



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

EXTENSION



HEAD START

2022-2023

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Board of Directors	Policy Council
Anissa Pace - Board Chair	Katie Wilson - Chair
Creola James - Secretary, Early Childhood	Laci Threadgill - Vice Chair
Taylor Brinkley - Attorney	Amy Panchana – Secretary
Joshus Ervin - Fiscal	Wesley Jackson
Hunter Andrews	LaQuisha Wright Johnson
	Tiphani Madden

HEAD START LOCATIONS

MSU-Extension Head Start Administrative Office

521 34th Street

Gulfport, MS 39507

Phone: 228-241-2181

Email: msuheadstart@ext.msstate.edu

East Biloxi Head Start

590 Division Street

Biloxi, MS 39530

Phone: 228-967-7290

Gaston Point Head Start

1526 Mills Avenue

Gulfport, MS 39501

Phone: 228-731-3746

Gilbert Mason Head Start

4221 Popp's Ferry Road

D'Iberville, MS 39540

Phone: 228-967-7257

MISSION

MSU-Extension Head Start strives to promote optimal development of each child and his/her family through positive learning experiences and high-quality service.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Dr. Louise E. Davis

Executive Director



Jamila B. Taylor

Director, Head Start and EHS

We are excited and honored to share our Annual Report for Mississippi State University Extension Head Start/Early Head Start. We would like to thank you for your continued interest and investment of time and energy to our program. We are also committed and invested in providing the highest quality of service to the children and families served within our Harrison County communities. Our goal is to serve as a model of excellence in early care and education throughout the nation, and this year marked an important step in achieving that goal with a successful review by the Head Start Bureau. We were recognized for the accomplishments we have achieved in our short existence in the Head Start landscape and were encouraged that we have the necessary systems in place to continue to innovate and improve.

We recognize that our success is only possible with the dedication of our staff and the support of our partners as well as our Board and Policy Council. Most of all, we would be remiss if we didn't recognize that parents are their children's first and best teacher. We are humbled by your trust in us to help educate and care for your children.

This report is just a snapshot of our efforts throughout the year, but we hope you find it an uplifting reflection of our commitment to cultivating positive and long-lasting experiences for our children and our communities.

Sincerely,

Louise and Jamila

FROM OUR BOARD



The Board and staff have continued to focus on the "mission" of the agency by providing the services outlined in this year's Annual Report. We applaud and thank the community, staff and stakeholders for support and resources that have contributed to another successful year. It is again a pleasure to share with you the results of our dedicated team. This report will reflect on the impact of MSU Extension Head Start on the hundreds of families whose lives were touched and served.

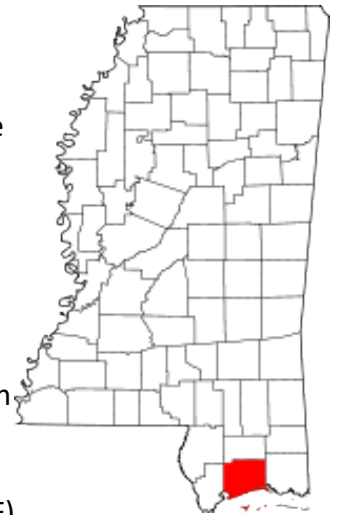
As we begin another year of working with young children and their families, we are taking extra precautions to ensure everyone remains safe. We are committed to providing high quality services to our children. We believe every child, regardless of their circumstances at birth has the ability to reach their full potential. We are in this together and it is our privilege to continue to bring Head Start services to you.

Aníssa Pace
Board Chair



ABOUT US

Mississippi State University - Extension (MSU-ES) serves children and families in Harrison County, located in the Gulf of southern Mississippi. Our organization has been a singular beacon for quality early childhood education in the state. Over the last decade, MSU-ES has been tasked with operating the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network, administering the state's QRIS and providing a network of quality improvement supports for early childhood providers, culminating in the \$15M/year Early Years Network grant. There is no meaningful ECE initiative in the state in which MSU-ES has not played a leadership role. We expanded our capacity into new territory by entering the Head Start/Early Head Start world on August 1, 2019, for Harrison County, Mississippi.



