



**90% of the brain
is developed by
the child's
5th birthday.**

2024–2025

Self-Assessment Summary

Introduction

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require two systems of self-reflection: ongoing monitoring and self-assessment. Ongoing monitoring takes place throughout the year and helps answer the question, “Are we doing things right?”. Self-Assessment, on the other hand, is a dedicated time for programs to pause, reflect, and ask the bigger question, “Are we doing the right things?”

Throughout the year, program leaders and staff monitor operations through the ongoing monitoring system. The annual Self-Assessment builds on this work by using program data to assess progress toward strategic goals.

The Self-Assessment is conducted in two phases: 1) internal reviews within the content areas; and 2) the Collaborative Session. This joint session brings together a variety of parties with different levels of program involvement and interest.

The Self-Assessment process begins by highlighting successes and identifying practices that can be applied more broadly across the program. We look closely at what’s working well, where we can improve, and how we can meet the changing needs of our families and the community. By looking at program-wide data, we are also able to examine systemic issues and explore solutions at a higher level.

The 2024–2025 Self-Assessment Collaborative Session, conducted in the spring of 2025, used a partnership- and data-driven approach. This year, over 100 individuals joined in and participated across five sessions, focusing on the areas of Education, ERSEA, Family Services and Mental Health, Health and Nutrition Services, and Organizational Success. The diverse groups included program staff, leadership, parents, Policy Council Members, Board members, and community partners.

Each focus area group reviewed performance data, compliance measures, and stakeholder feedback to identify strengths, challenges, and priorities, which were used to develop program-wide quality improvement plans for the 2025–2026 program year.

The following summary provides an overview of how our program operated during the past year. It highlights key accomplishments and successes that demonstrate our progress, as well as areas where further growth and improvement are needed. By reviewing this document, readers will gain a clear understanding of the program's overall performance and the steps we are taking to strengthen services for children and families moving forward.



Process

Self-Assessment is required by section 1304.51(i) (1) of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Even though Self-Assessment is required, the process may look different from one recipient to the next. Geminus Head start follows a standardized process for the annual Self-Assessment collaborative session that includes the following:

1.) Design the Process: Set a clear direction for what you want to accomplish and by when. Consult with and obtain approval of the Self-Assessment plan from the governing body and Policy Council. Select and invite staff, governing body, and Policy Council members, Board member as well as participants who bring outside perspectives to join the Self-Assessment team.

2.) Engage the Team: Prepare and deliver an overview of the program, including current goals, objectives, and expected outcomes.

3.) Analyze and Dialogue: Explore systemic issues and review the program's progress on goals and objectives. Review and analyze current and previous data to uncover trends and patterns. Engage in dialogue about what is going well and why, as well as what could be improved. Formulate discoveries.

4.) Make Recommendations: Reconvene the entire Self-Assessment team. Consolidate discoveries across teams and prepare recommendations to inform program planning.

5.) Prepare Report: Create a report based on the results of the Self-Assessment process. Share the completed report with the Policy Council and governing body for approval. Use the report in annual program planning.

Vision

Geminus Head Start will be an organization that inspires, empowers and ignites children, families, and the community to reach their full potential.

Mission

Geminus Head Start is the Northwest Indiana leader in early childhood education impacting the lives of young children and their families. We anchor ourselves in the community, providing health, education, and family services through collaboration, comprehensive services, resources, and support, resulting in greater opportunities for personal growth and community connection.

2024–2028 Strategic Plan

Goal 01

Strive for Organizational Success

- Review and revise internal communication and feedback processes
- Strengthen Continuous Quality Improvement Model (CQI) to make data-informed decisions
- Partner with Regional Care Group communications department to develop a marketing and communications plan for Geminus Head Start
- Explore additional funding opportunities to innovate and expand program services
- Achieve National Head Start Association (NHSA) Program of Excellence Accreditation

Goal 02

Provide High-Quality Program Services

- Prioritize a culture of safety
- Prioritize wellness, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Deliver intentional services based on trends in child, family, health, and monitoring outcomes



Goal 03

Secure, Sustain, and Support a Strong Workforce

- Continue High Performing Organizations efforts to create a positive work culture
- Increase recruitment efforts for qualified staff
- Enhance the professional development program structure

Goal 04

Enhance Strategic Partnerships

- Increase community presence and networking
- Create a structure for identifying and fostering strategic partnerships
- Increase engagement in industry affiliations

Program Strengths

Geminus Head Start made strong gains across all content areas. Children showed growth in cognitive development, math, and social-emotional skills, while supports for children with disabilities exceeded requirements. Enrollment stayed at full capacity thanks to streamlined systems and easier applications. Family Services expanded mental health supports, relaunched male engagement events, and improved staff onboarding and wellness programs. Health and Nutrition strengthened dental partnerships, increased dental & physical exam completion, and boosted community health efforts. Community health efforts included connecting families to primary doctors and assisting with obtaining insurance. Professional development exceeded requirements, and support teams kept services running smoothly and accessible.

