



**EXTENSION**



**HEAD START**

MSU Extension Head Start-Early Head Start Programs

***Annual Report to the  
Community***

***2019-2020***



We are delighted and humbled by the ability to serve the children and families within our Harrison County communities and are pleased to share with you the results of our first year in operation. Through the dedication of our staff, partners, and Board of Directors, we envision a program that we expect to be a model of excellence for our early care and education peers throughout the nation. Our program is designed to help children and their parents make an easier transition from childcare and preschool to kindergarten and combines local partnerships with research-based education methods to serve children at this most critical stage of life. This report includes baseline measures, and we look forward to the completion of a full year to determine the true impact of the systems we have put in place in year two. We are proud of the strides we have made in our first year and look forward to continued growth in our children and families, our staff, and our communities.

In our first year, we focused on building a lasting foundation for the program to ensure long-term success, including hiring and training of quality staff, acquisition of facilities, development of partnerships and refinement of Head Start administrative systems, and as such, our year one numbers are reflective of that phased in approach. This important work is impossible to do in isolation. Our partners include local school districts—Gulfport School District and Biloxi Public School District—as well as Moore Community House and Shine Early Learning. In addition, we are fortunate to have numerous health, mental health, and social services partnerships that allow us to meet the needs of our children and families in a holistic manner.

Being a start-up program has its own set of challenges, but along with the rest of the country, we learned to operate in a new reality with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2019. Our staff learned to be truly innovative in delivering services to children through virtual means that allowed us to discover the resiliency of our communities and the importance of connectedness. What we found during this time was that the quality of interaction, compassion, and empathy was compounded. It truly takes all of us to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children and families. We are committed to unlocking the amazing potential of our next generation through our services. We also are charged to provide diverse program options that provide opportunities for success and empowerment for the children and families we are fortunate to serve. Our hope is that our passion is contagious, and you are inspired to join us in our mission of building a bright future!



*Dr. Louise E. Davis*  
**Executive Director**



*Jamila B. Taylor*  
**Director, Head Start and EHS**

## About us

### *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*

### *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.*

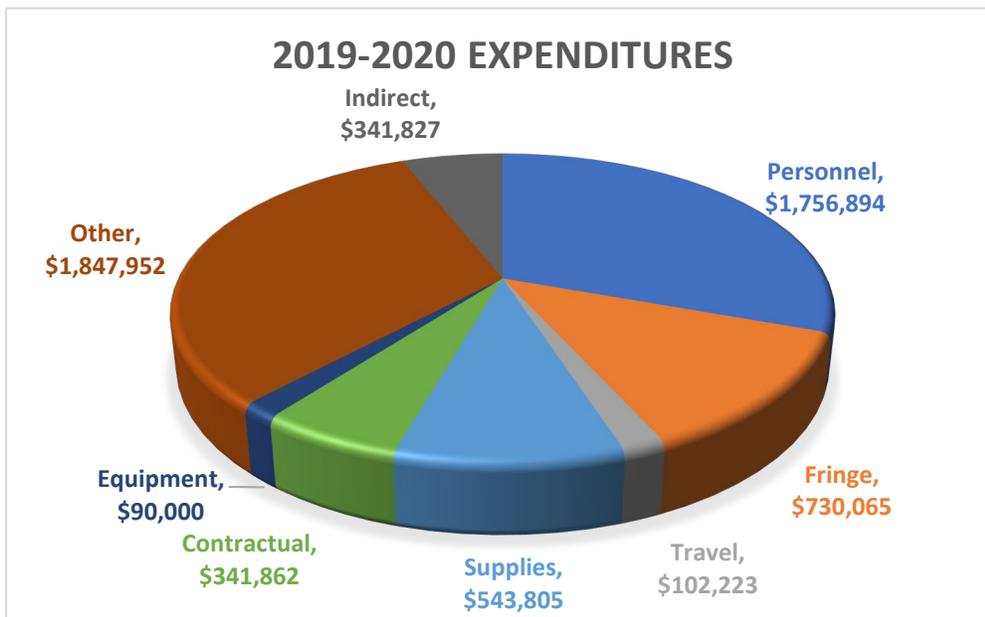
Mississippi State University - Extension (MSU-Extension) serves children and families in Harrison County, located in the Gulf of southern Mississippi. Our organization has been a singular beacon for quality early childhood education in the state. Over the last decade, MSU-Extension has been tasked with 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-Extension 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 May 4, 2020 to May 8, 2020, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The review consisted of interviewing content area and leadership staff, Board and Policy Council members as well as policy and procedure review. **We were found to be in good standing with no areas of concern, non-compliance, or deficiency during our first year of operation.** The review team also identified several areas of strength, including the use of various program data to monitor compliance and staff performance to inform continuous improvement in all service areas; the leveraged support and expertise of board members in assisting with the implementation of the goals and objectives related to identifying community resources for parents and helping to improve children's transition to kindergarten.

