting children's social-emotional development and mental health; and 3) Addressing current child health issues faced by our community: Access to dental care, and issues around nutritional status. Analysis of data around these topics took place in the context of a COVID-19 responsive lens.

Data from our Human Resources analytics highlighted the need to work on retaining and supporting a highly-qualified workforce, with a focus on staff wellness. Out of 100 staff positions, 18%



left the program since the previous school year, almost half of the turnover occurring due to accepting another job. Nearly half of our workforce had lengths of service under five years. We were not fully staffed until February 2022, and teaching positions were the most difficult to fill. COVID-19 impacted the program in multiple ways: staff absences, staff need for childcare, and loss of staff due to the federal vaccination mandate.

Anecdotal data from staff surveys provided important information. Teaching staff noted paperwork and multiple classroom observations as being negative aspects of the job, and workplace stress was noted by many respondents to our staff survey. The greatest challenges identified by staff were: finding time to complete tasks; lack of facility space and COVID-19, as well as communication and children's challenging behaviors, factors referenced as stressors for staff. Positives identified by the staff were helping families, teamwork, dedication to children, strong support systems, and making a difference.

Teaching Strategies GOLD, our Case Management process, and TPOT observations identified the need for social-emotional supports for children. It was clear that many children were entering the program with stress behaviors, difficulty adjusting, and challenges around interactions. With intentionality, we continued to focus on program-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. A trauma-informed lens provides the perspective that children's social emotional outcomes were adversely impacted by the many challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to a community characterized by poverty.

Our goal to strengthen parent, family and community engagement processes and supports for family well-being and positive parent-child relationships was an area of progress, with effective, robust parent engagement. Implementation of the Positive Solutions for Families/PIWI parenting curriculum (127 families) and our popular Fatherhood Initiative (46 fathers) received strong positive feedback from parents. Despite parent volunteers in the classroom being curtailed during the pandemic, home engagement and connection with classrooms increased. Monthly School Readiness Calendars, full of activities to support parent-child relationships and child development, were an important source of



non-federal match. Parents regularly completed the daily activities, returning their completed calendars with notes, work samples and photos, connecting learning at home with our programs.

Community and family engagement with HSCPMC was a source of support and resources for enrolled children, staff and community members, in an area heavily impacted by COVID-19. Family Engagement and Health Services Specialists continually conducted family needs assessment via phone and electronic surveys. Community connections helped with food and nutrition, clothing, diapers, COVID testing, COVID vaccines, housing, employment referrals and wraparound child care. Rampant inflation made for continued economic hardships for many of our families, despite improvement in employment numbers attributable to the ending of COVID restrictions and return to in-person child care locally.

In terms of our goal to establish best-practice program design and management systems to support staff professional development, attract and retain highly qualified staff, and ensure long-term fiscal stability, significant progress has occurred, although many challenges remain due to factors outside of our control. Over the 2021-2022 program year, staff retention and wellness were prioritized, with many new programs and strategies implemented to support staff wellness. An important area for our focused improvement efforts is staff wellness, an area that has also been prioritized nationally by the Office of Head Start. Because every staff member plays an essential role in supporting children and families, staff wellness is critically important. We are and will continue to invest with intentionality in programs leading to staff who are happier, healthier, and less stressed.

Significant progress was made on our facilities plan, with key improvements around outdoor spaces. At the RCG, a state-of-the-art playground was donated by the New York Jets Foundation and several other sponsors. At the Dover site, AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP) funding, along with donations, provided an additional outdoor play space for gross motor and social emotional activities in our central courtyard, a previously under-utilized area.

Plans for expansion at the Dover site continued to be stalled, with another year of multiple submissions and returns of our facility major renovation applications for OHS approval. We have submitted for federal approval for three connected applications, including a supplemental application

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to support a major renovation with startup funds under our second HS/EHS grant (now consolidated into a single grant), as well as a major renovation with ARP funding. The delay in obtaining federal approval for these projects has brought additional obstacles, including the exponential increases in costs, necessitating revisions in the project concept. A further concern is that the project will not be able to be completed before the expiration of the project period under the terms of the grant funding.