Everything's better when we work together.

Improvement Needs

- Strengthen language and literacy outcomes through targeted curriculum supports, training, and monitoring.
- Refine the disability referral process to ensure timely evaluations and services.
- Improve family understanding of school readiness goals.
- Increase accuracy and timeliness of data entry for better decision-making.
- Boost in-person family engagement while maintaining virtual engagement success.
- Elevate coordination with local school districts for smoother transitions to kindergarten.
- Evaluate enrollment application process to ensure timely responses.
- Expand mental health supports to families in need.
- Increase completed dental exams



**Teaching children.
Serving families.**



Education

Methodology

During 2024–2025, the education team used monthly meetings to review Self-Assessment data, track progress, and share successful strategies. Feedback from staff and families identified three main priorities: improving family communication about school readiness, increasing training to better support children with disabilities, and clarifying kindergarten transition procedures. These insights will guide future training, program improvements, and family partnership strategies to strengthen outcomes for children and families.

Strengths

- **Curriculum is aligned to School Readiness Goals.** Creative Curriculum is utilized for Geminus Head Start center-based programs.
- **Individualized Support and Inclusion** The education team prioritizes inclusive practices by providing tailored supports for children with disabilities and those with suspected delays. Individualization ensures that each child receives appropriate resources to thrive.
- **Family Engagement in Learning** Families are engaged as partners in education through conferences, home visits, and goal-setting meetings. Efforts are made to communicate school readiness goals and involve parents in supporting learning at home.

Areas for Improvement:

- Increase Parent Understanding of School Readiness Goals
- Provide training on Disabilities, focusing on a deeper understanding of the disability
- Establish a working transition plan between Head Start & the Local Education Agencies (LEAs)



Summary

During the Self-Assessment collaborative session held in the spring of 2025, participants talked about ways to help children grow in language, literacy, and math, and to ensure our program follows the curriculum as planned. They discussed improving the process for referring children with disabilities, making sure data is entered on time and correctly, and finding new ways to get more families involved in person. They also looked at how to better support families in understanding school readiness, expand mental health resources, and work more closely with local schools to make transitions to kindergarten smoother.

ERSEA



Methodology

Over the past year, the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) department brought together staff, parents, and community volunteers to review progress, share data, and identify strengths as well as areas for growth. Through three Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions, participants reviewed last year's goals, selected priority focus areas, and analyzed data on enrollment, recruitment, and attendance. They brainstormed improvement ideas, shared successful site-level practices, and learned from each other. In preparing topics for the larger collaborative session, the team focused on how external stakeholders view the program, discussing attendance barriers, sharing strategies to effectively reach families, and gathering feedback on recent program changes.

Strengths

- **Complete Full Enrollment Initiative (FEI)**
The ERSEA team increased enrollment over the past program year and reached the required 97% enrollment.
- **Centralized enrollment team located in the Geminus Corporate building**
This change has helped to streamline the enrollment and application process.
- **Application appointments can now be conducted over the phone or via a video call**
This has removed the transportation barrier for families who don't have a means of transportation.
- **Adoption of DocuSign to obtain parent signatures on forms and application documentation collection**
DocuSign has helped speed up the application process for families and staff.
- **Improved communication**
Weekly meetings are conducted virtually with Child Care Partners to ensure enrollment is current and fully enrolled.

Areas for Improvement:

- Evaluate the application procedure to increase efficiency and flexibility for families, timely processing of applications, and effective follow-up to families and site staff.
- Implement the new Head Start standard to include an adjustment to a family's annual gross income when they pay annual housing costs over 30% of their income.



Summary

In 2024–2025, Geminus Head Start reached 97% enrollment, and streamlined services by centralizing the enrollment team. The ERSEA team improved access with virtual appointments, DocuSign, and updated translated forms. Collaborative sessions generated strategies to boost attendance, expand outreach, and enhance recruitment through varied communication and distribution of family-friendly materials. Upcoming plans focus on refining application processes, exploring electronic options, improving communication, and implementing new income-adjustment rules with staff training and updated procedures.