## Financial Overview

Total 2019-2020 federal, state and local funding \$9,137,480	Head Start		Early Head Start
	Base	\$ 4,709,252.00	\$ 957,198.00
	COLA	\$ 71,236.00	\$ 16,942.00
	COVID	\$ 402,654.00	\$ 82,448.00
	COLA/QI	\$ 218,972.00	\$ 44,878.00
	In-Kind	\$ 2,358,528.00	\$ 275,371.00
	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$ 7,760,642.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,376,837.00</b>



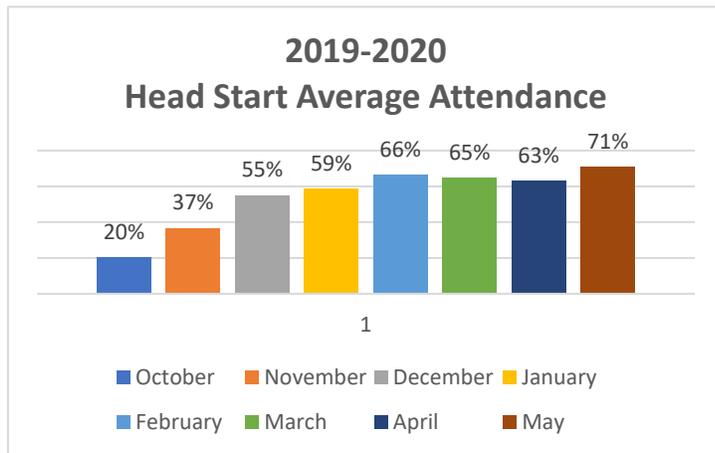
**In 2020, an additional \$4,032,000 was awarded for building construction and renovation**

As a start-up, we have yet to have an official financial audit for the Head Start program; however we administer more than \$60 million in total funding across all programs with all of 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 Head Start Budget				
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Non-Federal	Total
Personnel	\$ 2,599,789.00	\$ 41,618.00	\$ 40,810.00	\$ 2,682,217.00
Fringe	\$ 978,821.00	\$ 15,669.00	\$ 15,364.00	\$ 1,009,854.00
Travel	\$ 49,529.00	\$ 2,480.00	\$ -	\$ 52,009.00
Supplies	\$ 201,555.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 201,555.00
Contractual	\$ 614,231.00	\$ 1,115,034.00	\$ -	\$ 1,729,265.00
Other	\$ -	\$ 33,369.00	\$ 1,457,340.00	\$ 1,490,709.00
Indirect	\$ 413,226.00	\$ 8,229.00	\$ 5,618.00	\$ 427,073.00
<b>Total Budget</b>				<b>\$ 7,592,682.00</b>

## Snapshot of participants served

MSU is funded to serve 488 Head Start and 64 Early Head Start for a total of 552 children. In the first year of funding, we focused on a phased-in opening approach with East Biloxi Elementary opening in October 2019, Gaston Point in November, and Dr. Gilbert Mason in December. In March 2020, all in-person services in the state were closed for COVID-19 and did not return during the program year. This resulted in an indefinite delay in the opening of the remainder of our facilities, and all services for enrolled children were conducted virtually. As we were learning to operate effectively in the virtual world, we also slowed our timeline for Early Head Start – with our first infants and toddlers served in July 2020.



