

2022-2023 Annual Report



**Head Start
for Kent County**

Connecting Families and Community Resources

Message from the Board President

Dear Reader:

Have you ever looked at a giant oak tree and marveled at the fact that it began with a tiny acorn? The fact that something so small and seemingly insignificant can become a mighty tree – it is truly amazing! That is exactly what we think when we look at the children enrolled in Head Start. They are small, young, just a little package of potential. Yet, with the right conditions, they can become mighty and mark their space on this earth. We at Head Start count it a privilege to pour into the lives of so many children. In the 2022/23 school year, we had the privilege of providing a safe, loving, creative education to 1,177 children. Each one has a unique history and an equally unique future. Each one has the capacity to learn and thrive. We are so honored that the parents chose Head Start as the preschool of choice to nurture their children. We have not only taught them, but we have also measured their growth. How beautiful it is to see these little ones gain language skills, learn to play well together, master their beginning math skills, and learn the alphabet. They leave Head Start with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school for the years ahead. Head Start is a launching pad for greatness, and we are proud to offer this valuable resource to the children and families of Kent County.



With a commitment to the future,
Joann Hoganson, HS4KC Board President

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Head Start Families, Partners, and Community:

As we close out another school year, we have a chance to reflect. This was our first year back with minimal COVID restrictions in place and it made it feel somewhat "normal" again. We saw amazing growth and opportunities for children throughout the year. As an agency and as a community we are still struggling with the ability to find sufficient staff in order to provide maximum services to the community. It is absolutely heartbreaking to know families are waiting for services or are having to be told we can't continue services due to lack of staff. We have been working hard all year to address this issue and to problem-solve before heading into next year. One key piece for us to address is wages for staff. The other is developing pathways and partnerships for individuals who are interested in Early Childhood to join the field and work toward their credentials. I am very excited that we were able to work with our funding sources to address both and are looking forward to increasing our staff and the capacity to provide services for the children in our community.



We want to thank all of our partners for their continued support in helping us to provide high quality early childhood services to the families we serve. We are looking forward to the start of a new year and welcoming both our new and returning students and families. Please follow along with us on our social media pages for regular information on the happenings at HS4KC!

Sincerely,
MaDonna Princer
Executive Director

Board of Directors



Joann Hoganson
President



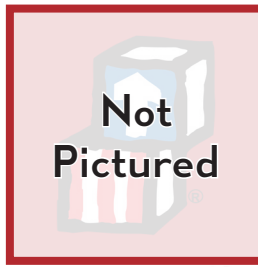
Kristy Greenberg
Vice President



Brian Hofstra
Treasurer



Rudy Gutierrez



Tammy Smith



Oogie LaMar



Dean Pacific



Linda Pickett



Lauren Stanton



Fabiola Tenorio

Parent Policy Council

Ryan Cooper
Kyla Fletcher
Jennifer Harris
Mandria Hodges
Shelly Jones

Linda Pickett
Lee Anne Ritzema
Zamkhup Samte
Kathleen Szarowicz
Lianna Tagle

Mission

To deliver comprehensive services to low-income children five and under and their families, promoting their well-being and development.

Vision

To strive to provide comprehensive services through a highly trained staff, current technology, innovative programming, and diverse community partnerships that will create a strong foundation for each child's future success.

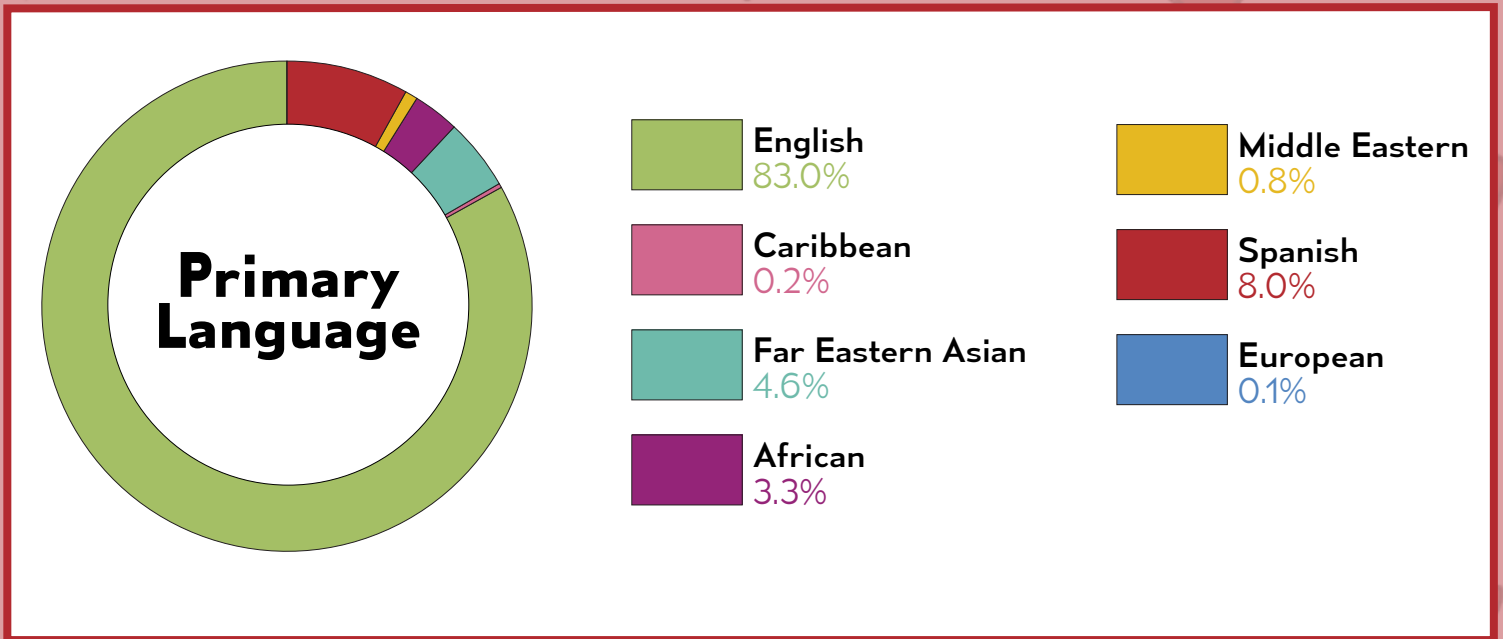
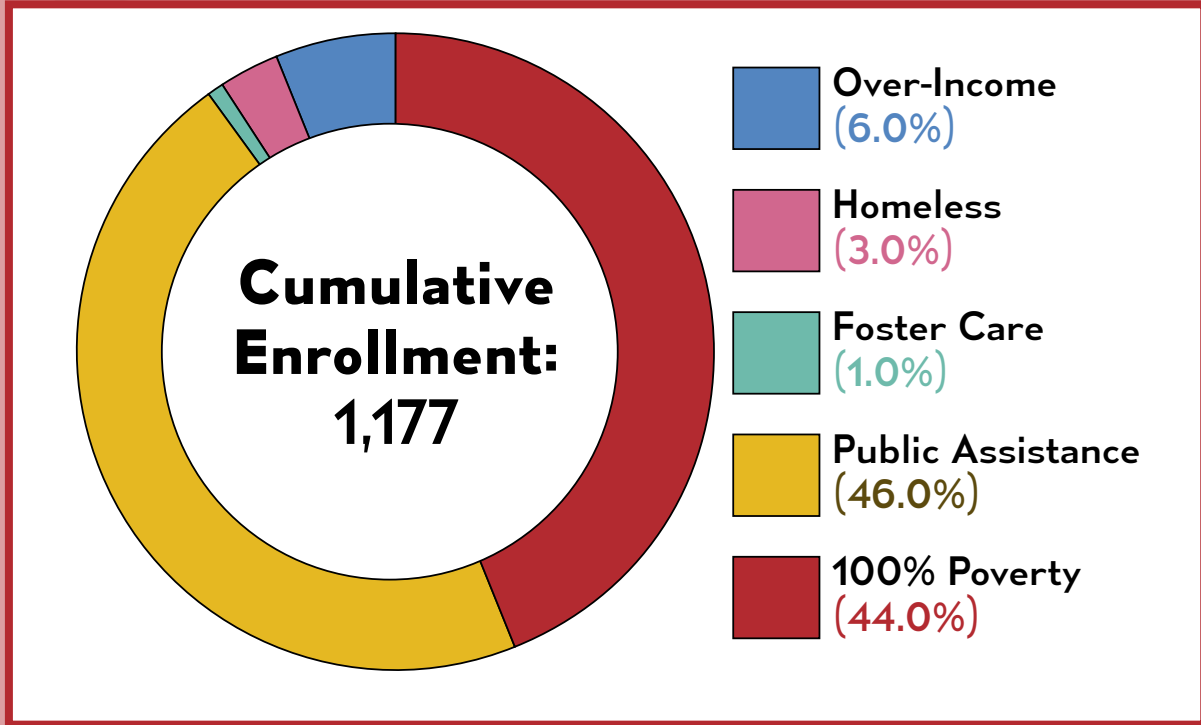
Core Values