Family Services & Mental Health

Methodology

For the 2024–2025 Family Services Self-Assessment, data gathered from reports, audits, family/staff surveys, and feedback from staff and families, along with updated Head Start Performance Standards, were used to identify strengths and areas for growth. Focus areas were chosen based on the highest needs from the data, while building on existing strengths. Collaborative sessions with staff and stakeholders provided additional insights and will guide planning for the next program year.

Strengths

- **Behavioral Support**
The Family Services team offered behavioral support to the Recipient and Child Care Partnership Head Start classrooms by facilitating the AI's Pals social-emotional curriculum.
- **Resources and Referrals**
The Family Advocates utilized the Family Outcome Assessment, motivational interviewing, and relationship building with the families they serve to offer individual resources and referrals. The Family Advocates front-load families with resources to strengthen and build relationships.
- **Family Engagement**
Family engagement efforts have increased at the Head Start sites, resulting in higher virtual adult education views and slightly higher in-person engagement attendance.
- **Behavioral Health**
The Behavioral Health System consultants have provided ongoing support for individual family referrals and consistent monthly classroom management support.
- **Family Advocate Supports**
Family Services Managers have strengthened the support they give Family Advocates using a real-time family services dashboard and other data reports generated on an ongoing basis.

Areas for Improvement:

- Family Services would like to formulate a structure to strengthen in-person family engagement opportunities and attendance.
- We aim to strengthen and expand our mental health supports by enhancing current services, increasing access to resources, and deepening partnerships with mental health providers to better serve both families and staff

Summary

Family Services built stronger engagement opportunities, streamlined processes, and expanded wellness and mental health supports in 2024–2025, while prioritizing flexible, family-centered events and cross-team collaboration to address participation, staffing, and resource challenges.



Health & Nutrition



Methodology

The Health Team used this year's Self-Assessment to identify strengths, challenges, and improvement opportunities, with a focus on boosting the accuracy and timeliness of health and nutrition data. Oral health emerged as a key area needing attention, prompting collaborative discussions on effective strategies, partner support, and new ideas such as utilizing a mobile health unit. Additional topics included immunizations and lead testing. Feedback from the session will guide future development of future strategies to better support sites and families.

Strengths

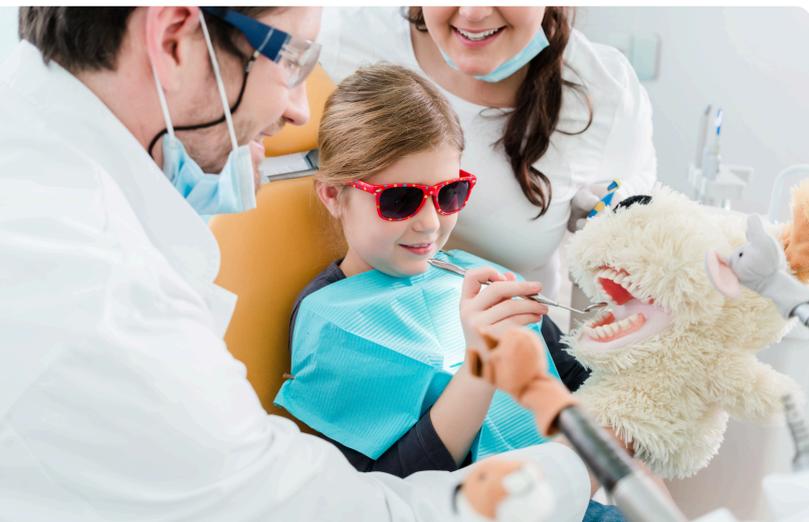
- **The Health team utilized a mobile dentist to provide care onsite.**
Mobile dentists' units help bring needed dental care to children enrolled in Geminus Head Start and Early Head Start.
- **Families received oral health literature before the arrival of the mobile dentist.**
Geminus Head Start provides a variety of resources to families, including dental flyers and referrals.
- **Health Specialists visited the sites to perform specific health assessments and screenings.**
Being able to visit Head Start and child care partner sites and serve children directly has been a vital part of the health team, ensuring that children receive health assessments and screenings in a timely manner.

Areas for Improvement:

- Increase the number of Oral Exams across the program
- Ensure that all children receive fresh fruit daily and monitor for substitutes accurately
- Ensure that children with allergies can start class in a timely manner

Summary

This year's focus was on improving health compliance (particularly oral health), implementation of using a mobile unit access, and meeting Strategic Plan goals. Progress included more timely dental exams, greater mobile unit use, and stronger staff-family communication on oral care. Strengths were high family engagement and staff adaptability of new procedures. Challenges such as gaps in follow-up care and limited family awareness of early prevention will be addressed by expanding mobile services, enhancing staff training, and increasing health data audits. Nutrition efforts will be targeting the availability of fresh (not canned) fruits and vegetables through vendor partnerships.



