



# ANNUAL REPORT

## SY 24-25

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# HEAD START LOCATIONS

## **MSU-Extension Head Start Administrative Office**

521 34th Street, Gulfport, MS 39507

Phone: 228-241-2181 | Email: [msuheadstart@ext.msstate.edu](mailto: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

## FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



**Jamila Taylor**  
*Executive Director*

Mississippi State University Extension Head Start/Early Head Start's 2024-2025 Annual Report highlights the commitment and efforts of our staff in supporting children and families across Harrison County, as well as our successful expansion into Hancock County through the award of a new grant in July 2025. We are truly thankful for the continued trust and encouragement from our community—our partners, Advisory Board, Policy Council, and most importantly, the parents who place their confidence in our program. Your ongoing support plays a vital role in our success.

Our program remains dedicated to delivering high-quality services, and we are especially proud to extend those services in the coming year into Hancock County as a result of this award. We continue to focus on maintaining strong, consistent standards in early care and education while creating meaningful learning experiences and supportive environments for every child we serve.



**Roslyn Reed**  
*Director*

We extend our sincere appreciation to our staff, community partners, Board members, and Policy Council for their continued involvement and dedication. Through these collaborative efforts, we are able to provide dependable, high-quality early childhood services that families can rely on.

While this report cannot capture every success from the past year, we hope it offers a snapshot of the meaningful work taking place and the positive difference being made in the lives of children and families throughout our communities.

Yours in service,

*Jamila and Roslyn*

### 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 BOARD

This past year has been a time of growth for our program as we continued serving families in Harrison County and prepared to expand into Hancock County through the award of a new grant. It is a privilege to serve as Board Chair for MSU Extension Head Start during this exciting time, as we work to extend our reach and strengthen services for children and families.

We are especially proud of this expansion opportunity, which reflects the dedication of our staff and the strength of our program. This award allows us to bring high-quality early childhood services to more families in our region.

This progress would not be possible without the continued support of our staff, partners, and stakeholders. As we move forward, we remain committed to providing strong, reliable services and building meaningful connections across both counties.

*Anissa Pace*, Board Chair

### Advisory Board:

Anissa Pace, Board Chair  
Hunter Andrews, Vice Board Chair  
Felicia Watson, Early Childhood  
Taylor Brinkley, Attorney  
Josh Ervin, Fiscal

### Policy Council:

Brenna Roberson  
Kayla Scrivner  
Leonard Fells  
Carisa Johnson  
Tinauve Dukes  
Roselyn Jones  
Jamie George  
Binesha Fairley  
Whitney Taylor  
Ju-Kenya Chapman

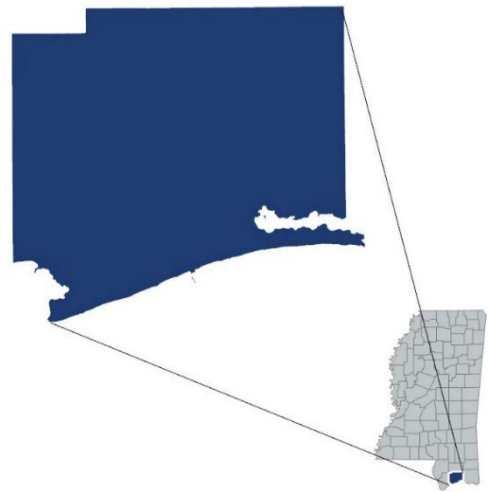
### VISION:

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.

## ABOUT US

The Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Head Start and Early Head Start program in Harrison County is designed to support children and families during the critical transition from early childhood education to kindergarten. By combining strong local partnerships with research-based practices, our program helps ensure children are prepared for lifelong learning and success.

Our Head Start centers proudly serve the communities of Gilbert Mason, East Biloxi, and Gaston Point, while our Early Head Start operates from the Linda Lyons Center through our partnership with Moore Community House. We are deeply committed to delivering high-quality early childhood education through strategic collaborations with local school districts, including the Gulfport and Biloxi Public School Districts. In partnership with Moore Community House—home of our Early Head Start program—and Shine Early Learning, which provides essential program support, we offer comprehensive services that meet the diverse needs of children and families.



This past year was an exciting and successful one for MSU Extension Head Start–Early Head Start. We were awarded continued funding to serve families in Harrison County and also received approval to expand services into Hancock County. These milestones reflect the strength of our program and our ongoing commitment to providing high-quality early childhood services to more children and families across the region.

Overall, the year brought positive progress and strong outcomes across the program. Our continued focus on quality, compliance, and continuous improvement has helped support safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environments for children.

As we continue serving children in Harrison County, MSU Extension is focused on strengthening a successful, scalable model that can be shared and replicated across Mississippi. Through these efforts, we remain committed to expanding high-quality early childhood services and supporting program growth in additional communities, including Hancock County. Our goal is to continuously improve and expand access to services that meet the needs of children and families.

Through this ongoing work, we remain dedicated to making a lasting, positive difference for children and families across the state and supporting stronger outcomes for future generations.

## STATE OF THE STATE

In overall child well-being, Mississippi ranks 48th, just above Louisiana and New Mexico, which is up one rank from the previous year. The table below shows that Mississippi is ranked 47th in Economic Well-Being, Health, which is up three ranks from the previous year. Education is ranked 16th in the nation, up from 30th the previous year. Health remains the same at 50th, and Family and Community metrics are 48th, up two from the previous year (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.). A child’s chances of thriving depend not only on individual, family, and community characteristics but also on the state in which they are born and raised. States differ in wealth and resources, and policy choices and public investments play a significant role in shaping opportunities for children to succeed.