Focus Area	Outcomes/Progress	Plans & Strategies for
		Improvement – 2022/2023 program year
COVID- responsive health and safety policies and procedures to support school readiness and compre- hensive family services	 With input from Health Advisory Committee and Board of Directors committee members, updated COVID-19 Standards Compliance Policy to reflect current guidance for 2022-2023 school year Paychex App for staff updated to reflect current guidance and organizational policy Preservice training provided to staff on COVID- responsive health and safety policies and procedures PPE provided to staff and students; physical spaces updated consistent with guidance Security system upgrades increased audio access to systems messages and two-way communications Building access was limited to essential visitors who completed health screenings The local community continued to be impacted by COVID-19. Economic and employment impacts to families were significant, with availability of childcare and rising costs of goods and services presenting challenges to financial wellness. 	 Continue to review OHS, CDC and NJ DoH guidance and accordingly update COVID-19 Standards Compliance Policy Continued facility security and building access limitations will remain in place with reinforced staff training for 2022-2023 school year Continue with health screenings for visitors to buildings Vetted, fully vaccinated contractors and volunteers will be able to enter facilities to support program services Parents may sign in and complete health screenings to briefly enter buildings to attend to the wellbeing of their child Staff and families to self-screen for illness symptoms

III. SUMMARY OF SELF-ASSESSMENT & PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Focus Area	Outcomes/Progress	Plans & Strategies for Improvement – 2022/2023
		program year

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Systemic	 Staff newsletter (in English and Spanish) 	Staff Wellness Committee
Issue:	supports morale and communication;	collecting data on staff
Retaining	recognizes staff birthdays/work anniversaries/	members wants, needs and
and	special events and achievements, also	personal preferences to
Supporting a	provides key information and updates. Each	support wellness and
Highly-	month a different staff member is highlighted,	motivational activities
Qualified	with their photo, biography and story.	 Recognize staff service
Workforce	 Staff childcare classroom/slots provide free 	anniversaries with
with a Focus	pre-k care for up to 10 staff children (by	congratulations and
on Staff	seniority)	commemorative anniversary
Wellness	• Staff Wellness Committee created to prioritize	pins
	activities to build positive organizational	• Continue to support inter-
	culture and nurture staff	departmental
	Wellness activities/programs included: Jeans	communication through
	Fridays; Spirit Days; Bonus provided program-	monthly meetings between
	wide to recognize hardships endured by staff;	Family Services staff
	Ice Cream Socials; Head Start Heroes boards;	members and Education
	Cooking night; Online clothing store for staff;	members who support the
	monthly birthday celebrations at each site;	same families
	supervisor affirmation program to recognize	• Annually review possibility
	staff when they go above and beyond	for payout of unused
	Staff mental health and wellness program	sick/PTO time at end of
	facilitated by Montclair University for Autism	Employment Year. Not a
	and Early Childhood Mental Health provided	regular policy but can be
	consultation meetings in virtual format to	addressed situationally,
	support staff with strategies and address	along with 401K payout, if
	issues in service delivery for children and	funds remain at end of
	families	budget year.
	 Testimonial from HS graduate now at 	 Annually review possibility
	university shared with staff to express	of contribution to 401K
	appreciation and affirm their work	accounts
	 Healthcare contribution expense for staff 	 Continue to seek minimal
	minimized with contribution from CARES	levels of staff contribution
	funding	toward healthcare
	 Staff onboarding process updated to 	premiums
	incorporate multiple departments and follow	 Continue to review salary
	up at 30-day and 90-day intervals	structure and standardize
		ranges for positions. Any