*October – 1 Center*

*November – 2 Centers*

*December – 3 Centers*

*March – In person services were halted and moved to virtual due to COVID*

*April/May – 100% Virtual*

*EHS virtual services first operational in July 2020 (no data included in chart)*

Location	Children Served	Families Served	Physical Exams	%	Dental Exams	%
East Biloxi Elementary <b>(October opening)</b>	130	119	103	79%	100	76%
Gaston Point <b>(November opening)</b>	118	108	68	49%	74	63%
Dr. Gilbert Mason <b>(December opening)</b>	140	128	90	64%	93	66%
<b>Total Head Start</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>69%</b>
Linda Lyons (EHS) <b>(July opening)</b>	23	20				

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 (64 EHS and 488 HS), we would serve 2% of the eligible Early Head Start population and 27% of the Head Start population in our service area. The pandemic affected our number of children served (less than 1% of Early Head Start and 21% for Head Start), as well as the percentages of children with physical and dental exams. We anticipate these numbers to remain closer to 100% in subsequent years.

## ***Parent Involvement***

COVID magnified the importance of parent involvement in a child's development like never before. Our staff worked tirelessly with families to provide structure and some fun activities in a home and virtual setting so young children could continue to develop skills to be school ready even without being able to be in a classroom setting.

Activities included assisting families in setting up spaces for children to learn in the home, where they can conduct activities in their own learning space. Families were able to put art supplies in a box and decorate the box and label it with the child's name. Parents were encouraged to place the box in a fixed location like a desk in the child's room or an as-needed spot like the kitchen table. These efforts were instrumental in maintaining children's developmental progress while in the home with the family.

The home was no longer an extension of the classroom, it actually became the classroom. Through innovative virtual activities, staff worked with families to enhance learning environments. Parents and staff collaborated to use indoor and outdoor activities with items easily found in the home to develop routines that enhance children's development. The most important outcome of this activities is the enhancement of the relationship between parents and children."



An example at-home activity that was highly successful was the creation of homemade books and reading them aloud. Parents worked with children to color, cut and paste, or print and paste images onto construction paper, slip the pages into clear plastic bags to make pages. The parents used a hole puncher to make holes along one side, and the child or parent used yarn or twine to tie the book together. During virtual learning sessions, the parents and children were

encouraged to read their books. When children are learning a process and having to think about the theme and when they're building and doing, they are building skills. When they are active in their learning, children retain knowledge and build on it.

Health and safety in the home were also a strong focus. We encouraged our parents to practice safety measures away from the school to give their child the best chance of staying healthy through this pandemic. All parents were given MSU Extension Head Start COVID-19 protocol during orientation, and we also gave parents an overview of all the personal protection equipment that had been purchased for each child when they return to centers.

## *Our efforts to prepare children for Kindergarten*

The goal of the MSU Extension Service Head Start program is to ease the transition to school for families with young children. The program leverages community partnerships and research-based methods to establish a strong program that serves children at their youngest and most vulnerable stage in life.



We create a seamless experience so children can easily transition from early care to kindergarten. Our Head Start brings high-quality, early-childhood educational experiences in a fun atmosphere, laying a strong foundation for school success. 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.

During the pandemic, we had to be more creative in the ways we prepared children, with more emphasis being placed on how to extend the classroom into the home environment. Elizabeth Thorne, a graduate assistant in the MSU School of Human Sciences, said the program has not missed a beat through the pandemic. The centers have had to take precautions at different times and quarantine but learning continued.

“We sent home curriculum bags that included learning materials so our students could continue at home,” Thorne said. “We maintained contact with our families and offered virtual learning opportunities for the children to ensure that we always provided a high-quality program.”



Our program has stayed vigilant in finding ways to instill learning while staying healthy during the pandemic. Careful mask-wearing, frequent hand-washing and social distancing have been part of the school day since the doors opened. Staff were given extensive training on health and safety protocols, and administrators are careful to ensure that these measures are followed consistently. By focusing on building healthy habits, we were able to ensure the children remained healthy, thus increasing the likelihood of optimal development.