From February 13-17, 2023, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted an intensive Focus Area Two (FA2) monitoring review consisting of interviews for content area leadership staff, Board and Policy Council members as well as policy and procedure reviews. Reviewers visited centers and classrooms to monitor and complete safety checks as well as file audits for both children and personnel. On March 27, 2023, we received a very positive report that included only one noted area of improvement regarding lack of documentation for lead free paint for school-based partnerships. The review team identified several areas of strength, including our facilities and the learning taking place in each center, family engagement supports, our monitoring for health and safety, our wellness program, ERSEA and the documentation provided to support our efforts across service areas, our HR and fiscal systems and our partnership programs. The lead reviewer commented that for a program only in business for four years, we have done an amazing job and have excellent systems for an excellent program. Through our efforts, and other committed early care and education professionals, we will change the narrative for our most vulnerable children and families in Mississippi.

VISION

THE MSU-EXTENSION SERVICE PROVIDES RESEARCH-BASED INFORMATION, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER FOCUSED ON ISSUES AND NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI, ENABLING THEM TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WELL-BEING.

STATE OF THE STATE

In overall child well-being, Mississippi ranks only behind New Mexico. The table below, (taken from *Mississippi Kids Count Factbook 2023*), shows Mississippi is the last ranked state in both Health and Family and Community metrics, 49th in Economic Well-Being, and 39th in Education, however for young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school, the state fared worse than the previous year with an estimated 36,000 children not in an educational setting. A child’s chances of thriving depend not only on individual, family and community characteristics but also on the state in which she or he is born and raised. Policy choices and investments also influence children’s chances for success.

		Year	Number	Percent/Rate
Economic Well-Being Rank: 49	Children in Poverty	2016-20	191,000	28%
	Children whose Parents Lack Secure Employment	2016-20	241,000	34%
	Children Living in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden	2016-20	189,000	27%
	Teens Not in School and Not Working	2016-20	16,000	9%
Education Rank: 39	Young Children (Ages 3 and 4) Not in School	2016-20	36,000	48%
	Fourth-Graders Not Proficient in Reading	2019	N/A	68%
	Eighth-Graders Not Proficient in Math	2019	N/A	76%
	High School Students Not Graduating on Time	2018/19	N/A	15%
Health Rank: 50	Babies with low birth weight	2020	4,192	12%
	Children without Health Insurance	2016-20	38,000	5%
	Child and Teen Deaths per 100,000	2020	340	46
	Teens who are Overweight or Obese	2019-20	N/A	38%
Family and Community Rank: 50	Children in Single-Parent Families	2016-20	293,000	45%
	Children in Families Where the Household Head Lacks a High School Diploma	2016-20	84,000	12%
	Children Living in High Poverty Areas	2016-20	152,000	22%
	Teen Births per 1,000	2020	2,711	28

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Total 2021-2022 federal, state and local funding \$7,422,921		Head Start	Early Head Start
		Base	\$4,733,499
	Carry forward	\$57,186	\$13,512
	In-Kind	\$1,197,704	\$286,880
	Total Funding	\$5,988,389	\$1,434,532

