

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

**Mercer County
Head Start**

Early Head Start

PA Pre-K Counts

**Serving Pregnant
Women, Children
Birth to Age Five,
and Their Families
in Mercer County**



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www.mchs-ehs.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Throughout the last quarter century, I have had the utmost pleasure of working for our County's Head Start / Early Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts program and I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to continue my career here as the Program Director. I take extraordinary pride in sharing our Annual Report with our families and stakeholders. Throughout the 2022-2023 program year, the lack of workforce impacted our program significantly. There were multiple classrooms that were unable to open because of the lack of staff to adequately supervise and ensure the health and safety of the children enrolled. Although the Public Health Emergency related to COVID-19 has ended, the effects still impact our program, especially with workforce. Our goal is always to provide high quality services to pregnant women and children birth - five years of age and their family as a wholistic approach to meeting the needs of the child by meeting the needs of the family. At this time, the program is committed to working to increase salaries of staff to become more competitive within the workforce.

The program has seen changes that also include the resignation of our Sub-Recipient, the Farrell Area School District after 50+ years of working together effective July 1, 2023. Community Action Partnership of Mercer County, the Recipient of all the programming funds, was made aware of the separation in February 2023 after it was approved at the Farrell Area School Board meeting. Community Action Partnership of Mercer County is now operating the programs seamlessly under their umbrella of high-quality services to the residents of Mercer County.

The program's priorities continue to promote teaching and learning and to meet the diverse needs of all the families that we serve. We continue to work to ensure that our children are working towards their individual goals related to school readiness, from the time a child enrolls, until they transition into K-12 education. Our top priority is to provide high quality learning environments that promote safe and positive opportunities for children to gain the knowledge and skills to start their educational journey.

I would like to take this time to thank the families who allow us the opportunity to provide their children with an educational experience that is fun and inviting and welcomes all children into our programming. Partnering with our families is so important to our continued success and we could not do it without you as part of the team. I am so thankful to have the opportunity to work with our community stakeholders as well as our team of dedicated staff, families, Policy Council, and Community Action Board Members. Our Head Start / Early Head Start community is deeply committed to the safety and well-being of our children and we look forward to collaborating with you in the future. Sincerely, Jennifer A. Zilla, ECE Division Director, Community Action Partnership of Mercer County