Integrity
Competence
Professionalism
Humanitarianism
Commitment
Respectfulness

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Program At-A-Glance





Preschool



Home Visiting



Infant/
Toddler

Expecting Families and Children Served

986

133

58

Sites

12

-

4

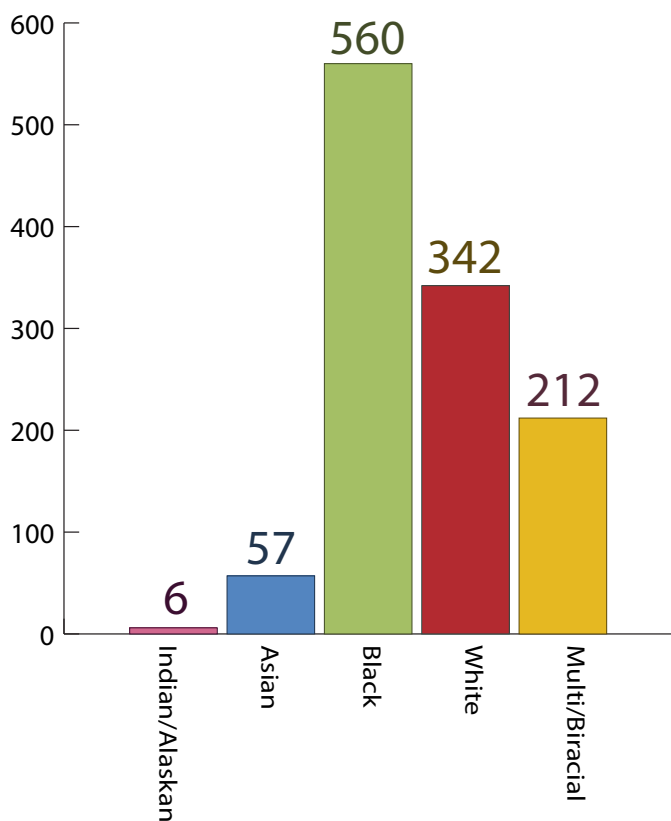
% of Children with Diagnosed Disabilities

19%

16%

26%

Racial Identities

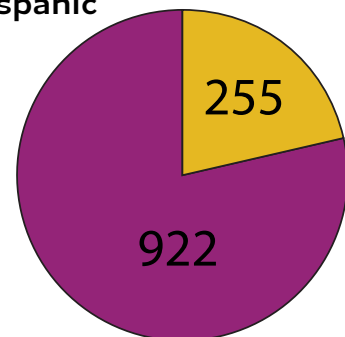


What's the difference between "Race" and "Ethnicity"?

Race is defined as "a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits." The term ethnicities is more broadly defined as "large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background."

Ethnic Identities

■ Non-Hispanic
■ Hispanic



Community Needs Assessment



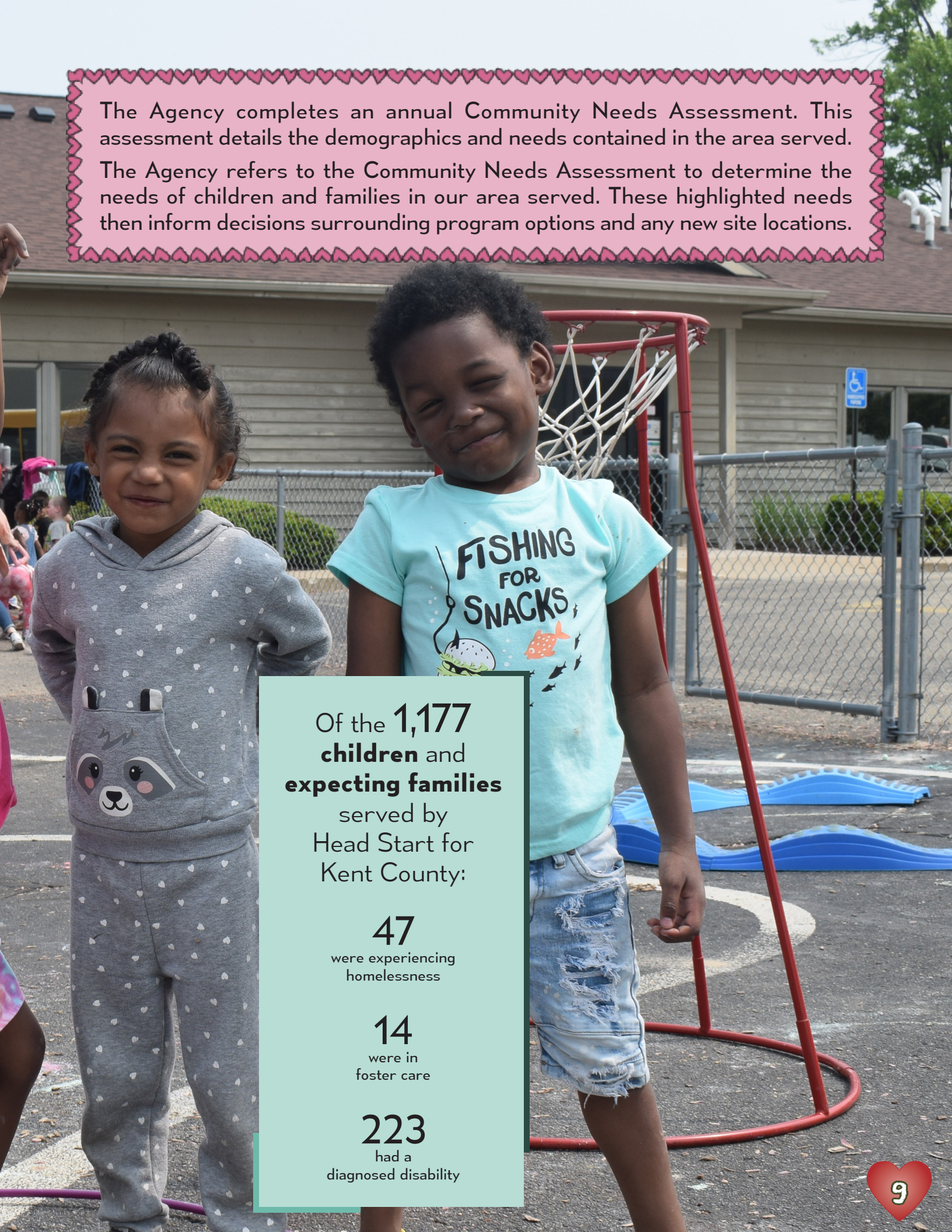
51,911 children ages 0-5 live in Kent County, representing **7.8%** of the **total population**