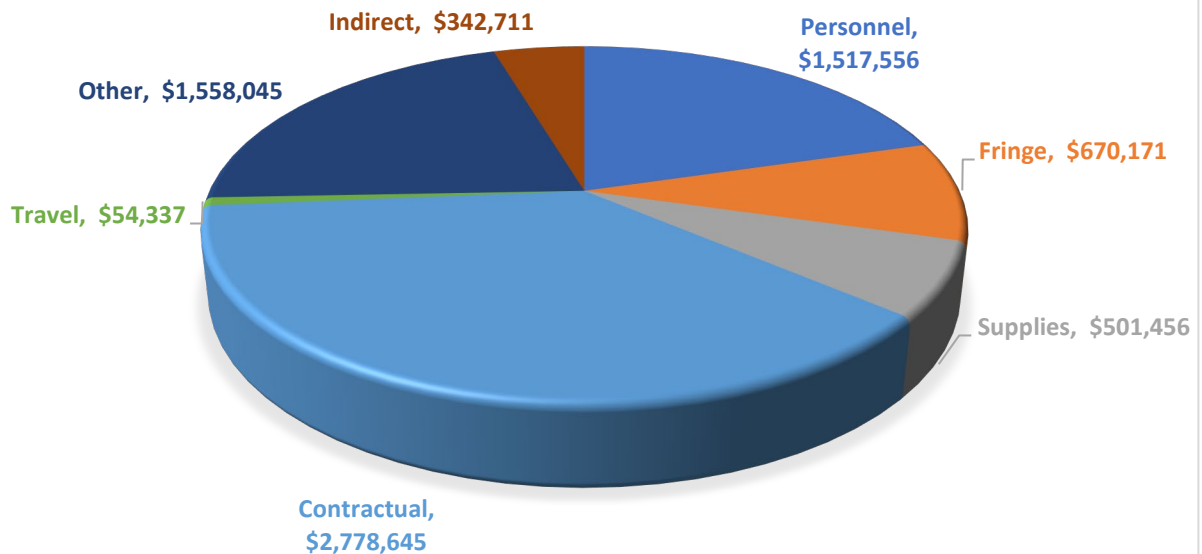
MSU-ES Head Start has administrative and system-wide fiscal capacity and financial resources to implement, manage, report on, and achieve the goals and objectives of Head Start and Early Head Start grant. At all stages of implementation and management, the MSU team follows policies and procedures relating to maintaining fiduciary and financial responsibility for all grant activities; keeping accurate payroll and accounting data, records, and archiving of supporting documentation for all charges; preparing and submitting expenditure reports; certifying expenses are true and correct; classifying and reporting accounting transactions properly; and maintaining procurement records.

We have intensive monitoring guidelines and practices to ensure that all federal money passed through to partners is used appropriately, and that the funds spent on this program are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to Head Start. The Board and Policy Council have a robust role in setting program priorities through their input and review of budgets and expenditures as standing agenda items at regular meetings.

MSU Extension Head Start is audited as a part of the University system and has maintained unqualified opinions of Extension services throughout our tenure as a Head Start grantee. The University administers more than \$60 million annually in total funding across all programs with all the finance, grant accounting and compliance measures in place for ensuring the maintenance of fiduciary and financial responsibility for all activities. Reviews of other MSU early childhood programs have consistently reflected the strength of our financial accountability systems.



2020-2021 EXPENDITURES



2021-2022 Head Start Budget				
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Non-Federal	Total
Personnel	\$1,443,781	\$32,965	\$40,810	\$1,517,556
Fringe	\$642,136	\$12,527	\$15,508	\$670,171
Travel	\$51,857	\$2,480	\$0	\$54,337
Supplies	\$501,456	\$0	\$0	\$501,456
Contractual	\$1,683,514	\$1,095,131	\$0	\$2,778,645
Other	\$135,411	\$0	\$1,422,634	\$1,558,045
Indirect	\$332,530	\$4,549	\$5,632	\$342,711
Total Budget	\$4,790,685	\$1,147,652	\$1,484,584	\$7,422,921

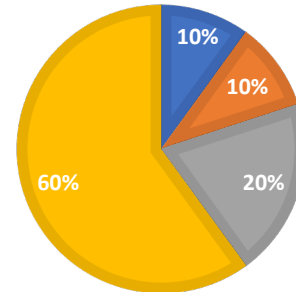
STAFFING

We are extremely fortunate to have a high number of dedicated staff who are well trained and supported to work with our children and families. The majority of our Head Start education staff (71%) hold a bachelor's degree or higher, with another 29% with an associate degree. For Early Head Start, approximately half have an associate degree or higher, with the remainder holding a CDA in infant/toddler education.

Even with our high-quality staff, we are facing the same challenges as other Head Start programs throughout the nation in finding and retaining qualified staff to work in classrooms. Early childhood, with traditionally low pay, is a field that is struggling to attract candidates to the field and even when we hire staff, the burnout rate is incredibly high. Our profession is seeing record numbers of staff across the nation voluntarily leaving their jobs; we are no different. In the past year, we were unable to open several classrooms due to the inability to recruit, hire and retain staff to safely operate classrooms. As such, we were able to serve approximately ½ of our funded enrollment. In addition to the difficulty in finding qualified staff, we also face challenges in keeping staff as well. In the past year, we had 10 Early Head Start staff leave, ½ of whom were teachers and 24 Head Start staff out of 50 total staff (48%). Out of those 24 staff, 21 (87%) were education staff. For the 34 staff who left, only 13 were replaced during the school year, leading to a negative impact on continuity of care for our children served in those classrooms. In exit surveys of staff leaving the organization, we are finding a myriad of reasons for the vacancies. The majority (53%) left for work in similar fields, such as local school systems at a higher rate of pay.