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 Staff overwhelmingly reported feeling satisfied	opportunities for budget
with health safety measures taken to protect	relief will continue to
children and adults	prioritize more competitive
 Most staff feel respected, well-prepared for 	staff wages.
their jobs, and have good communication with	 Supplemental application
their supervisor	pending for one-time grant
 Staff reported taking pride in helping children 	to pay off mortgage and
and families as a positive aspect of their work	support construction—
Challenges and causes of stress reported by	impact of funding, if
staff included finding time to complete tasks,	granted, will provide some
lack of office space, technology, need for more	space in budget to raise
PTO, language and communication,	staff wages in key areas of
paperwork, the number of meetings requiring	program need
their attendance, technology, children's	 Updated MOU with
challenging behaviors, staff absences and	Montclair Center for Autism
COVID-19	and EC Mental Health
• Staff turnover levels at 18%; most staff left for	Services will revise wellness
higher pay	and mental health
 Many staff feel underpaid 	consultation meeting format
 Education positions were especially difficult to 	and frequency.
fill	• For HS children, use one
• Education staff reported feeling overwhelmed	(rather than multiple) early
and stressed about time due to the number of	screening instrument per
observations, data requirements and meetings	site, consistent with local
 Coverage for educational staff positions was 	school districts
frequently challenging, with Mondays and	 Add language to
Fridays being days most impacted by staff	employment letters for
absences	floating staff to facilitate
 Staff requested that they be allowed to take 	their movement between
PTO in hourly increments rather than $\frac{1}{2}$ day	both sites, and conduct
increments; supervisors confirmed this would	background check
be easier to cover	clearances with each site
 Staff parking at Dover managed with 	Update Employee
automated parking system (FlowBird). There	Handbook/Personnel Policy
is still a need for more parking closer to the	to allow staff to take PTO in
facility; the lot designated for HS staff use is	hourly increments as
shared with another nonprofit (which has	opposed to half-day
another lot available to them).	increments
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• Negotiations took place with Dover officials to	 Review feasibility of a
improve parking for Head Start parents at	wellness retreat type of PD
drop off and pickup times.	event on a day when all
	program staff would be
	available.
	Continue to request support
	from Dover municipal
	officials in designating
	available parking for HS
	Staff and follow up on
	timelines for planned on-
	street parking
	improvements

Focus Area	Outcomes/Progress	Plans & Strategies for Improvement – 2022/2023 program year
School Readiness Outcomes	 OHS Region II Staff requested disaggregation of child assessment data for children with IEPs/IFSPs for separation of data analysis Goal for Staff Professional Development was achieved: All Teachers/Teacher Assistants achieved Interrater Reliability in Teach Strategies GOLD Quality professional development provided through a variety of sources and platforms, including Grow NJ Kids, Teaching Strategies, in-house Zoom presentations, Google Docs, email links, and hybrid training models Practice based coaching by School Readiness Coordinator, Director of Education, EHS Manager and other members of LT is informed by outcomes data and targets identified areas of need Staff are brought in for a full week of training prior to start of school year Professional Learning Communities take place via departmental Zoom trainings at regular intervals and address areas of need identified through outcomes data 	 Director of Education connected with Teaching Strategies GOLD staff to build capacity into system for separate data collection (OSEP Child Level Mandated Report). For 2022/2023 year, data is being pulled separately for children with IEPS/IFSPs Plan for leadership staff PD opportunities for Reliability as available (ECERS/ITERS/CLASS, TPOT, TPITOS) Continue working toward full implementation of the TPOT and TPITOS instruments and the Creative Curriculum Fidelity Tool in classrooms Continue to seek federal approval of 1303 application for major renovation project