13.1% of children in Kent County under the age of 5 live in **poverty**

2,343 children in 0-5 Kent County were in **special education**

202 children ages 0-5 in Kent County lived in **foster care due to abuse or neglect**

The Agency completes an annual Community Needs Assessment. This assessment details the demographics and needs contained in the area served. The Agency refers to the Community Needs Assessment to determine the needs of children and families in our area served. These highlighted needs then inform decisions surrounding program options and any new site locations.



Of the **1,177**
children and
expecting families
served by
Head Start for
Kent County:

47
were experiencing
homelessness

14
were in
foster care

223
had a
diagnosed disability

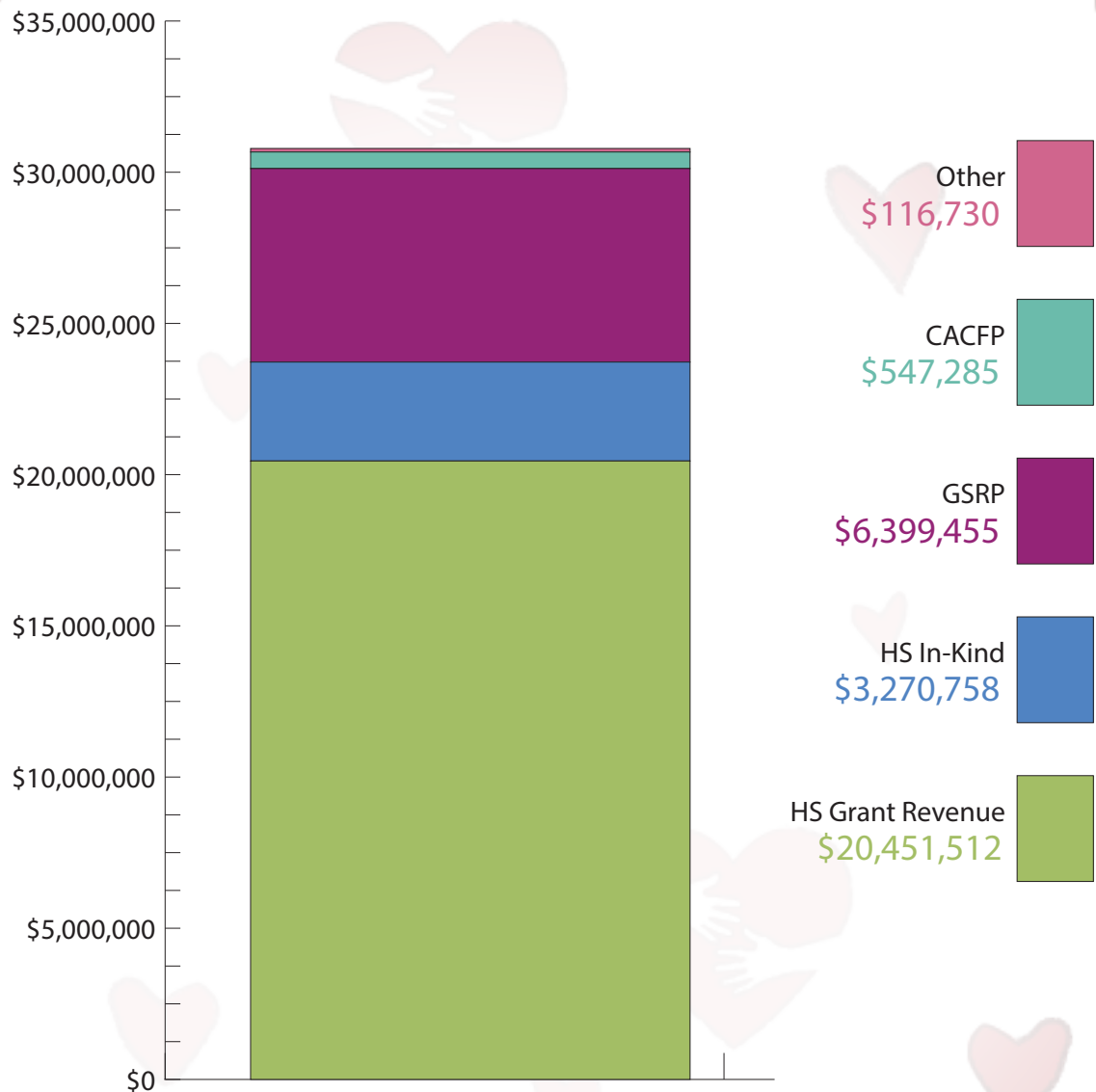
Finances

Audit

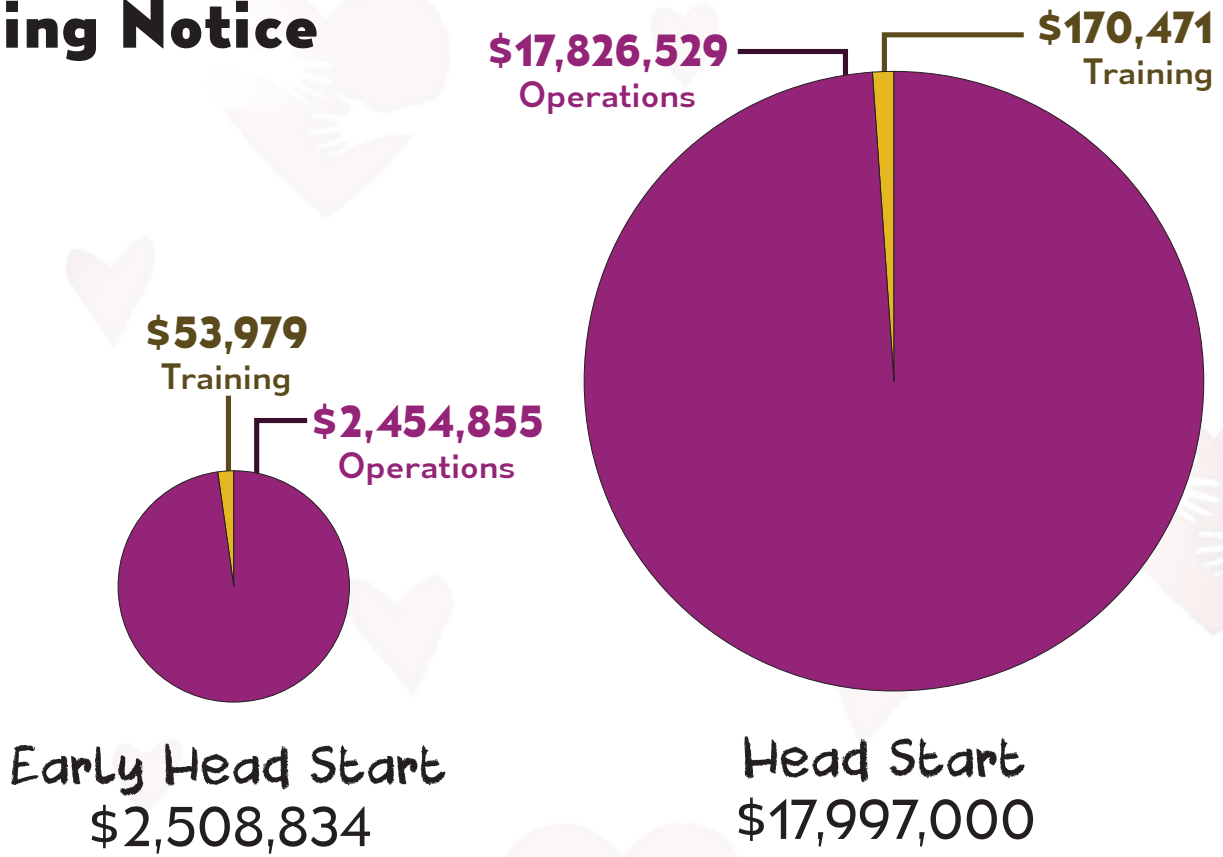
An independent audit, completed for the year ending December 31, 2022 by Vredeveld Haefner resulted in an unqualified opinion. The financial statement presented fairly, in all material aspects, of the financial position of Head Start for Kent County as of December 31, 2022. This audit provides assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatement and reviews the internal control over financial reporting for compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements.

No deficiencies or instances of noncompliance were found.

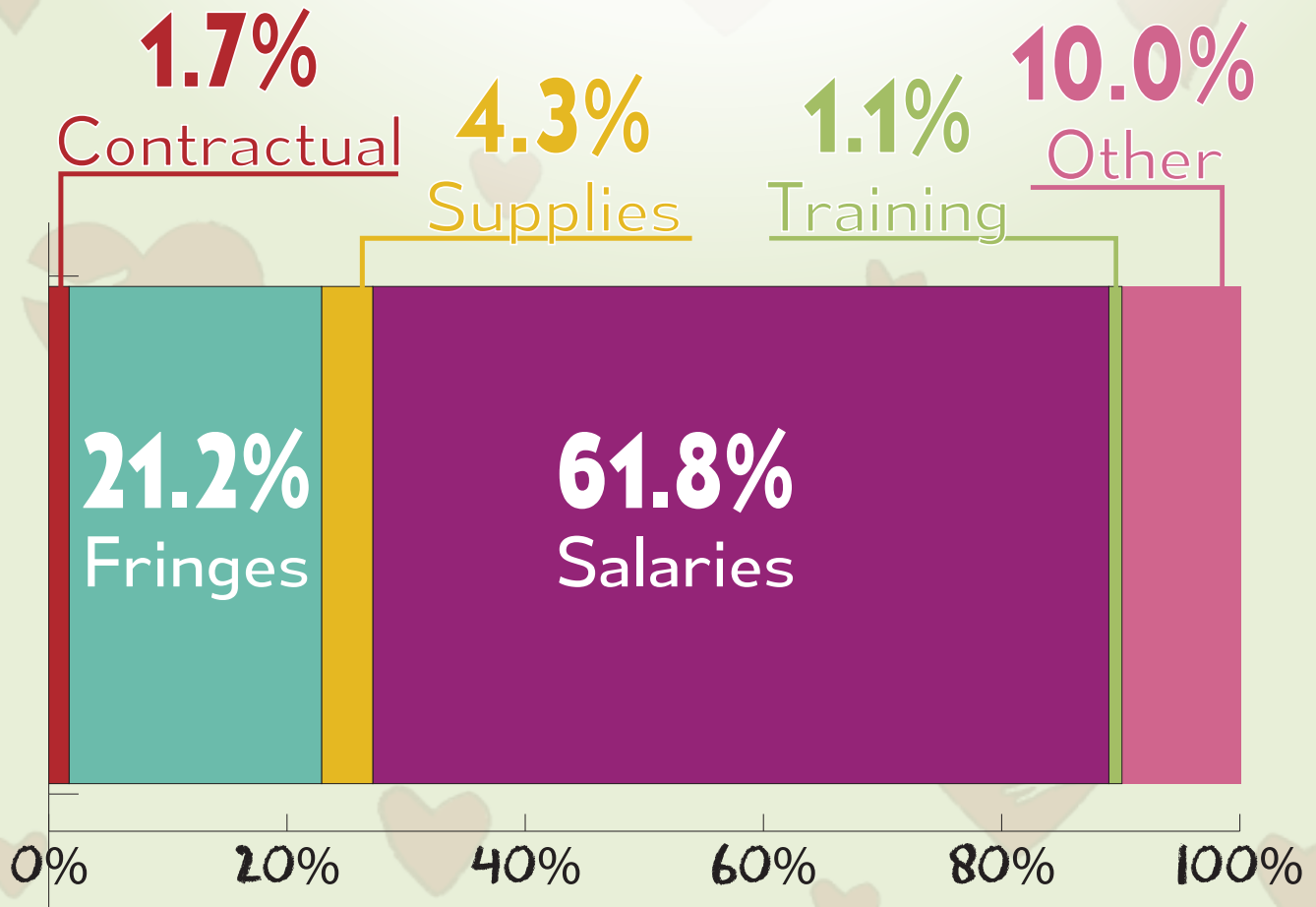
2022 Public and Private Funds



Funding Notice



Expected 2022 Budget



Breakdown Chart



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