Indicator	Year	Number	Percent/Rate	Rank
<b>Economic Well-Being: 47<sup>th</sup></b>				
Children in poverty	2024	166,000	25%	49
Children whose parents lack secure employment	2023	209,000	31%	48
Children living in households with a high housing cost burden	2023	166,000	25%	17
Teens not in school and not working	2024	18,000	10%	48
<b>Education: 16<sup>th</sup></b>				
Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school	2019-2023	37,000	50%	8
Fourth-graders not proficient in reading	2024	N/A	68%	14
Eighth-graders not proficient in math	2024	N/A	78%	40
High school students not graduating on time	2021-2022	N/A	11%	9
<b>Health: 50<sup>th</sup></b>				
Babies with low birth rate	2023	4,290	12.5%	50
Children without health insurance	2024	42,000	6%	26
Child and teen deaths per 100,000	2023	384	53	50
Children and teens (10-17) who are overweight or obese	2022-2023	N/A	42%	49
<b>Family &amp; Community: 48<sup>th</sup></b>				
Children in single-parent families	2024	278,000	45%	49
Children in families where the head of the household lacks a high school diploma	2023	64,000	10%	32
Children living in high-poverty areas	2019-2023	138,000	20%	49
Teen births per 1,000	2023	2,596	25	50

Note. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (n.d)

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Total 2024-2025		Head Start	Early Head Start
Federal, state, and local funding  \$6,758,851	Base	\$5,289,437	\$1,243,218
	COLA	\$124,302	\$29,216
	TTA	\$46,111	\$26,567
	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$5,459,850</b>	<b>\$1,299,001</b>

MSU Extension Head Start has the administrative infrastructure, system-wide fiscal capacity, and financial resources necessary to implement, manage, report on, and achieve the goals and objectives of the Head Start and Early Head Start grant. At every stage of implementation and management, the MSU Extension team adheres to established policies and procedures that ensure fiduciary and financial responsibility for all grant-related activities.

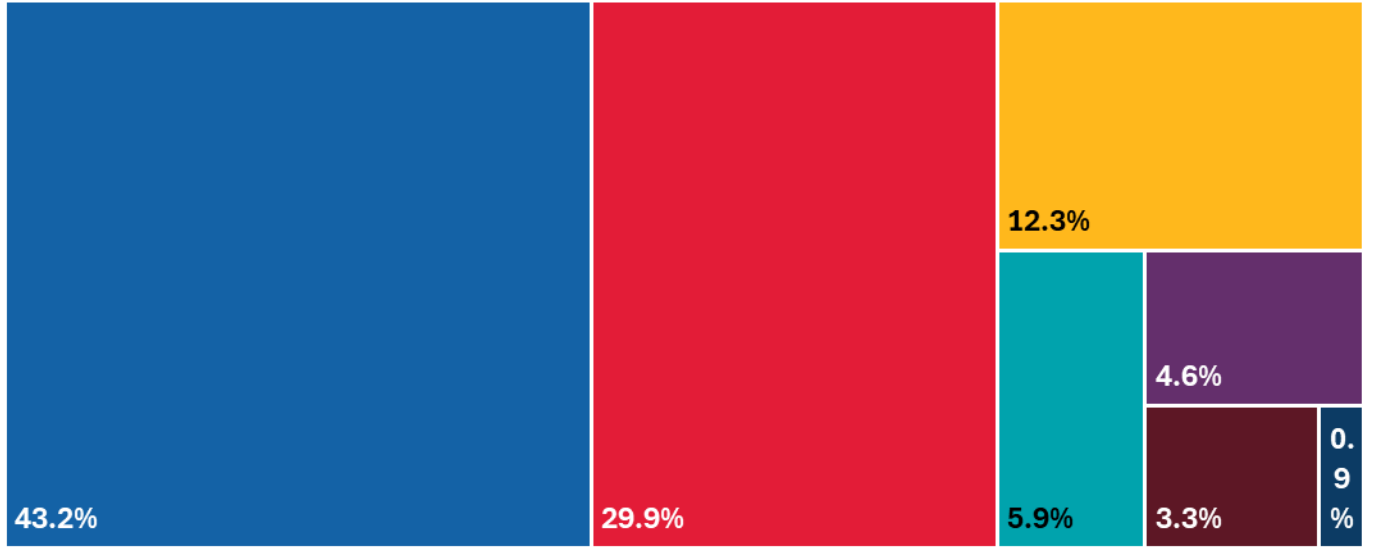
These responsibilities include maintaining accurate payroll and accounting records; archiving supporting documentation for all charges; preparing and submitting expenditure reports; certifying that all expenses are true and correct; properly classifying and reporting accounting transactions; and maintaining thorough procurement documentation.

We have robust monitoring protocols in place to ensure that all federal funds passed through to partners are used appropriately and that all expenditures are reasonable, allowable, and allocable under Head Start guidelines. The Board and Policy Council play an active role in setting program priorities and reviewing budgets and expenditures, with financial oversight as a standing item at regular meetings.

As a part of the broader Mississippi State University system, MSU Extension Head Start is included in the University's annual audit process. MSU has consistently received unqualified audit opinions, reflecting the strength and integrity of its financial systems. The University administers more than \$300 million annually across all programs, supported by comprehensive financial, grant accounting, and compliance systems that ensure strong fiduciary oversight. Reviews of other MSU early childhood programs have consistently affirmed the strength of our financial accountability and internal controls.