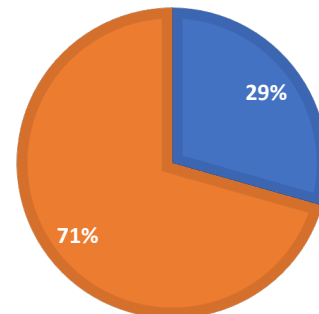
EARLY HEAD START TEACHERS

■ Masters ■ Bachelors ■ Associates ■ CDA



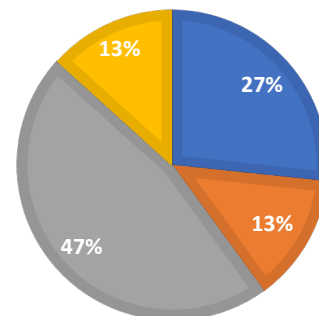
HEAD START TEACHERS

■ Bachelors ■ Associates



HEAD START TEACHER ASSISTANTS

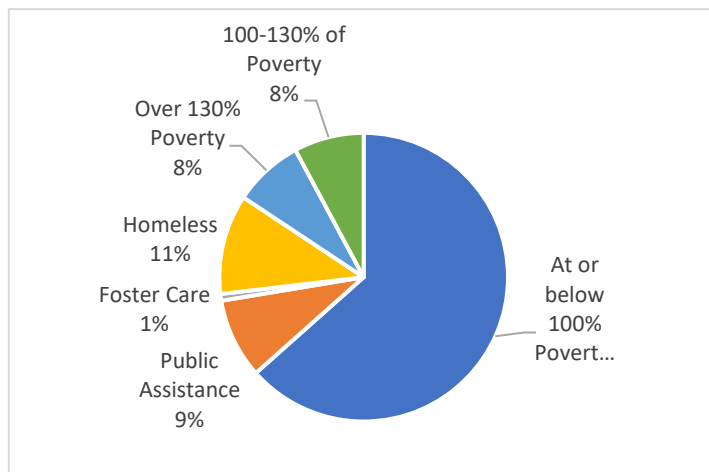
■ None ■ Bachelors ■ Associates ■ CDA



SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANTS SERVED

MSU is funded to serve 488 Head Start and 64 Early Head Start for a total of 552 children in three Head Start centers that MSU-Extension has oversight of: East Biloxi Head Start, Gilbert Mason Head Start, and Gaston Point Head Start. In addition, we have a partnership with one of the local school districts, Gulfport School District where we have 5 pre-K classrooms; 1 classroom each that are housed at 5 different elementary schools. East Biloxi Head Start is currently housed at Nichols Elementary in Biloxi, MS with the region serving families in the Biloxi Public School District. Gilbert Mason is located in D'Iberville within the Harrison County School District. Gaston Point Head Start is located in Gulfport, and along with the partnership program, serves families in the Gulfport School District.

Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, our program served a total of 227 children in Head Start as well as 41 children in Early Head Start.