We are pleased to announce the Cultural Competency and Inclusion department has undergone some restructuring and is now our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) department. The new name not only aligns with industry standards, it also directly reflects the mission of the department and the efforts we will continuously focus on. The DEI department will continue to ensure we look at our agency's practices, policies, and procedures with a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive lens. Our department mission is an extension of our agency mission, which is to ensure each individual feels valued, and we foster an inclusive environment so that all staff, children, and families have a sense of belonging.

Professional Development Session - "Unconscious Bias: Why it Matters?"

In August of 2023, we presented a PD session to all staff on Unconscious Bias: Why it Matters? Recognizing our biases are the first steps in being proactive, forward thinking, and progressive. We plan to continue to build upon our understanding of the importance of recognizing and eliminating our biases.

Mentorship Program

A few of Head Start for Kent County's goals are to recruit and retain high quality staff that reflect the children and families that we serve, and retention and satisfaction of ALL our staff. We recognize that there is a disparity in the representation of minority staff within our agency, as compared to the children and families we serve. Ultimately, every person is hired based on their suitability for the position, regardless of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious affiliations. HS4KC continues to support staff pursuing advancement within the agency through a mentorship program. The mentorship program staff seeking advancement as a mentee to receive professional guidance and expertise from an experienced, knowledgeable staff as a mentor.