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• For EHS, Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment	to increase Dover facility
data showed that most children entered the	classroom space
program in the fall below or close to the	 Continue to seek space in
bottom of Widely Held Expectations (WHE). In	community for offices,
winter and spring, the number meeting WHE	meetings, and Home-based
increased substantially.	socializations
• For HS, most children were meeting	Continue interdepartmental
expectations, with some below, at the fall	team meetings between
checkpoint	Education staff members
• For HS winter and spring data checkpoints,	and Family Services staff to
most children were meeting or exceeding	ensure alignment of
expectations overall	communications and
 By end of school year, children were 	addressing child and family
performing within WHE. Most of the children	needs
transitioning to kindergarten who were below	 Prioritize focus on children's
WHE at spring checkpoint were identified	social-emotional
through case management and were eligible	development and mental
or in the evaluation process for special	health with mental health
educational services.	consultation services, staff
 TSG data for all children across programs 	training around
showed significant growth over the course of	implementation of the
the year	Pyramid Model for
 Areas of highest growth: EHS - Literacy and 	Promoting Social- Emotional
Mathematics; HS three-year-olds - Language	Competence in Early
and Cognitive; HS four-year-olds – Language,	Childhood, and conduct
Cognitive and Mathematics	TPOT observations to
 Areas in need of continued support: EHS – 	support classroom
Social Emotional and Language; HS three-year-	environments
olds – Social Emotional, Literacy and	 Continue to provide
Mathematics; HS four-year-olds – Social	coaching support for
Emotional and Literacy	implementation of
Goal achieved: Educational leadership team	curriculum to fidelity
members achieved or maintained Reliability in	Continue to post monthly
the Classroom Assessment Scoring System	literacy or social-emotional
(CLASS)	support messages for
HS CLASS scores exceeded national averages.	families, and to provide new
Instructional Support, a key area of focus in	children's books at family
accordance with our school readiness goals,	engagement events.
was an area of strength. EHS CLASS scores fell	 Continue to conduct CLASS absorvations as part of
into the mid/high range, although national	observations as part of
norms are not available.	ongoing monitoring and to
Goal for achievement of quality ECERS/ITERS	inform coaching needs during the school year.
outcomes was partially achieved: Program-	uning the school year.
wide ECERS-3 scores were consistently high,	

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averaging 5.59 (5.0 indicative of quality	
program). ITERS-3 was paused due to COVID-	
19 staff transitions, but focused walk-throughs	
and ITERS staff training was conducted	
throughout the year.	
 Each HS classroom received two (Teaching 	
Pyramid Observation Tool) TPOT assessments	
over the course of the school year, with	
teacher feedback and follow-up. Areas for	
teacher coaching include teaching children to	
express emotions, teaching behavior	
expectations, and teaching friendship skills.	
Goal achieved: Educational leadership team	
members completed the training program for	
Coaching to Fidelity for Creative Curriculum	
 Most classrooms achieved strong fidelity in 	
curriculum implementation. Head Start areas	
of strength included physical environment,	
lesson plans, structure/ schedule, and	
interactions. Areas for coaching and additional	
support included social-emotional, language	
and literacy, math and science.	
• Early Head Start areas of strength included	
physical environment, positive classroom	
climate, and structure/schedule. Areas for	
coaching and additional support included	
transitions, conversations, and	
challenging behaviors.	
 Monthly school readiness activities calendars 	
were provided to families to support children's	
learning at home and the home-school	
connection.	
• Gross motor space was added and upgraded	
at Dover site with the addition of HS play area	
with social-emotional components in central	
courtyard and improvements to EHS	
playground. State-of-the-art playground at	
1 /0	

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RCG site was donated through partnership
with NY Jets, United Way, and NRG.
Use of Child Plus for data-informed decision
making was increased with additional staff
training to input screening data and reports
connected with school readiness