## 2024-2025 Expenditures

■ Contractual 
 ■ Personnel 
 ■ Fringe 
 ■ Indirect 
 ■ Other 
 ■ Supplies 
 ■ Travel



2024-2025 Head Start Budget			
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Total
Personnel	\$2,003,099	\$14,583	\$2,017,682
Fringe	\$825,675	\$5,785	\$831,460
Travel	\$55,879	\$2,480	\$58,359
Supplies	\$225,107	\$0	\$225,107
Contractual	\$1,742,847	\$1,174,116	\$2,916,963
Other	\$218,531	\$90,909	\$309,440
Indirect	\$388,712	\$11,128	\$399,840
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$5,459,850</b>	<b>\$1,299,001</b>	<b>\$6,758,851</b>

## STAFFING

We are extremely fortunate to have a team of dedicated, well-trained, and supported staff who work tirelessly to serve our children and families. Over the past several years, we've seen a notable shift in the educational qualifications of our teaching staff. Currently, the majority of Head Start teachers (44%) hold a bachelor's degree, and there has been an increase (10%) in those with an advanced degree, now totaling 19%. And percent (38%) of Head Start teachers have an associate's degree.

In our Early Head Start program, teacher qualifications have increased dramatically, with the majority of teachers (67%) holding a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The remaining staff holds either a bachelor's (8%) or an associate's degree (25%).

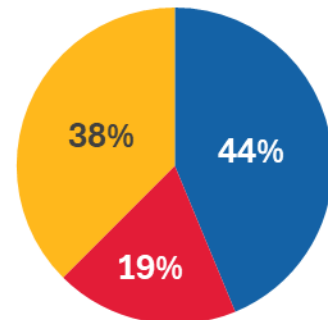
Despite the strength of our staff, we continue to face the same workforce challenges affecting Head Start programs nationwide—namely, recruiting and retaining qualified classroom staff. Early childhood education, a historically underpaid field, is struggling to attract and keep talent. Even when staff are hired, burnout remains a significant concern, contributing to high turnover.

As noted in previous reports, staff retention poses a challenge.

In the 2024-2025 year, nine Early Head Start staff left and 13 Head Start staff. Out of those 22 staff, 7 (32%) were education staff. For the 22 staff who left, only 11 (50%) were replaced during the school year, leading to a negative impact on continuity of care for our children served in those classrooms. Almost 40% (36%) of staff left for higher compensation (ACF OHS, 2025a, 2025c). We remain committed to finding solutions to these workforce challenges and to supporting the well-being and professional growth of our dedicated team.

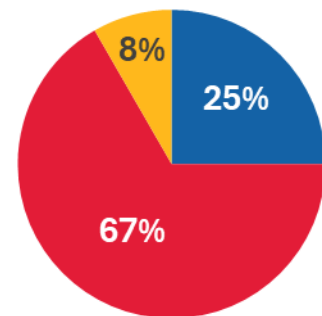
### Head Start Teachers

■ Bachelors ■ Advanced ■ Associates



### Early Head Start Teachers

■ Associates ■ CDA ■ Bachelors

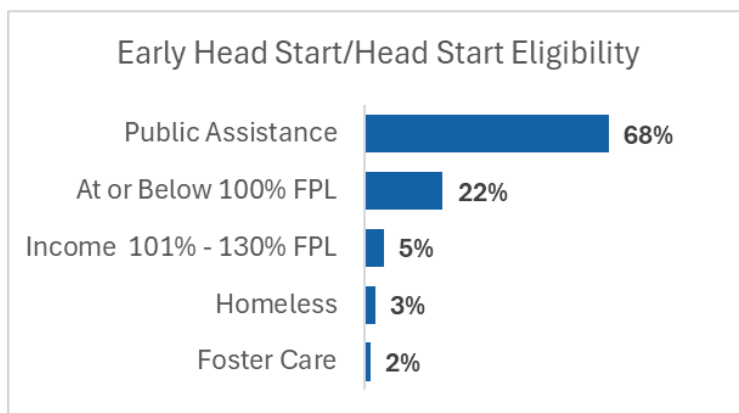


## SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANTS SERVED

MSU Extension is funded to serve a total of 356 children, 320 in Head Start and 36 in Early Head Start, across three directly operated Head Start centers: East Biloxi Head Start, Gilbert Mason Head Start, and Gaston Point Head Start. MSU Extension provides oversight and management for each of these centers.

In addition to these centers, we maintain a strong partnership with the Gulfport School District, operating five pre-K classrooms, with one classroom located at each of the five different elementary schools across the district.

East Biloxi Head Start is currently housed at Nichols Elementary in Biloxi, Mississippi, and serves families residing in the Biloxi Public School District. Gilbert Mason Head Start is in D'Iberville and serves families in the Harrison County School District. Gaston Point Head Start is in Gulfport and, along with the Gulfport School District partnership classrooms, serves families throughout the Gulfport School District.