Dual Language Learner Program Assessment

Dual Language Learners Program Assessment Dual Language Learners Program Assessment (DLLPA) assists our program in assessing our management systems and services to ensure the full and effective participation of children who are Dual Language Learners (DLL) and their families. We conducted our first DLLPA in 2018 and completed our second assessment in 2021. We've seen an increase in our translation of documents into our families' preferred languages since 2018 and one of our current focus areas is to strengthen our internal process for interpretation and translation for our families and our staff that are bi-multi-lingual. The DEI team will continue to review program policies to ensure staff and volunteers fulfill their responsibilities in culturally and linguistically respectful ways. This includes review of staff qualifications, competencies and job interview questions that ensure communicative competence in the language(s) spoken by children and their families.

Strategic Outreach

At the end of last year, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (previously called 'Cultural Competency and Inclusion') and Strategic Outreach departments were separated into individual departments and now reside under the Human Resources umbrella.

With this restructuring, "strategic outreach" efforts look different as well. While it still encompasses branding, public relations, and communications, it has now expanded to include strategic marketing efforts as well.

Strategic Marketing Efforts

This restructuring has allowed us to begin to focus on strategic marketing efforts some of which include:

- Identifying our target audiences.
- Using an integrated marketing approach with ERSEA, HR, and PFCE in order to operate in the community as a unified agency, rather than individual departments.
- Collecting data to allow us to make informed decisions.
- Adapting our job descriptions to be more 'search' friendly from a digital marketing perspective and exploring the use of Google AdWords campaigns.
- Growing our social media accounts and public brand awareness

Furthermore, our agency's marketing and communication strategy has been refocused to include key messaging points to attract new employees who are aligned with not only teaching, but also our mission of "making a difference in the community." We are also emphasizing employee perks, including incorporating our employee perks website page on all recruitment promotional materials. We've developed several taglines focused on recruitment such as "Grow with us" and "We focus on you so you can make a difference."

This has guided some adjustments in regards to messaging and promotional giveaway items, and we are working on developing more strategic, innovative ways to spread awareness on our employment, enrollment, and engagement efforts.

Refining our Social Media Presence

We narrowed our focus to build/grow our social media presence using the platforms that our target audiences use to align with our marketing goals. This allows us to grow our existing audience and gain more engagement by ensuring that our content aligns with our brand, audience, and the proper social media platform. In line with social media statistics, we no longer are using TikTok and Twitter, and are continuing to grow our Facebook and Instagram. We started utilizing our LinkedIn account as well in the hopes of connecting with professional audiences to expand our reach in those spaces and engage with our community partners.

Our department made various changes in order to encourage engagement on our platforms including utilizing Canva to create social media content. This has allowed us to improve consistency and make animated graphics that create more visibility with social media algorithms. Additionally, we set up a video recording studio at our Alger location, which we will use to create videos to bolster our social media presence even further.

One of our continuing goals is to develop targeted campaigns around recruitment (reasons to work for head start!), inclusivity, current employee spotlights to garner retention, and student enrolment. Look out for our new annual Strategic Outreach Campaign where we unveil our Strategic Outreach theme to the community across all social media platforms!

Nutrition

We provided special diets for children due to medically documented food allergies and/or food intolerances.

Each week, children participated in food experiences where they were able to try and/or help prepare new foods!

During the 2022-2023 school year, we provided:

73,124 breakfasts

73,366 lunches

65,201 snacks

to our EHS and Preschool Classrooms!



Operations

Transportation

The job of a Head Start Bus Driver is not one that is taken lightly, and there are requirements that are set in place to ensure our drivers have been properly trained to provide students with the safest form of transportation. One mandatory requirement of a Head Start Bus Driver is to have the Passenger and School Bus endorsements in addition to their Commercial Driver's License.

Did you know that Head Start for Kent County offers parents in our program the opportunity to obtain their CDL and necessary endorsements at no cost? This school year, the Transportation Department had two Head Start parents successfully complete the course and have two more on the road to receiving their CDL as well. Ms. Julia, who has been a Head Start Bus Driver since 2019, also went through our Parent Program and is a wonderful asset to our team. We are looking forward to continuing to provide this great opportunity to Head Start families.

- 618 Head Start students boarded our buses this year to attend school
- There were 96 different routes each day
- The average maximum time spent on a Head Start bus was 51.5 minutes – exceeding Head Start's performance standard and Michigan Child Care licensing rule of a maximum 60 minutes per ride
- Kent County is the largest Head Start Transportation Department in Michigan

Facilities

Our Facilities Department takes great pride in keeping our Head Start children and staff safe. We are excited to announce that over the course of the past school year, the Facilities team has become fully staffed! Each team member has the heart and drive that it takes to be part of the Head Start Facilities Department. They go above and beyond to ensure our buildings are clean, sanitized, and in compliance with licensing regulations. The team has been focusing on Professional development and team building. They even attended the KSS West Michigan Training Expo over the summer to gain knowledge and tips to strengthen the department. They are looking forward to attending again this summer!

- 72 Head Start classrooms cleaned
 - In addition to our Head Start classrooms, our staff also clean rooms for Great Start in our shared sites!
- 763 work orders completed by Facilities staff through the 2022-23 school year
- 218 safety concern work orders completed



Education and Special Needs

Classroom Support

Early Learning Coach Specialists

These support specialists ensure that each classroom provides a developmentally appropriate, high-quality play and learning environment. They help to ensure that the program is culturally and linguistically responsive to children and families. They also help ensure that there is always appropriate care and supervision of children. They provide ongoing individual and group training on departmental processes and expectations, and play a key role in the orientation and onboarding of new teaching staff, and anyone who helps to provide coverage in the classroom. Coaches are regularly working alongside teaching teams in classrooms when children are present to provide modeling.



Early Childhood Behavior Specialists

These support specialists utilize a model of Tiered Social Emotional Support to follow up with and provide support for children who have behavior and/or mental health concerns. The Behavior Specialists work to build the teacher's capacity to support children's social emotional development and address challenging behaviors. They also partner with families to address behavioral/mental health needs.

Trauma Informed Practices

As an agency, we are committed to being prepared to recognize and respond to trauma and utilize strategies that promote resilience in children and adults who care for them. We recognize the importance of focusing on adult wellness so that staff are better able to create a trauma-informed organization. Implementing strategies such as mindfulness, training on the impact of trauma, and mental health consultation help create a safe and nurturing environment for children. Our Special Needs department provides training, resources, and referrals for children, families and staff who are struggling with the effects of first-hand and second-hand trauma.

CLASS

CLASS is an observation tool designed to assess teacher-child interactions rated on a 7-point scale ranging from low to high. The system uses research based insights to improve how teachers interact with children every day.

CLASS assessment data is used in our preschool and infant/toddler classrooms to set goals while forming targeted coaching and professional development.