MISSION AND VALUES

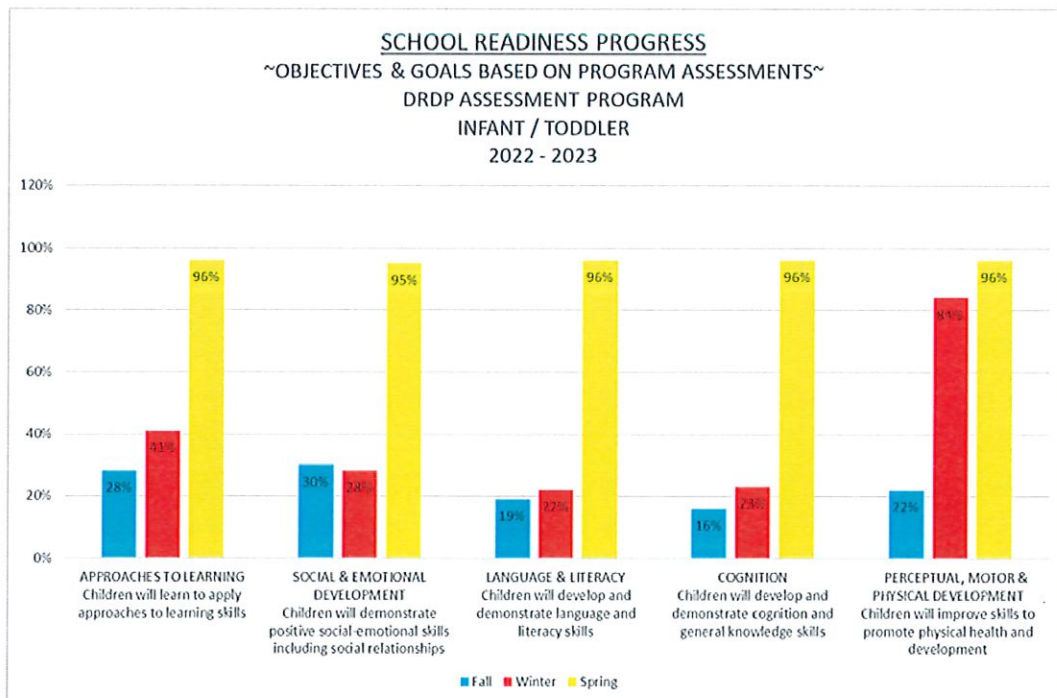
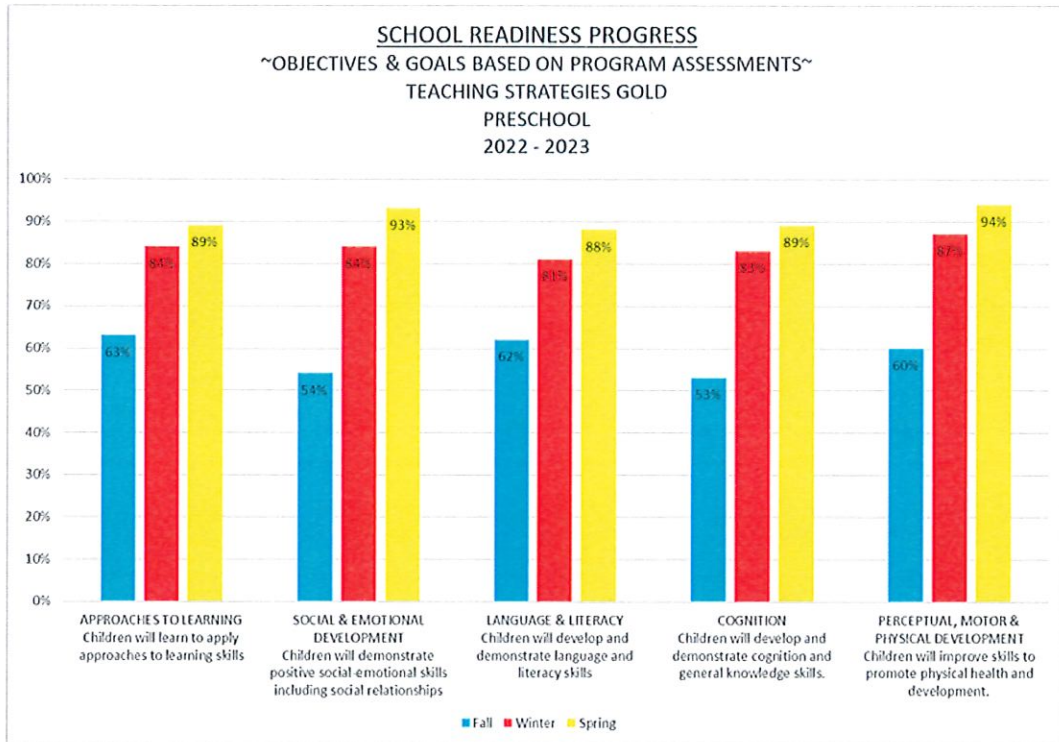
Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts connects children, families, schools and communities by partnering quality education with caring support services today for a better tomorrow.



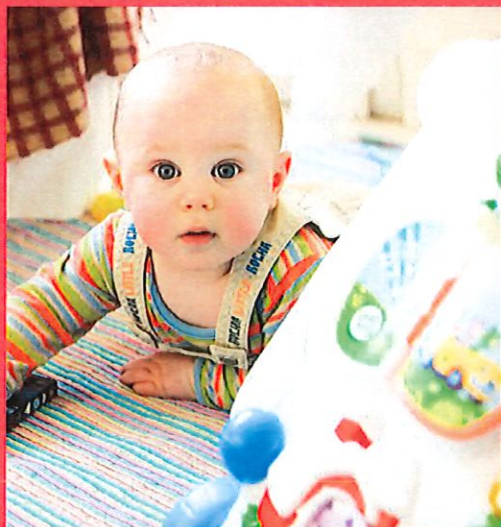
- We believe that parents are a child's first and best teacher.
- We believe that our entire staff should be committed to children, families, fellow staff members and our community partners by demonstrating the highest levels of professionalism, dignity and respect.
- We believe that the key to self-sufficiency is through quality education, parental responsibility and community partnerships.
- We believe that education and the love of learning is critical to school readiness and a family's future success.
- We believe that providing comprehensive services for physical and mental health development are crucial to a child's overall development.
- We believe in the empowerment of families to ensure self-reliance.
- We believe that a child that has healthy nutrition and a safe environment can learn effectively.

SCHOOL READINESS

Children are assessed three times per year in all birth to five programming. In Early Head Start, the program made the switch in the 2022-2023 program year to use the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and continued using Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD for Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts. These goals are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards.