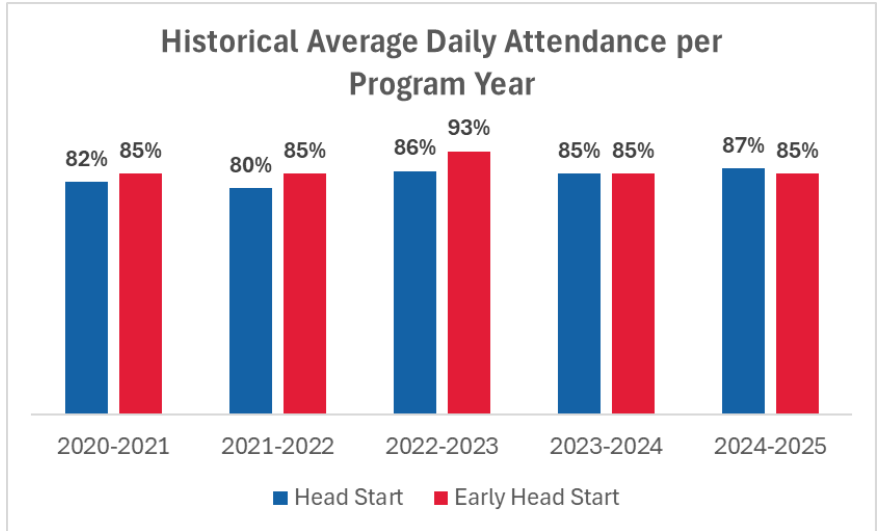


Over the course of the 2024–2025 school year, our program served a total of 300 children in Head Start and 41 children in Early Head Start. Our Early Head Start program operates in partnership with Moore Community House and is located at the Linda Lyons Early Head Start Center in Gulfport, Mississippi.

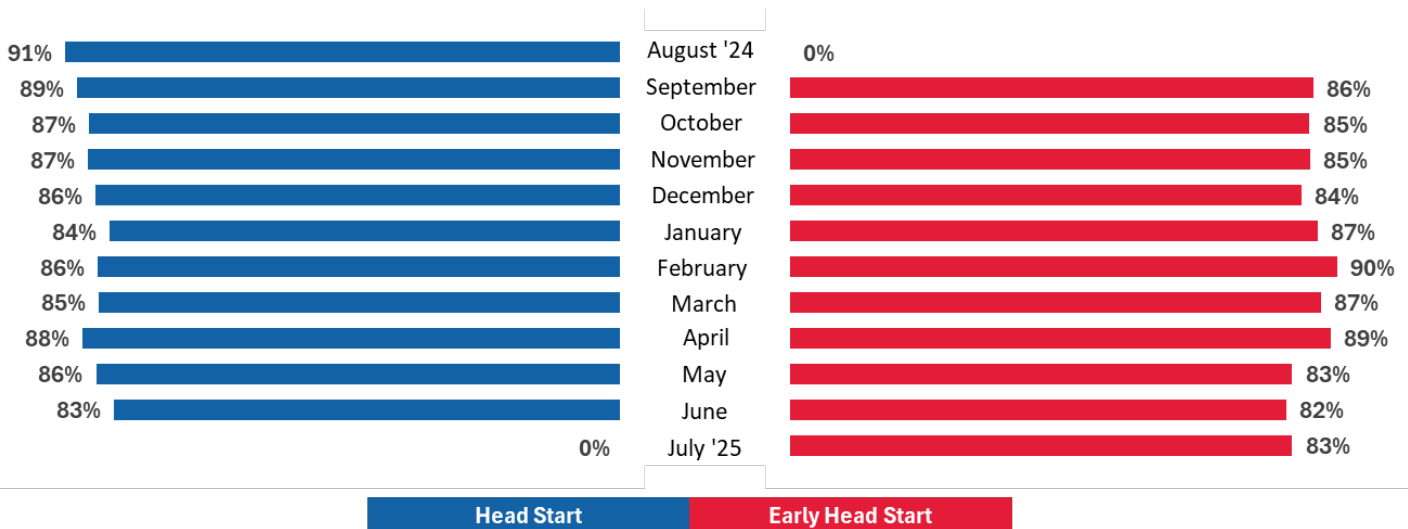
In 2024–2025, 22% of enrolled children were income-eligible, living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level, which for a family of four is approximately \$33,000 per year. An additional 73% of children qualified through categorical eligibility, including foster care, receipt of public assistance, or experiencing homelessness.

Based on current estimates, there are approximately 1,814 income-eligible infants and toddlers for Early Head Start and 1,230 income-eligible preschool-aged children for Head Start in Harrison County. At full enrollment capacity, we can serve just 2.5% of the eligible Early Head Start population and 26% of the eligible Head Start population within our service area.

Early Head Start and Head Start programs operate on staggered start dates, resulting in approximately one month each year without enrollment for each program. Like many programs across the country, we have been impacted by the ongoing shortage of qualified early childhood professionals. This workforce shortage has directly affected our ability to operate at full capacity and maintain consistent staffing levels across all classrooms.



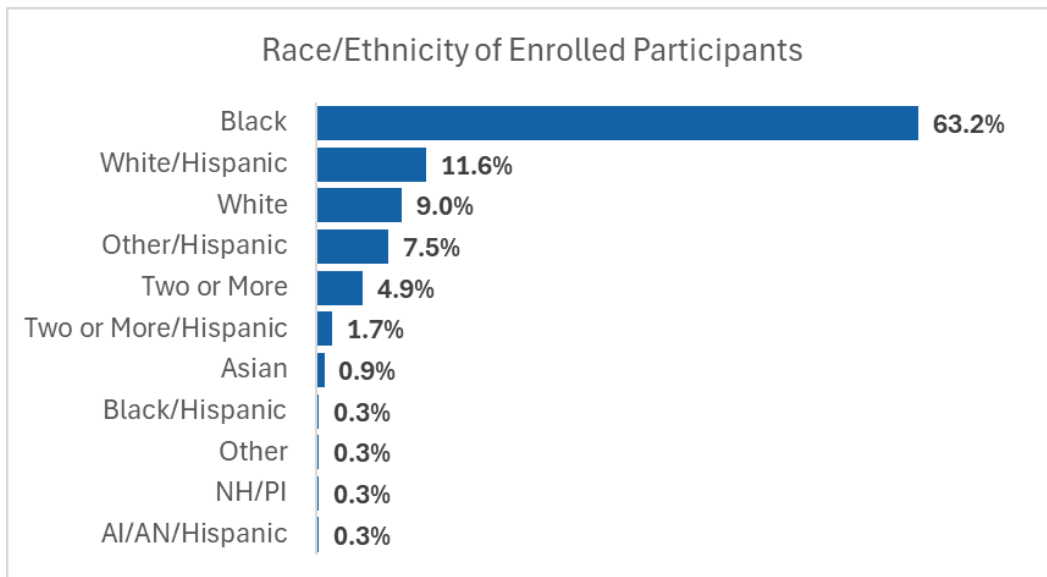
During the 2024–2025 program year, we were able to serve 94% of our funded enrollment for Head Start and 100% of funded enrollment for Early Head Start. Our attendance data reflects only the number of classrooms that were open and staffed during the year.