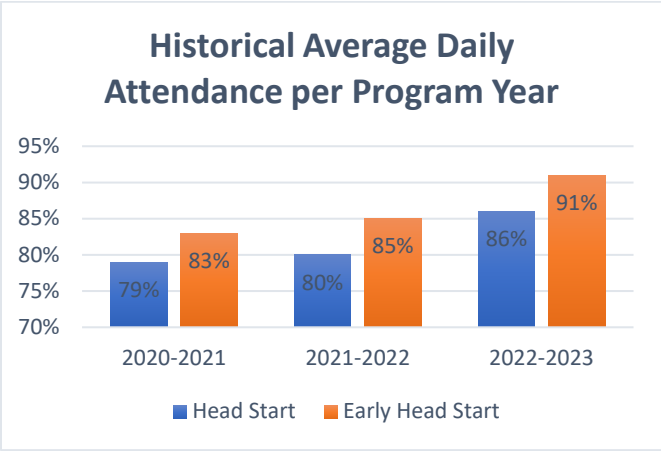
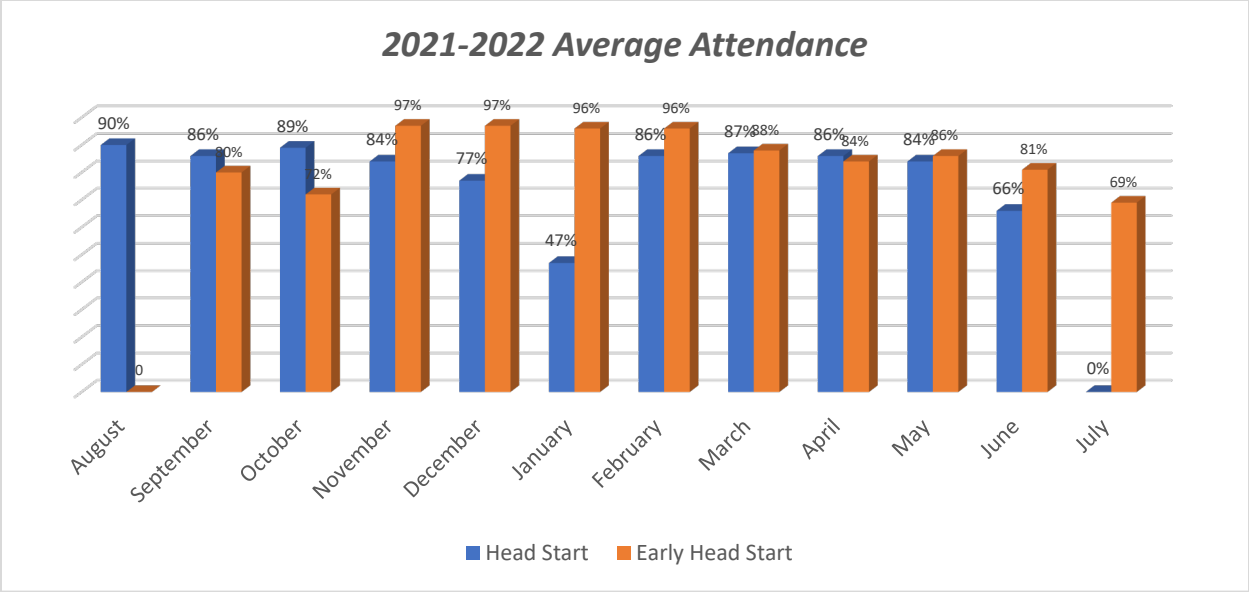


Our Early Head Start program is in partnership with Moore Community House and located at our Linda Lyons Early Head Start in Gulfport, MS. In 2021-2022, 63% of our children were income eligible – living at 100% of the federal poverty level, which for a family of 4 is \$27,750 per year. Another 31% of our children qualified through categorical eligibility including foster care, public assistance or homeless (a staggering

11%). We estimate there are 2,875 income-eligible Early Head Start infants and toddlers and 1,812 income eligible Head Start children in Harrison County. At full capacity, we would serve 2% of the eligible Early Head Start population and 27% of the Head Start population in our service area.

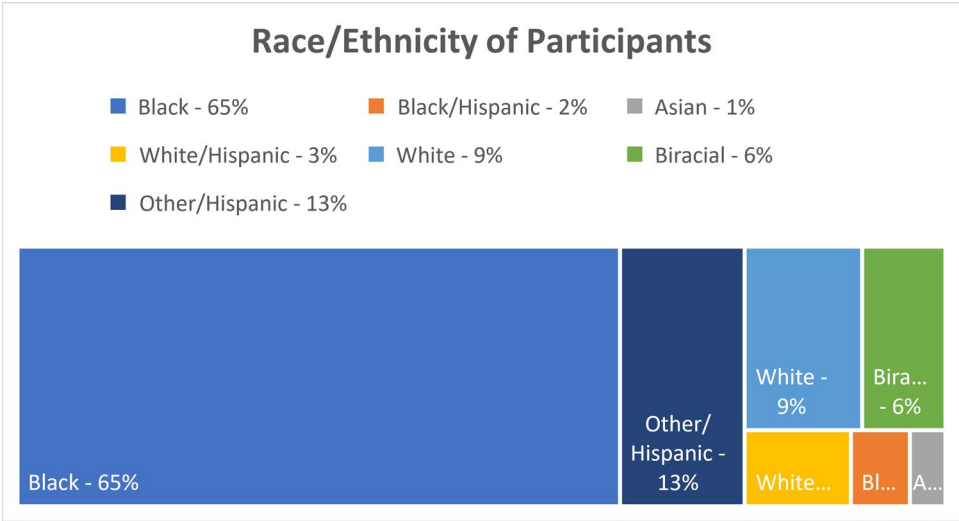
Early Head Start and Head Start have staggered starts, accounting for a month without enrollment in each. The critical staffing shortage of qualified early childhood professionals sweeping the nation has had a tremendous impact on us locally. As a result of that, and lingering effects of COVID, we had capacity of approximately half of our funded enrollment. Our attendance reports are based on the number of open classrooms.