Curricula and Assessment Tools:

- Partners for a Healthy Baby for Pregnant Mothers
- The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos for EHS Classrooms
- The Creative Curriculum for Preschool for our 3 Year Old Classrooms
- Parents as Teachers for Home Visiting
- Connect4Learning for our 4 Year Old Classrooms
- Child Observation Record (COR) to assess and support areas of development essential to school readiness
- DECA: Devereux Early Childhood Assessment
- DECA-C: Devereux Early Childhood Assessment - Clinical
- ASQ: Ages and Stages Questionnaire
- DAYC-2: Developmental Assessment of Young Children

Intensive Coaching

In compliance with federal performance standards, we have a system in place to determine which staff will receive more intensive coaching than others. This support could be provided by the Coaches, Behavior Specialists, Site Supervisors, or other community partners.

This includes: New Hire Onboarding, Child Assessment Interrater Reliability, Curriculum Fidelity, CLASS Scores, and/or Supervisor/Manager Identified topics.

We track the number of staff who receive Intensive Coaching as well as the number of those who provide Intensive Coaching.

School Readiness Goals



Approaches to Learning

Children will show an interest in and persist to learn, create, and solve problems.

- A. Initiative and planning
- B. Problem solving with materials



Social and Emotional Development

Children will develop a positive sense of self and regulate their own emotions and behaviors.

Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers.

- D. Emotions
- E. Building relationships with adults
- F. Building relationships with other children



Language and Literacy

Children will develop increasingly complex language for use in social conversations and as a basis for literacy skills.

Children will build and use varied vocabulary while identifying and discriminating smaller units of sounds in words; rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and book appreciation.

- L. Speaking
- M. Listening and comprehension
- N. Phonological awareness
- O. Alphabetic knowledge



Cognition (Mathematics)

Children will explore and discover their own environments while developing an understanding of shapes, sizes, quantity and patterns.

- S. Numbers and counting
- T. Geometry: Shapes and spatial awareness
- V. Patterns



Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

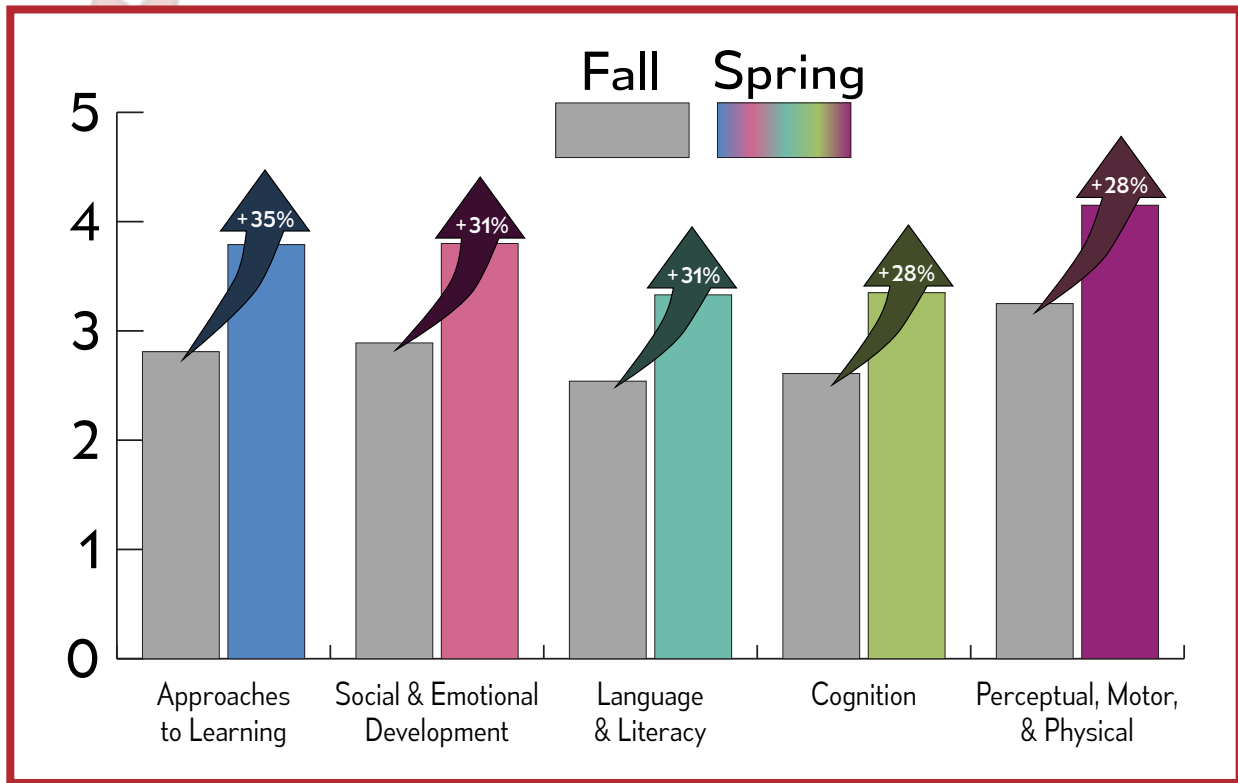
Children will demonstrate control of large and small muscles for movement including balancing and navigation skills.

- I. Gross-motor skills
- J. Fine-motor skills

COR Assessment (child outcomes):

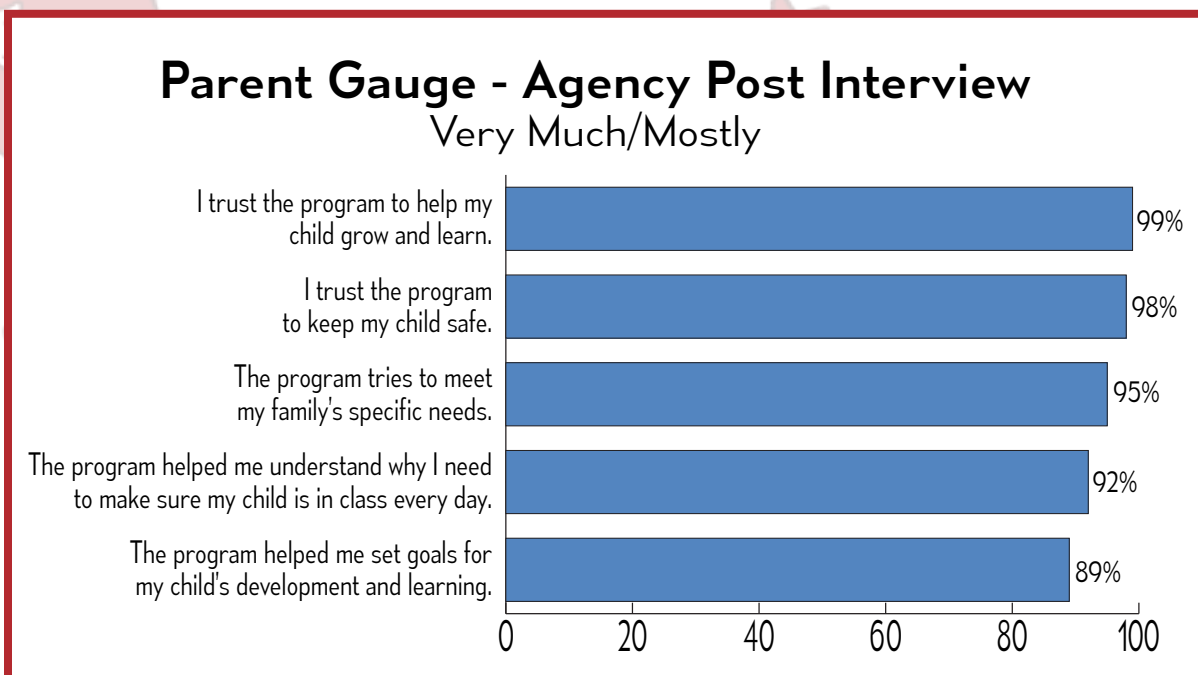
Teaching Teams collect ongoing assessment data to measure child outcomes. This data is reviewed and reported quarterly.