The following chart shows the breakdown of how many children were served by each center, as well as the number and percentage of children who are up to date on schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care (EPSDT) and dental exams. Please note that the chart includes exams completed within the 2024-2025 school year. Not all students had exams due, either because of exemption or their due date did not fall within the timeframe.

Location	Children Served	Physical Exams	Physical Exams %	Dental Exams	Dental Exams %
East Biloxi Elementary	60	58	97	58	97
Gaston Point	51	48	94	34	67
Dr. Gilbert Mason	105	101	96	72	69
Gulfport Partnership	84	83	99	82	98
<b>Total Head Start</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>82</b>
Linda Lyons (EHS)	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>89</b>

We serve diverse children and families and are continuing to see increases in our Hispanic/Latinx population. Sixty-four (64) of our children are Dual Language Learners, with most of those children being proficient in Spanish (92%), but also a few families whose primary languages are East Asian. We strive to ensure that we can communicate with children and families in their home language by providing staff and partners who can interpret and translate important information.



## FOCUS ON WELLNESS

Building on our commitment to workplace wellness, we continued to prioritize staff well-being through intentional, accessible supports. Staff were encouraged to take breaks throughout the day, including walks, to promote physical and mental wellness. We also provided healthy snack options to support better nutrition and energy during the workday.

To encourage creativity and stress relief, we introduced an Art Cart stocked with supplies, giving staff a simple, meaningful outlet for expression and relaxation. Additionally, we brought in a professional to provide massages for teachers, helping reduce physical tension and support overall well-being.

These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to creating a supportive work environment where staff feel valued, recharged, and equipped to perform at their best.

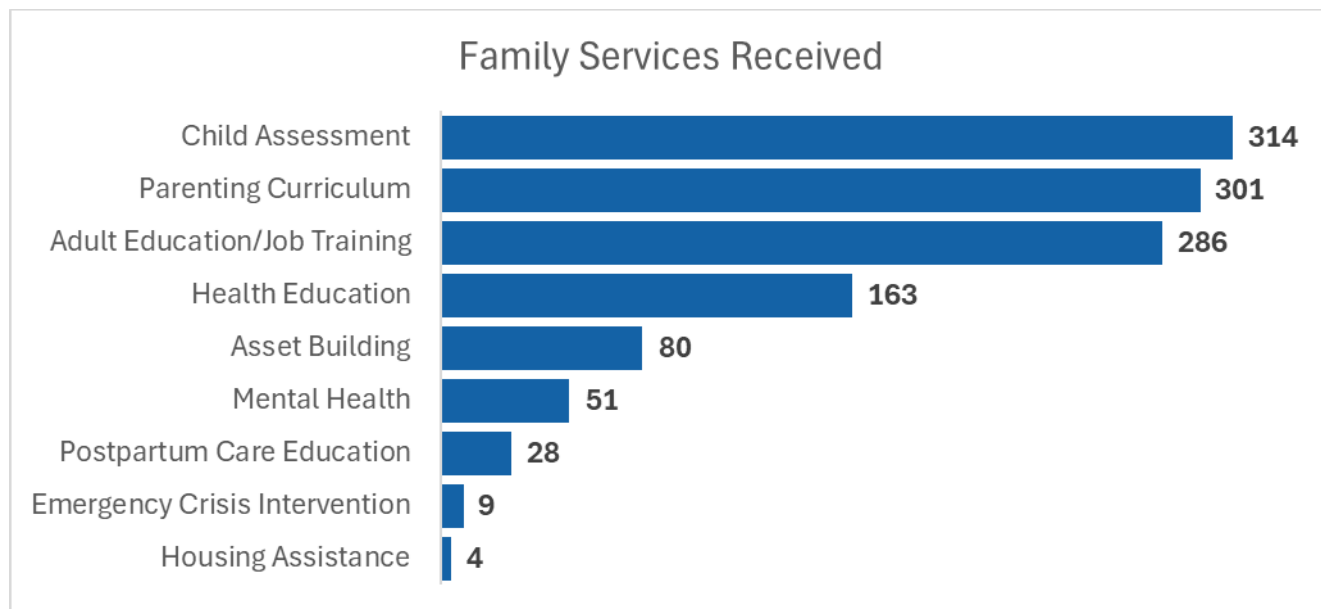
## PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our Parent, Family, and Community Engagement efforts focus on building strong, meaningful connections that support family well-being and children's school readiness. Over the past year, we expanded engagement through a variety of high-impact activities designed to meet families where they are and encourage participation in both program and community settings.

We hosted events such as fall festivals and Trunk or Treat, creating welcoming, family-friendly environments that encouraged relationship building and connection to resources. We also participated in community events like Cruisin' the Coast, increasing program visibility and reaching families who may not otherwise engage with traditional recruitment or school-based activities.