Organizational Success



Methodology

This year's Self-Assessment emphasized ongoing, organization-wide dialogue through focus groups, weekly touchpoints, and increased site visits. Feedback from staff, stakeholders, and surveys shaped Collaborative Session topics, leading to rich cross-program discussions and ideas such as job shadowing between newer and more experienced teams. Moving forward, we will maintain regular touchpoints, host town hall-style meetings, and launch a job shadowing initiative to strengthen alignment, communication, and onboarding across the program.

Strengths

- **Effective Communication Systems**
Communication among departments has shown notable improvement, supported by regular touchpoints and thoughtful feedback from program monitors. These interactions consistently include both praise and constructive guidance, which creates a balanced and transparent culture of accountability and support.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making**
The use of focus groups, surveys, and continuous feedback loops empowered staff at all levels to contribute to the direction of the Self-Assessment. This inclusive approach led to collective ownership of outcomes and greater buy-in for ongoing improvement efforts.
- **Leadership Visibility and Support**
The increased presence of the Recipient Program Director and Quality Assurance monitoring team members through ongoing site visits demonstrated a clear investment in the success of recipients and child care partner programs. This engagement provided real-time feedback, boosted morale, and strengthened relationships across all sites.

Areas for Improvement:

- Internal communication barriers/challenges need to be addressed.
- Family engagement participation levels need to be increased.
- Methods of family communication need to be enhanced.

Summary

The 2024–2025 Organizational Success Self-Assessment focus area emphasized stronger communication, collaboration, and alignment across the program. Through the use of focus groups, surveys, site visits, and weekly touchpoints, we identified strengths in leadership visibility, inclusive decision-making, and improved systems. We recognized the need for clearer internal communication and expanded mentorship. Collaborative sessions addressed challenges like family information overload and the need for timely feedback. Progress was made on prior improvement plans. Two new initiatives will enhance internal communication and parent engagement through centralized calendars, structured mentorship, and targeted communication follow-ups. No non-compliance issues were found.



Professional Development



Methodology

The Professional Development team's 2024–2025 Self-Assessment prioritized aligning work with long-term goals for a high-quality, data-driven training system. Key achievements included launching role-specific onboarding plans to strengthen new hire readiness and refining post-training evaluations for more reliable impact data. Additional efforts focused on streamlining processes, improving data monitoring, and enhancing follow-up support after trainings. Insights from cross-content Collaborative Sessions will guide 2025–2026 planning to ensure training remains targeted, effective, and responsive to staff needs.



Strengths

- **Development and implementation of role-specific onboarding workflows:**
The Professional Development team successfully designed and piloted position-specific onboarding timelines that include sequenced training, job shadowing, and system access. These workflows have improved clarity, consistency, and relevance for new hires.
- **Improved feedback tools and data-driven decision making:**
Post-training evaluation questions were revised to improve the quality, reliability, and usefulness of feedback. This allowed the team to gather more meaningful data to guide training decisions, monitor impact, and identify follow-up needs.
- **Successful collaboration to meet NAEYC accreditation standards:**
In partnership with content area directors, the Professional Development team revised policies and procedures to align with NAEYC standards—particularly Standard 6D. These efforts directly contributed to the Head Start site at Ridge View earning NAEYC accreditation, with all standards fully met.

Areas for Improvement:

- Collaboratively design workflows that outline the sequence of steps for onboarding new hires that include position-specific onboarding timelines
- Creation and implementation of a process for individualized professional development

Summary

The Professional Development team advanced strategic goals this year by moving from process creation to full system implementation. Key achievements included launching role-specific onboarding workflows, enhancing post-training evaluation tools for more actionable data, and aligning policies with NAEYC standards to achieve full compliance at Ridge View. These efforts improved new hire readiness, strengthened supervisor support, and informed targeted training follow-ups. Ongoing priorities include increasing post-training reinforcement, expanding Vector system tracking, and building structured feedback loops at 30/60/90 days. The focus for 2025–2026 will be on refining these systems, ensuring consistent implementation, and maintaining strong cross-team collaboration to meet compliance and performance goals.



What's Next

The content areas each are responsible for tracking their implementation of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) throughout the 2025–2026 program year. Progress will be monitored through ongoing data reviews, departmental check-ins, and a mid-year evaluation, with adjustments made as needed to ensure continuous improvement. Their regular meetings will ensure concerns are addressed in real-time, instead of waiting until the end of the school year. Self-Assessment is a process that must be done throughout the year to best serve children and families enrolled in Geminus Head Start.



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