During the 2022-2023 program year, there were seven Head Start classrooms closed for the program year, with one opening in February 2023. Classrooms were not able to operate due to an insufficient number of staff personnel to work in classrooms. In addition, other classrooms were being operated with supervisory staff to keep classrooms open. The primary reason staff left the program or did not accept a job was the wages that were being offered.



The Early Head Start home-based program was able to maintain full enrollment throughout the program year with active participation in weekly home visits and socializations. The program was able to conduct both on site and offsite socialization opportunities for families to participate in during the 2022-2023 program year.

According to the most recent Kids Count Data Center information from 2022 - There were 5,273 children under the age of five in Mercer County. The Head Start, Early Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts programs that are operated by the Recipient/Sub-Recipient served approximately 10% of the eligible children who reside in Mercer County. There was a decrease in the number of children served by the program due to classrooms not operating as the result of staff shortages.

During the 2022-2023 program year 550 children and 503 families were served by Head Start / Early Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts. The average monthly enrollment by program was
Head Start 72%,
Early Head Start 100%
PA Pre-K Counts 98%.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

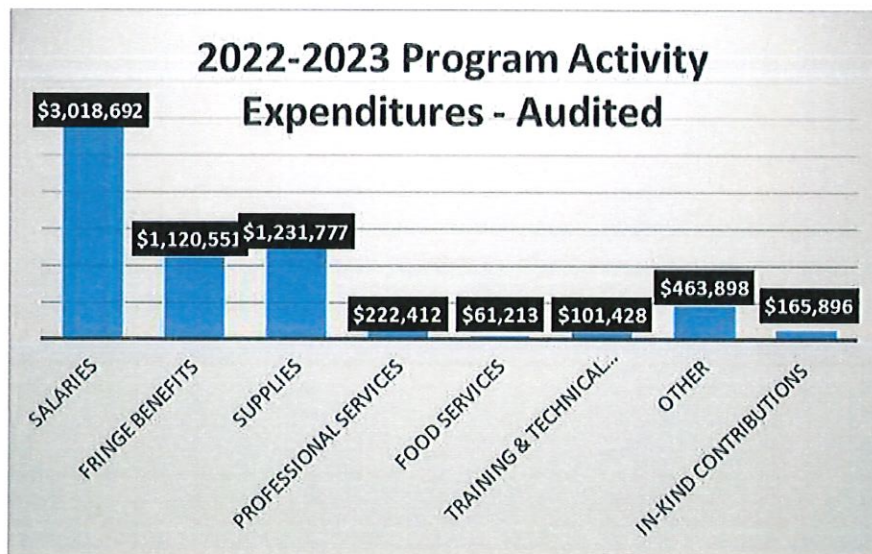
The Program receives Federal and State funding to provide comprehensive early childhood services to 559 pregnant women, infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and their families. Federal funding is awarded by an 80% federal share provided by the Federal Government for the cost of the program and a 20% non-federal share expected to be provided by the Program in the form of cash or in-kind donations. State funding includes a Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide aid for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was awarded American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Coronavirus Response Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) funds. The timeframe to expend these dollars expired March 31, 2023. The program, like many others, across the nation did not expend all of its monies prior to the funding expiration.

2022-2023 Funding Type Descriptions	Program Grant Revenues	Program Grant Expenditures
Head Start (HS) - Operating / Training & Technical Assistance	\$3,738,755	\$3,687,739
Early Head Start (EHS) - Operating / Training & Technical Assistance	\$690,894	\$689,333
Head Start State Supplemental (HSSAP)	\$880,686	\$883,643
PA Pre-K Counts	\$949,251	\$959,256
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	\$291,308	\$313,087
Non-Federal Share (In-Kind)	\$145,018	\$145,018
2022-2023 Program Totals	\$6,695,912	\$6,678,076

2021-2023 Additional Funding Types Description	Program Grant Revenues	Program Grant Expenditures
Head Start ARP 4/1/21-3/31/23	453,474	398,919
EHS CRRSA 4/1/21-3/31/23	114,067	81,135
2021-2023 Additional Funding Totals	567,541	480,054

AUDIT

Hill, Barth & King, LLC an independent auditing firm, conducted a financial audit of the combined financial statements and programs of Farrell Area School District – Head Start, Early Head Start, PA Pre-K Counts. The combined financial statements presented fairly, with findings noted. The financial position of the programs as of June 30, 2023, and 2022, and the changes in their fund balances for the years then ended in accordance with (GAAP) accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.