Our nutrition initiatives were strengthened through partnerships with organizations such as Feeding the Gulf Coast, supporting families with access to nutritious foods and resources beyond the classroom. We also incorporated nutritional education opportunities, including food demonstrations and guidance on healthy eating habits, to promote overall family wellness.

Family engagement was further supported through interactive learning opportunities that encourage strong parent-child relationships and reinforce learning at home. These efforts included hands-on activities, shared experiences, and practical strategies families can use daily to support their child's development. In addition, we continued to provide parenting education and resources focused on child development, positive guidance, and effective communication. Through intentional partnerships and diverse engagement strategies, we are creating a supportive network that strengthens families, increases participation, and promotes long-term success for children and their caregivers.



**Other Family Metrics:**

- One or more parent employed – 249
- Active military parent – 7
- Grandparents raising grandchildren – 3
- One or more parent in school – 25
- Single-parent families – 218
- Two-parent families – 314

## PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

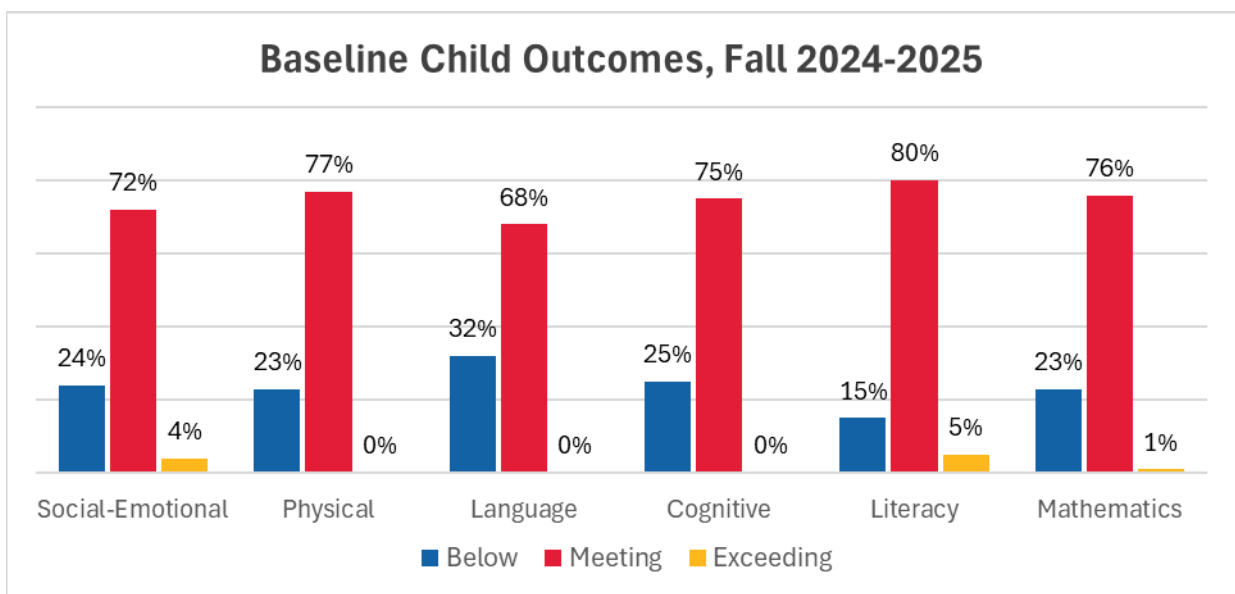
Everything we do in the MSU Extension Head Start program is designed to support children’s success in the school setting—from classroom experiences to parent training. Our ultimate goal is to leverage community partnerships and research-based methods to build a strong program that serves children during their earliest and most vulnerable stages of life, helping them achieve optimal outcomes.

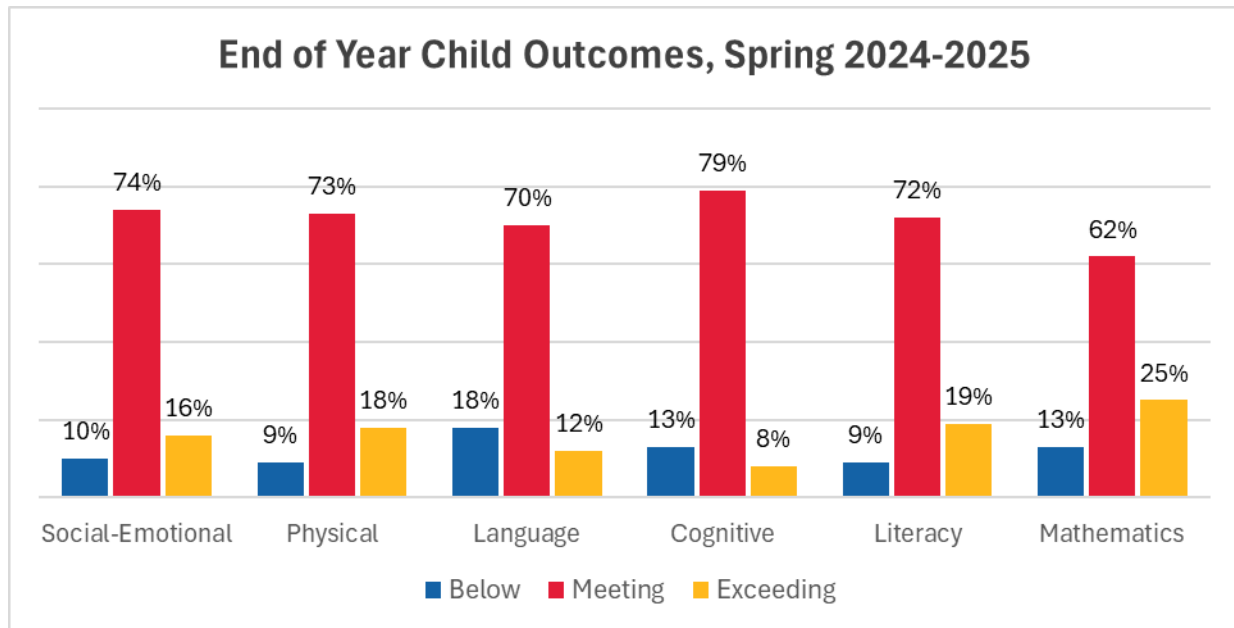
Throughout the year, we provide hands-on learning opportunities that expand children’s experiences. Teaching staff employ multiple modalities to engage children across a variety of settings—including indoor and outdoor environments, mealtimes, and transitions. Teachers individualize instruction to meet each child’s unique needs, building on skills and abilities as children grow and learn.