The COR Assessment allows for areas of strengths, opportunities, and educational gains to be identified for each child.



Parent Gauge (family outcomes):

Parent Gauge is implemented twice a year and is a tool designed to measure family outcomes. It allows us to identify areas of strengths and improvement.



Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE)

PFCE leads a strengths-based approach that promotes equity, inclusiveness and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. We work in partnership and relationship with families and the community. We strive to support families in achieving their goals and overcoming obstacles on their way to school readiness.

In the 2022-2023 School Year in Kent County we served 913 Head Start families and 143 Early Head Start families.

PFCE seeks to develop parents as leaders through various opportunities. These include those listed below.

Parent Policy Council (PPC)

Parent Cafes

Family Engagement Event Planning

Education Task Force

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Group

Health Advisory Committee

Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students)

Strengthening Families

Understanding Readiness Outcomes Committee (UROC)

Parent Policy Council

The purpose of the Policy Council is to empower parents in their children's education and development in coordination with the Head Start for Kent County Administration and the Board of Directors.

The council is comprised of parents, community members and Head Start staff. They work together as a team to make decisions about the design and operation of the Head Start for Kent County program. Policy Council officers are elected by the parents of children enrolled in the program. Members serve one year terms and can serve up to five years.

Members take ideas between site parents and council meetings for representation and possible action. The Policy Council gives parents a voice in the Head Start program.

During the 2022-2023 school year, we had spots for 30 parent representatives, 2 community representatives, and 1 board member.



Family Needs

Family Advocates (FAs) at the sites worked diligently to ensure that the emergency needs of our HS4KC families were met.

**Total
Emergency
Needs Met:**

Preschool:
90%

Early Head Start:
86%

Testimonials

Shanik M.

Head Start Parent

Thank you for this! He kept saying "Mommy, Pete the Cat!" I was wondering where did he learn it from. Goes to show he's definitely learning and being a sponge! Thank you ladies!



Lee Anne Ritzema

PPC Chairperson

For our family, Head Start has taught us new skills as parents (we have adult kids too), gave great ideas, resources we needed, and brought our family closer together. Our son has blossomed greatly due to their focus on the needs of the children in their program. Head Start helped us reconnect as a family, which has been a challenge in the past. We are looking forward to another amazing year of growing and learning as a family.



Marie M.
Head Start Parent

Thank you for taking care of my child and giving him great confidence! Your staff are so kind, and the transportation Head Start offers makes it easier for my child to attend.



Daniel B.
Head Start Parent

Thank you for being such great teachers to him! The teachers are very caring and professional. The social interactions make my son like school!

Gloria M.
Early Head Start Parent

God bless her and keep you always. Thank you very much for the patience and care and also the love with my daughter!



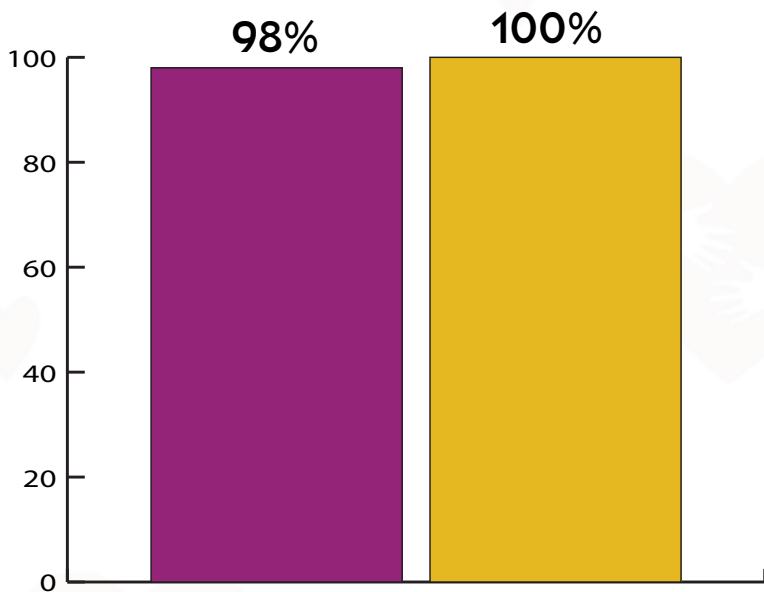
Health



We believe that health is the foundation of school readiness. We work with families to ensure that children can access the care they need when they need it so they can remain up-to-date on immunizations, well child visits, and oral health care, as well as learning healthy habits. We offer services that support families and strengthen communities so that children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

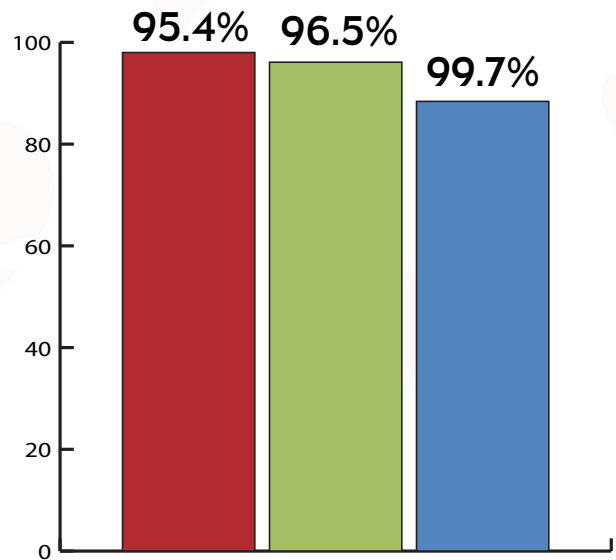
Early Head Start

- Well Child Checks
- Hearing and Vision Screenings



Preschool

- Physical Exams
- Hearing & Vision
- Blood Lead Testing

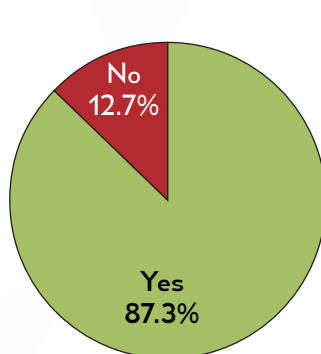


Students with an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care:

