

SELF-ASSESSMENT





Each year, Flowers Early Learning completes a comprehensive self-assessment as part of our commitment to continuous improvement and high-quality Head Start services. This process allows us to take a close, honest look at our programs, reviewing data, reflecting on outcomes, and gathering input from staff, families, and community partners. The goal is not only to ensure compliance with federal Head Start Performance Standards, but to strengthen the experiences and outcomes of the children and families we serve.

This year's self-assessment helped us better understand where our services are making the greatest impact, as well as where we can continue to grow and improve. Findings from this process are used to guide program planning, strengthen family engagement, and support ongoing professional development for staff across all service areas.

Founded in 1972, Flowers Early Learning is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operated by Tri-County Council for Child Development, Inc. We serve 583 children and their families across Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties through Head Start (ages 3–4) and Early Head Start (birth–3) programs. Services are delivered through both center-based and home-based options at 17 locations and 44 classrooms. Our work remains grounded in strong relationships, with families, staff, and community partners, and a shared commitment to helping every child thrive.

DEEPENING FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Families remain at the center of our work. This year, we saw continued growth in meaningful family engagement, with increased participation in program activities and ongoing feedback that helps guide decision-making. Families shared valuable insights into their needs and preferences.

To better understand family experiences, Flowers Early Learning conducted a family survey with 148 respondents.

Family Survey Insights Include:

- **Welcoming and Friendly Environment:** 145 families responded “true” when asked if the Flowers Early Learning team is welcoming and friendly, with 3 responses indicating “false.”
- **Equal Partnership:** 144 families shared that they feel like an equal partner with staff, with 4 responses indicating otherwise.
- **Safe Environment:** 144 families reported that Flowers Early Learning is a safe place for their child, with 3 responses indicating concern.
- **Satisfaction with Education:** 115 families strongly agree and 26 agree that they are satisfied with their child’s education, while 3 disagree and 4 strongly disagree.
- **Preparation for Transition:** 141 families shared that Flowers Early Learning is helping prepare their child and family for the next step, while 7 indicated additional support may be needed.



These results provide meaningful insight into family experiences and highlight areas of strength as well as opportunity. We remain committed to using this feedback to strengthen relationships, improve responsiveness, and ensure all families feel heard, supported, and valued.

UPDATES FROM THE 2024-2025 SELF-ASSESSMENT

Volunteer Program

Over the past year, the agency improved volunteer tracking through ChildPlus to better monitor participation and gather feedback. Community partnerships were also expanded to strengthen relationships and encourage continued family and volunteer engagement.

Stress Survey

The staff stress survey was transitioned from Human Resources to the Wellness Committee. January and April survey results identified team dynamics and workload as the highest staff stressors, helping guide ongoing wellness discussions and planning.

Community Gardens

During the 2024-2025 program year, the agency applied for two community garden grants. Although funding was not awarded, the process resulted in strong project plans and increased readiness for future opportunities. The Education team is pursuing an additional grant for a garden and outdoor kitchen learning space.



2025-2026 IDENTIFIED NEED: ENROLLMENT

Maintaining full enrollment remains a priority. Despite weekly enrollment reviews and targeted recruitment efforts, enrollment has not consistently met program goals. The Self-Assessment process identified barriers including limited community awareness, localized recruitment challenges, family engagement, and changing community demographics. Continued under enrollment creates operational and financial challenges and may impact the program's ability to fully meet community needs.

Opportunity

Opportunities exist to strengthen enrollment through more localized recruitment strategies, increased Policy Council involvement, stronger community partnerships, and exploration of enrollment incentives. These efforts can improve outreach and better connect families with available services.

Next Steps

- Develop and implement center-specific recruitment plans based on enrollment and community trends
- Increase collaboration with Policy Council members to support outreach and recruitment efforts
- Explore feasible enrollment incentive opportunities for families
- Strengthen partnerships with local officials, school districts, and community organizations to increase awareness of services
- Continue weekly enrollment reviews to monitor trends and adjust strategies as needed



2025-2026 IDENTIFIED NEED: AGENCY CULTURE

Agency culture was identified through the Self-Assessment process as an area needing continued improvement. To better understand staff experiences and organizational climate, the agency partnered with an external consulting firm to conduct a culture assessment, including staff surveys and focus groups. Findings identified concerns related to communication, accountability, and consistency across the organization. Staff feedback also highlighted the need to strengthen trust, clarity, and alignment across departments and leadership levels.

Opportunity

The assessment provided valuable feedback and a clearer understanding of organizational strengths and areas for growth. This creates an opportunity to improve communication, strengthen accountability, increase consistency in expectations and processes, and create more intentional opportunities for staff voice and engagement.

Next Steps

- Increase communication across departments and leadership levels to improve transparency and information sharing
- Strengthen accountability systems and expectations to support organizational alignment
- Improve consistency in communication, processes, and implementation of policies and procedures
- Continue creating opportunities for staff feedback and engagement
- Monitor progress through leadership discussions, staff feedback, and organizational review processes



2025-2026 IDENTIFIED NEED: POLICY COUNCIL & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Policy Council plays an important role in supporting family voice, shared leadership, and program governance. While the agency provides orientation, governance training, and ongoing support, the Self-Assessment process identified a need to strengthen overall engagement and participation at both the agency and center levels. The agency recognizes that families are key partners in governance, recruitment, volunteerism, and community engagement efforts.

Opportunity

The agency can strengthen family leadership through a grassroots approach focused on relationship building, advocacy, and community involvement. Partnering with the Director of Philanthropy and Engagement Coordinator will create opportunities for families to support recruitment, volunteerism, in-kind activities, and community awareness efforts.

Next Steps

- Launch a grassroots engagement campaign in partnership with the Director of Philanthropy and Engagement Coordinator
- Strengthen Policy Council engagement and visibility at both the agency and center levels
- Increase family participation in recruitment, outreach, volunteerism, and in-kind activities
- Expand opportunities for families to serve as program ambassadors and advocates within their communities
- Continue providing governance training, orientation, and ongoing support to strengthen leadership capacity
- Strengthen communication and relationship-building efforts between families, centers, and agency leadership



Looking Ahead

The Self-Assessment process is an opportunity to identify priorities, strengthen our services, and ensure we continue meeting the evolving needs of children, families, and communities.

This year's assessment highlighted important opportunities related to enrollment, agency culture, and family engagement. The goals and action steps outlined in this report will guide our work throughout the upcoming program year and support ongoing improvement across all service areas.

Flowers Early Learning remains committed to providing high-quality early childhood education and family support services while fostering meaningful partnerships with families, staff, Policy Council, the Board of Directors, and community stakeholders. Together, we will continue building a strong foundation for children and families to learn, grow, and thrive.





Where children, families,
and communities thrive.

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