We strive to create a seamless experience at every transition—from home to Early Head Start, from Early Head Start to Head Start, and from Head Start to the local school system—ensuring children feel comfortable and confident in each new educational setting. Our Head Start program offers high-quality, early childhood education in a fun and nurturing atmosphere, laying a strong foundation for lifelong success. Each classroom is equipped with materials and supplies designed to enhance school readiness.

Our holistic approach addresses the whole child and family. We focus on physical and mental health, balanced nutrition, and creating supportive home learning environments that extend classroom learning. For children enrolled in our school district partnerships, assessment and individualized instruction are guided by data from Renaissance to inform each child’s educational journey.

At the start of the year, we assess each child across developmentally appropriate domains—including Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics—to tailor our instruction and support. The following charts demonstrate the growth of our children from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.





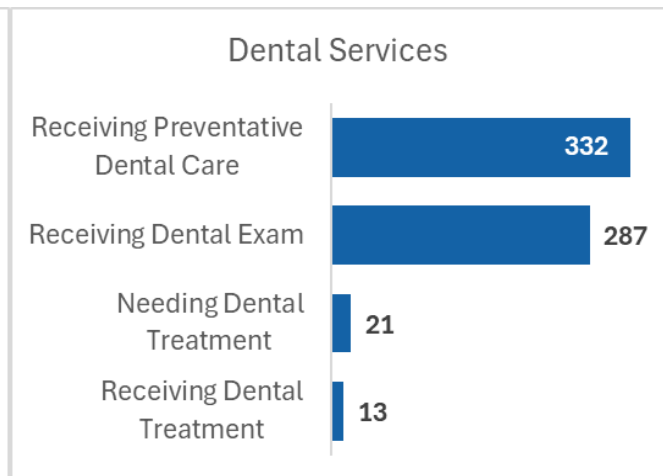
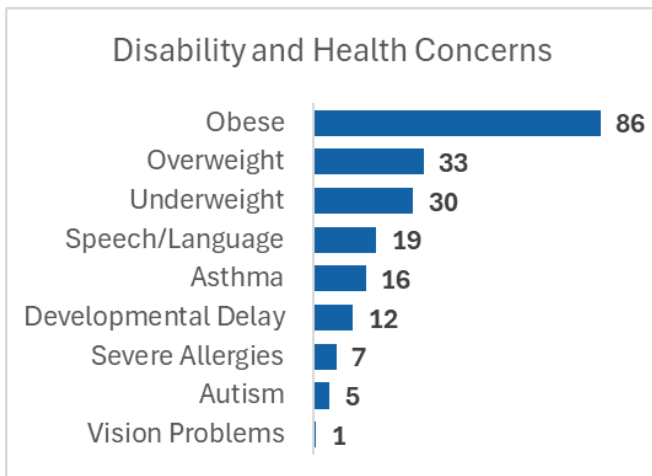
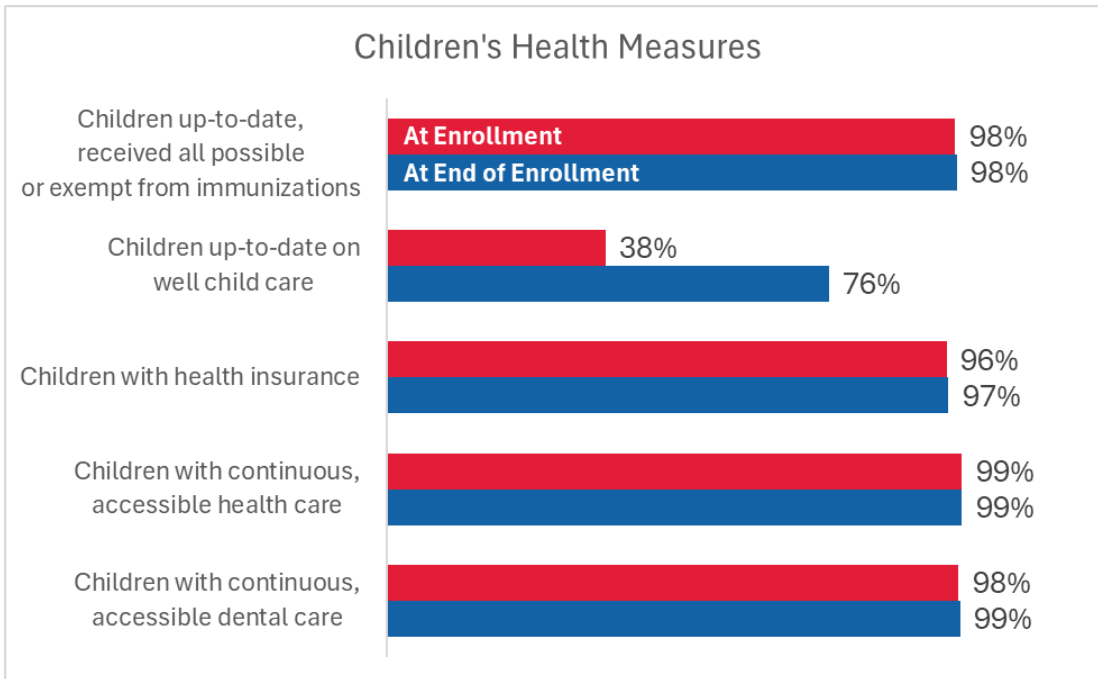
There is tremendous growth in all areas, as the percentages shift from emerging skills at the beginning of the year to accomplished skills by the end of the year. We recognize there is still significant room for improvement in both mathematics and literacy. To address this, we plan targeted professional development for teachers focused on evidence-based practices proven to enhance child outcomes in these specific areas.