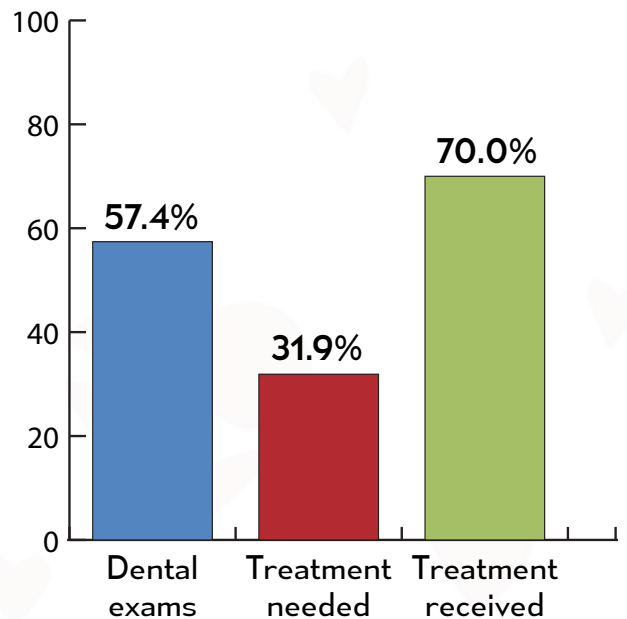
Medical

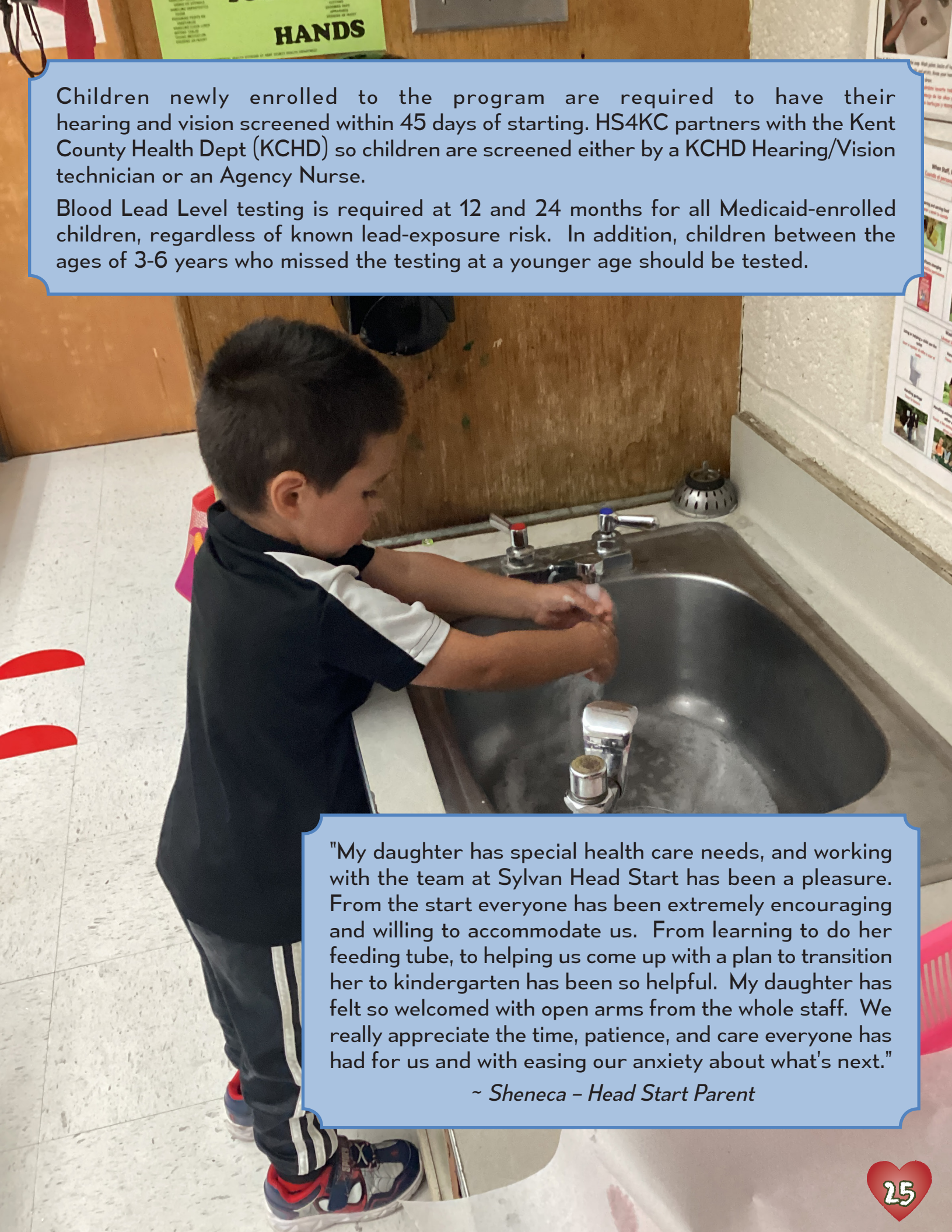


Dental



Preschool Dental Data





Children newly enrolled to the program are required to have their hearing and vision screened within 45 days of starting. HS4KC partners with the Kent County Health Dept (KCHD) so children are screened either by a KCHD Hearing/Vision technician or an Agency Nurse.

Blood Lead Level testing is required at 12 and 24 months for all Medicaid-enrolled children, regardless of known lead-exposure risk. In addition, children between the ages of 3-6 years who missed the testing at a younger age should be tested.

"My daughter has special health care needs, and working with the team at Sylvan Head Start has been a pleasure. From the start everyone has been extremely encouraging and willing to accommodate us. From learning to do her feeding tube, to helping us come up with a plan to transition her to kindergarten has been so helpful. My daughter has felt so welcomed with open arms from the whole staff. We really appreciate the time, patience, and care everyone has had for us and with easing our anxiety about what's next."

~ Sheneca - Head Start Parent

Community Partners



Alpha Family Center
American Red Cross of
Greater Grand Rapids
Arbor Circle Corporation
Aquinas College
Baby Scholars
Bethany Christian Services
Calvary Church
Calvin University
Catholic Charities of West Michigan
Cherry Street Health Services
Community Rebuilders
DA Blodgett - St. John's
Michigan Department of Health
and Human Services

Early On of Kent County
ELNC
Family Futures
First Steps
Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park
Gaines Pediatric Dentistry





Goodwill Industries of West Michigan
Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Grand Rapids Community College
Grand Rapids Housing Commission
Grand Rapids Public Library
Grand Valley State University

Grandville Pediatric Dentistry
Great Start Collaborative
Habitat for Humanity of Kent County
Health Net of West Michigan
Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan
Help Pregnancy Crisis Center
Hispanic Center of West Michigan
In the Image
Kent County Health Department
Kent District Library
Kent Intermediate School District (Kent ISD)
Literacy Center of West Michigan
Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)
Mel Trotter Ministries
Michigan Head Start Association
Michigan State University
Michigan Works
Mitten Kids Pediatric Dentistry
Network 180
Pine Rest Mental Health Services
Safe Haven Ministries
Salvation Army
Samaritas/Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Senior Neighbors, Inc.
South End Community Outreach Ministries
Special Olympics Young Athletes
Spectrum Health
Strong Beginnings
The Other Way Ministries
United Church Outreach Ministry (UCOM)
United Way
Vibrant Futures
YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids



Our 2023 Outreach Theme



Our 2022 Outreach Theme was "Heart Start!" We were so inspired by Dr. Adolph Brown's message at our November 2021 All Agency Professional Development Day and how Head Start gives a "Heart Start" to families that we asked if we could use this phrase, and he enthusiastically said yes! The Heart Start slogan is also inspired by Dr. Brown; "Learning starts with the heart"! This isn't just true for our children in school--it starts in the hearts of our teachers, support staff, and parents, too!



Head Start for Kent County

Connecting Families and Community Resources