The following chart shows the number of children/families were served by center during the 21-22 program year, the total numbers/percentages of children with physical and dental exams.

Location	Children Served	Families Served	Physical Exams	%	Dental Exams	%
East Biloxi Elementary	40	37	34	85%	38	95%
Gaston Point	36	33	28	78%	33	92%
Dr. Gilbert Mason	63	58	56	89%	56	89%
Gulfport Partnership	88	88	57	65%	74	84%
Total Head Start	227	216	175	77%	201	89%
Linda Lyons (EHS)	41	35	32	78%	40	98%



We serve diverse children and families and are continuing to see increases in our Hispanic/Latinx population. Forty-seven of our children are Dual Language Learners, with most of those children being

proficient in Spanish (75%), but also a few families whose primary languages are Middle Eastern or East Asian. We strive to ensure that we can communicate with children and families in their home language by providing staff and partners who have the ability to interpret and translate important information.

FOCUS ON WELLNESS

Over the past year, our program has placed an increased emphasis on wellness for our staff, children and families. We researched wellness assessments and programs, interviewed staff to determine strengths, opportunities for growth, current wellness needs and concerns. For parents, we outlined plans for our monthly Family Engagement Meetings to include activities and resources for wellness and mindfulness. In each center, we established wellness rooms for staff that included comfortable seating, staff artwork, coffee/tea stations, etc. to allow staff to recharge as needed. Our efforts to foster unity among staff will allow them to bring their best efforts to the classrooms. In addition, we are continuing to build ways to recognize staff's value to our program, including setting up a staff advisory committee to promote involvement in decision making processes and spotlights on staff contributions.



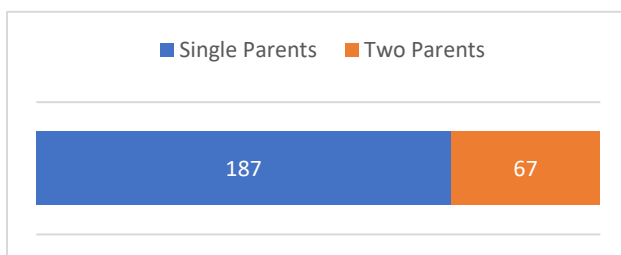
PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Our relationships with parents begin as soon as we take an application for a child, when we discuss parent’s hopes and dreams for their child. We set the stage for the importance of the parent’s involvement in their child’s educational journey. When the child is accepted into the program, we hold a parent orientation where we discuss what parents can expect from us and how they can be an essential part of the program. Because of our focus on child health, we also talk to the family about partnerships we have with community health experts, such as The Vision Center, South Mississippi Smiles, and Coastal Family Health Clinic who provide on-site services for children as necessary.