HEALTH INFORMATION

Percentage of children/pregnant women with health insurance:
Head Start-99%
Early Head Start children-100%
Early Head Start pregnant women-98%
PA Pre-K Counts-100%

Percentage of children with a medical home:
Head Start-98%
Early Head Start children-98%
Early Head Start pregnant women-100%
PA Pre-K Counts-96%

Percentage of children with up-to-date physical examinations:
Head Start-60%
Early Head Start children-52%%
Early Head Start pregnant women-100%
PA Pre-K Counts-44%

Percentage of children with up-to-date, or all possible immunizations:
Head Start-100%
Early Head Start children-98%
PA Pre-K Counts-100%

Percentage of children with a dental home:
Head Start-79%
Early Head Start children-74%
PA Pre-K Counts-91%

Percentage of children with up- to- date dental examinations:
Head Start -50%
Early Head Start, including pregnant women-57%
PA Pre -K Counts-65%



During the 2022-2023 Program Year:
75 Head Start/HSSAP students enrolled had an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
27 PA Pre-K Counts students enrolled had an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
21 Early Head Start students enrolled had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
The students in our Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts program were able to receive their itinerant services through the Midwestern IU #4 as part of their educational experience in our classrooms and our EHS children received their services through Mercer County's Birth to Three service provider, Behavioral Health Commission, in their homes.

Transition

Successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten happen when the schools and families work together and then their preschool teacher has the opportunity to engage with the receiving school. Mercer County Head Start / Early Head Start has a system in place to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. This includes Early Head Start to Head Start and Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts to kindergarten.

Mercer County Head Start has agreements in place with all 12 school districts. These signed agreements recognize and support the process in which our staff and school district personnel gather, along with parents, to successfully transfer students into kindergarten. With parent permission, we can transfer assessment data, health information and overall progress information from the preschool teacher.



of Children who transitioned from Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts to Kindergarten - 197

of Children who aged out of Early Head Start - 32

of Children who transitioned from Early Head Start to Head Start - 21

of children who transitioned from Early Head Start to another ECE Program - 2

of children who did not enter another ECE program - 9

Family Engagement

There were 78 Early Head Start families served during the 2022-2023 program year.

In addition to weekly home visits and on site Socialization opportunities, the following Family Engagement activities were available to all families:

- Grove City Park
- Buhl Environmental Park- Sandy's Place
- Visits to local fire and police departments
- Apple Castle family scavenger hunt
- Irons Mill fall fest
- Keystone Safari
- Outdoor water play
- Dental Day



There were 452 Head Start families served during the 2022-2023 program year.

The Head Start program offered the following family and community engagement opportunities:

Nutrition Lessons provided by the Nutrition Supervisor.

Supplemental learning materials for child/family activities

Health and Safety information through the Family Engagement Staff and Center Committee Meetings.

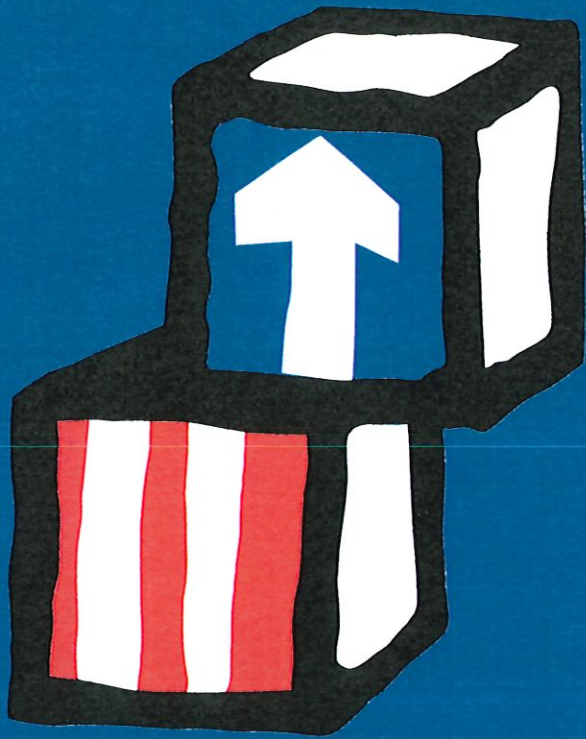
Transition planning and meeting with receiving school districts or other kindergarten programs.

End of Year Carnival for all Families

Autumn Fest

Parent/Child Dance

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