Focus Area	Outcomes/Progress	Plans & Strategies for Improvement – 2022/2023 program year
Family Outcomes and Wellbeing	 Families benefit from HSCPMC health programs to keep up-to-date with children's immunizations, check-ups and health records Families had difficulty with access to dental screenings and care. Providers were limited, with a turnover of dental professionals in the community and long wait times to schedule appointments. Collaborations with local providers, including the local Federally Qualified Health Center's dental van, were prioritized, and services brought to HSCPMC's locations. Higher rates of child obesity have been identified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Families noted that the pandemic impacted opportunities for outdoor gross motor activities and children with babysitters may have spent increased amounts of screen time. It was also noted that families may have responded by engaging in weight control behaviors such as restricting a child's food intake. Fatherhood Initiative has been a successful program for 7 years, with strong attendance and positive feedback, despite pivot to mostly virtual format during pandemic Positive Solutions for Families has been very well received as parenting curriculum program. Attendance has been strong and parent feedback positive. 	 Continue to support and develop community partnerships with health and especially dental providers in close proximity to Head Start sites. Continue to provide families with resources, ideas and direction to help connect with local opportunities for children's exercise and outdoor gross motor play, as well as supports for exercise inside the home during winter months. Continue to focus on parent education about healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyles. Ensure that safeguards are in place to increase education and knowledge about Body Mass Index (BMI) and ascertain that BMI calculations are accurate, using appropriate equipment, responsive language to communicate BMI assessment data and with the lens that considers

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 Areas of strength included children's continuous health care, up-to-date immunizations, and health insurance Child obesity continued to be a community issue. Summer subsidy program offered to pre-k students prioritized social-emotional health and outdoor gross motor play 	 the circumstances and history of individual children. Continue to work with community providers on supporting parent education. Continue to share information to facilitate community access to free or low-cost nutritional food sources (fresh fruit and produce) Aftercare (Extended Care Program) to meet the needs of working families will resume for the 2022-2023 school year.

2022 Self-Assessment Participants

Theresa Alonzo, Family Services Manager, HSCPMC

Analicia Amigon, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council

Brenda Andrade Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council

Carlos Caprioli, M.D., Executive Director, Excellence Family Success Center; HSCPMC Policy Council

Yazmín Carvajal, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council

Diana Choudhury, School Readiness Coordinator, HSCPMC

Johanna De Leon, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council

Rachelle Marie De Los Reyes, Senior Technical Assistance Specialist, District and Head Start, Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Center Northern Region

Juan P. Fernandez, Facilities Manager, HSCPMC

Sangly Fuentes, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council

Gladys Garcia, Family Support Coordinator, HSCPMC

Nancy Grande, M.D. HSPMC Board of Directors

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Robert C. Grant, President, HSCPMC Board of Directors Diana Grisi, Retired Child Care Director Chris Herdman, Superintendent of Schools, Wharton Borough School District Jenny Herrera, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council Judy Josephson, Vice-President, HSCPMC Board of Directors Ashley Kindberg, Executive Director, Richard Blake Children's Center Rebecca Kolpa, Chief Fiscal Officer, HSCPMC Kathy Kwasnik, Director, United In Care, United Way of Northern New Jersey Francy Leal, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council Alejandro Martínez, CEO, Lakeland Hills Family YMCA; Vice-President, HSCPMC Board of Directors Melissa Martínez, Office Manager, HSCPMC Felipe Molina, HSCPMC Board of Directors Gabriela Nochebuena, Former parent; HSCPMC Policy Council Susan O'Donnell, Chief Executive Officer, HSCPMC Aura Perez, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council Marianne Perry, Robert C. Grant, Site Director, HSCPMC Danual Pompa, Parent; President, HSCPMC Policy Council Michelle Priester, Dover Site Director, HSCPMC Joann Quattro, Executive Director, Children on the Green Julio Quevedo, Parent; HSCPMC Board of Directors Yosemira Rodas, Parent; HSCPMC Policy Council Isabela Rodriguez, Vice-President, HSCPMC Policy Council; Parent Patricia Romero, Early Head Start Manager, HSCPMC Robin Ross, Esq., Human Resources Attorney; HSCPMC Board of Directors Andrea Sepulveda, Member, Policy Council of HSCPMC, Parent Minsun Shin, Ed.D, ECE Graduate Program Coordinator, Montclair State University; Member, HSCPMC Board of Directors



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Yesenia Sosa, Parent; Secretary, HSCPMC Policy Council Michael Thompson, Esq., HSCPMC Board of Directors Amy Tousley, Director of Education, HSCPMC Sandra Wittner, Dover Alderwoman; HSCPMC Policy Council