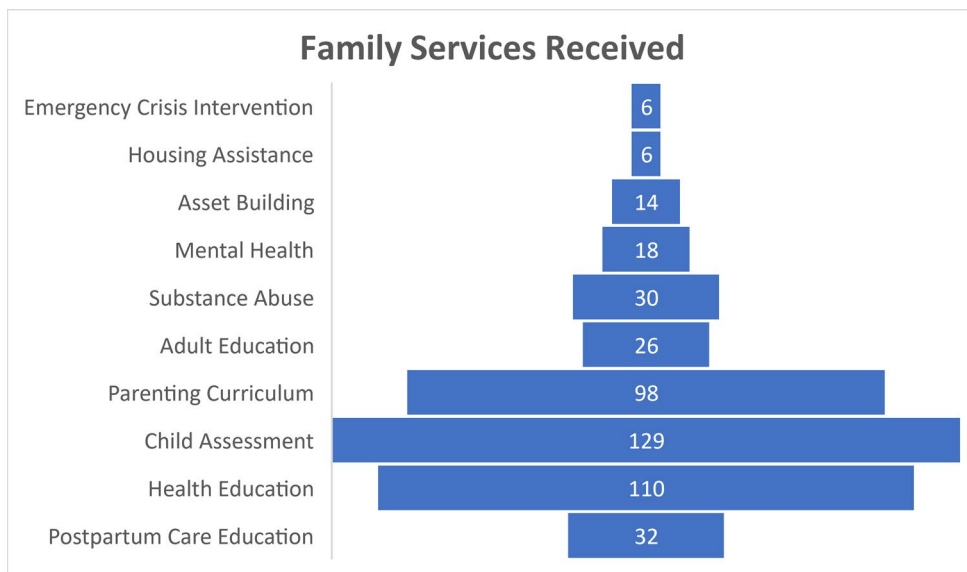
We were extremely pleased with the levels of parent engagement with high participation in Family Engagement Network Meetings held monthly at each center, as well as with other activities designed to bring educational and networking opportunities to parents of enrolled children. Our program served 250 unique families in the 21-22 school year and had a total of 658 documented family engagement activities “touches” including Health and Dental Education, Nutrition, Education and Home activities. In addition, we had 83 documented volunteers in centers and classrooms.

Other Family Metrics:



- One or more parent employed – 166
- Active military parent – 7
- Grandparents raising grandchildren – 6
- One or more parent in school - 14

Parents are encouraged to volunteer with the program in a number of ways, including taking leadership opportunities in the program through their center’s Parent Committee or our program’s Policy Council. The representatives on Policy Council have an important say in how we operate – specifically through input on curriculum, activities, budgets, grant application and hiring of staff. The skills learned through Policy Council can be instrumental in building confidence, as well as giving participants real life job skills that are easily transferred to the workplace.



PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

Everything we do with the children enrolled in the MSU Extension Head Start program is to help them become successful in the school setting – from classroom practices and experiences to training for parents. Our ultimate goal is to leverage community partnerships and research-based methods to establish a strong program that serves children at their youngest and most vulnerable stage in life so they experience optimal outcomes. Throughout the year, we utilize hands-on opportunities to expand children’s learning experiences. Teaching staff use multiple modalities to teach children in a variety of settings – indoor, outdoor, mealtime and transitions. Throughout the year, teachers were able to individualize as each child required and build upon skills and abilities as children grew and learned.



We strive to create a seamless experience at each transition (from home to Early Head Start, from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to the local school system) so the child has a good experience and can be comfortable in the new educational setting. Our Head Start brings high-quality, early-childhood educational experiences in a fun atmosphere, laying a strong foundation for school success. Each classroom is equipped with materials and supplies geared toward enhancing children’s school readiness. Teaching staff are trained and supported in child assessment and individualizing instruction for each child to achieve optimal outcomes. In addition, we take a holistic approach in working with children and families, taking care to ensure they are physically and mentally healthy, have well balanced diets and opportunities for home learning environments that are



extensions of the classroom. For children enrolled in our school district partnerships, assessment and subsequent individualization is based on information from Renaissance to determine the child’s educational journey.

To support and guide the approach to education, we have a School Readiness Committee that consists of staff, parents and community leaders who assist in analyzing outcomes and



providing input on educational activities throughout the year. In addition, we emphasize the family’s role in preparing a child for school success. Our monthly Family Engagement Networking Meetings are centered around school readiness and how to enhance development in the home as an extension of the classroom. We utilize *Shine On Families* as a support with families to promote family engagement and enhance school readiness in the home. Throughout the year, staff build a transition portfolio to present to parents with samples of the child’s growth. The portfolio serves as a roadmap of progress including writing samples, drawing/art, name writing, literacy and numeracy samples. Periodically throughout the year, the staff will meet with parents to review outcomes and discuss areas

of strength as well as areas where learning can be targeted. Our Assessment Working Groups supports the process of growth throughout the year by demonstrating where a child has made improvement and where assistance is still needed.