To support and guide our educational approach, we have established a School Readiness Committee composed of staff, parents, and community leaders who assist in analyzing outcomes and provide input on educational activities throughout the year. Throughout the year, staff build transition portfolios to share with parents, featuring samples of each child’s growth. Periodically, staff meet with parents to review progress, highlight strengths, and identify areas where learning can be further supported.

As children near kindergarten entry, we provide parents with information about their receiving schools, registration details, and opportunities to visit. Parents also receive information about kindergarten camps, where children can meet their future teachers and tour the school, including the cafeteria, library, classrooms, and playground. At the end of the school year, parents receive a “report card” along with materials designed to support their child’s continued growth over the summer months.

# HEALTH SERVICES

Our holistic approach to educating children begins with ensuring that they are free from physical or developmental barriers to learning. Each school year, enrolled children receive a full range of comprehensive services that support their health and well-being. These services include physical and dental examinations, developmental screenings, immunizations, and access to affordable health, dental, and vision care.



Our Family Advocates work closely with families to ensure that children receive all necessary screenings, assessments, and follow-up treatment. In addition, we collaborate with a wide network of community partners, including pediatricians, local health departments, mental health providers, and local education

agencies, to provide health and disability services for children with chronic conditions or those requiring special accommodation as outlined in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Through these coordinated efforts, we help ensure that each child is healthy, supported, and ready to learn.

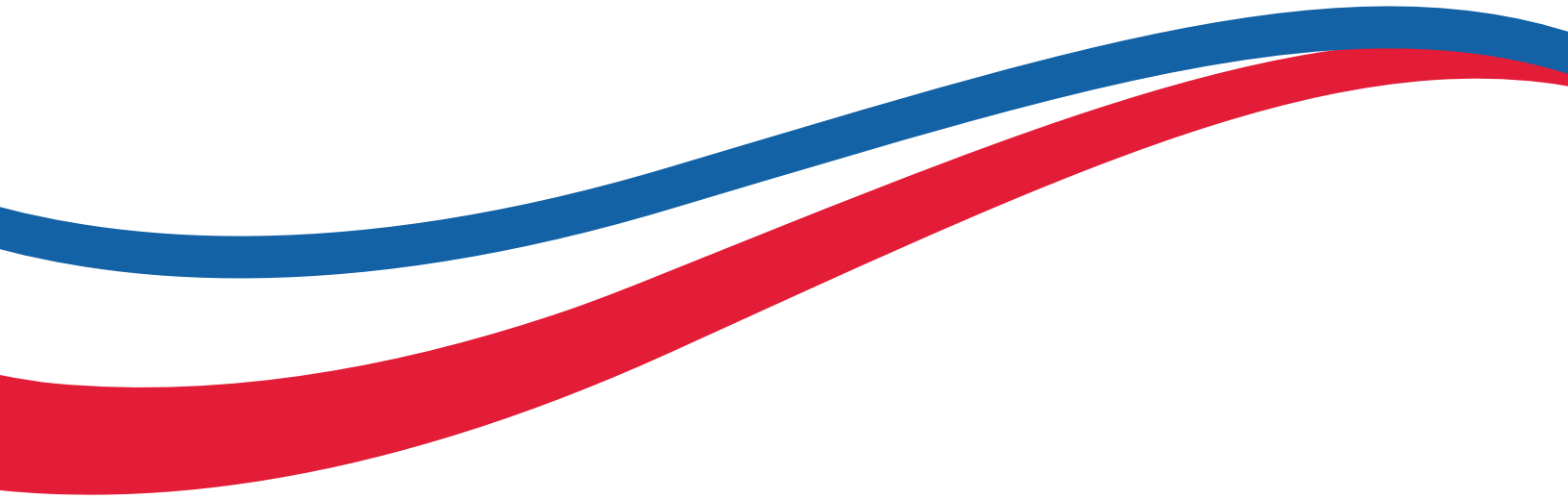
## PARTNERSHIPS

It would be impossible to serve our communities effectively without the support of our dedicated partners. We are deeply grateful for their collaboration, which helps us fulfill our vision of providing a holistic approach to education and support for children and families.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the following organizations for their invaluable contributions:

 <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 America – Gulf Coast</p>	 <p>University of Southern Mississippi</p>
 <p>Southern MS Planning &amp; Development</p>	 <p>South Mississippi Smiles</p>	 <p>Coastal Family Health</p>





**MISSISSIPPI STATE**  
UNIVERSITY™

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**EXTENSION**

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