As children approach Kindergarten entry, we provide parents with information on the receiving schools, registration information, and times they can visit. They also receive information regarding Kindergarten camp where children can meet their prospective teachers and tour the school – including the cafeteria, library, classroom and playground. At the end of the school year, parents receive a “report card” with materials to support a child’s growth over the summer months.

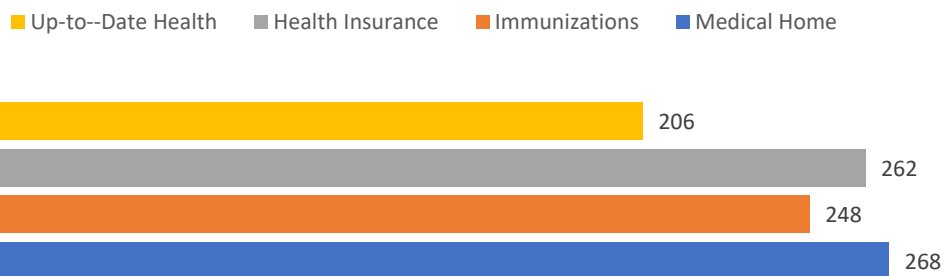


HEALTH SERVICES

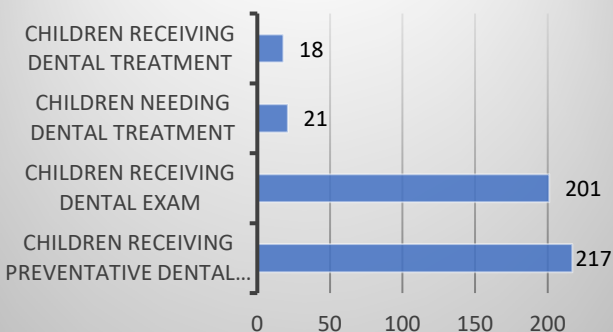
Our holistic approach to educating children is ensuring that they do not have physical constraints to learning. As a part of every school year, children receive comprehensive services attuned to the health and well-being of children enrolled in our program – including physical and dental examinations, developmental screenings, immunizations and access to affordable health, dental and vision care. Our Advocates work with families to ensure children receive necessary screenings, assessment and treatment as necessary. In addition, through collaboration with community partners, including pediatricians, health departments, mental health providers and local education associations, we are able to provide health and disability services to children who experience chronic conditions or special accommodations as noted in an individual education plan.



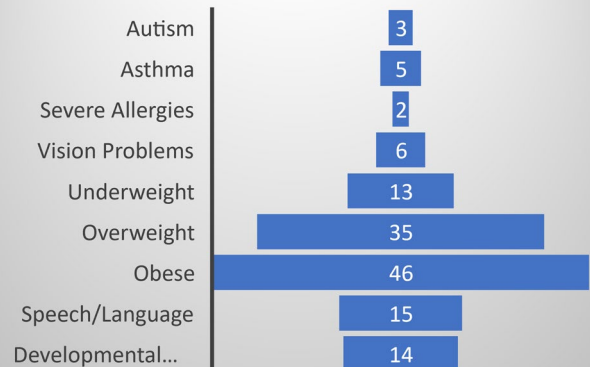
Health Information at the End of the Program Year



Dental Services



Disability and Health Conditions



PARTNERSHIPS

It would be impossible to serve our communities without dedicated collaborations with our partners. We are indebted to them for assisting us in meeting our vision for a holistic approach to education to children and families. We are truly grateful to the following organizations:

 <p>Moore Community House</p>	 <p>Shine Early Learning</p>	 <p>Gulfport Public Schools</p>
 <p>Harrison County Schools</p>	 <p>Oasis Mental Wellness</p>	 <p>Biloxi Public Schools</p>
 <p>Premier Professional Counseling</p>	 <p>MS Gulf Coast Community College</p>	 <p>Fordham University</p>
 <p>The Vision Center</p>	 <p>Feeding American – Gulf Coast</p>	 <p>University of Southern Mississippi</p>
 <p>Southern MS Planning & Development</p>	 <p>South Mississippi Smiles</p>	 <p>Coastal Family Health</p>



EXTENSION

Striving to promote optimal development of each child and his/her family through positive learning experiences and high-quality service.

