

**Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC)
Annual Early Childhood Programs (Head Start and Early Head Start)
Report to the Public 2024**

Total amount of Public and Private Funds Received and the Amount of each Source

For the Fiscal Year February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024, Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation received the following funding:

Funding Sources:	Amount
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	3,801,053
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services-ARPA	148,213
USDA Food Program	263,180
Wrap Around Child Care	679,640
Iowa Shared Visions	90,654
Community Empowerment Grants	51,575
Local Grants/Contracts	12,721
In-Kind	454,955
TOTAL FUNDING	5,501,991

**Explanation of Budgetary Expenditures and Proposed Budget for the Fiscal Year
Contract No. 07CH011393-03**

07CH011393-04	Budget	Expenses
Personnel	2,083,046	2,109,380
Fringe Benefits	686,451	668,435
Equipment	7,148	7,148
Travel	11,142	7,312
Supplies	221,310	232,098
Contractual	24,675	13,283
Other Costs	397,742	391,170
Indirect	369,539	372,227
SUB TOTAL	3,801,053	3,801,053
In kind	454,955	454,955
TOTAL	4,256,008	4,256,008

Total Number of Head Start funded Children and Families Served, Average Monthly Enrollment (as a Percentage of Funded Enrollment), and Percentage of Eligible Children Served (funded for 233 for HS and 80 for EHS)

Month	Head Start Enrollment	Early Head Start Enrollment
Feb 2023	100%	100%
March 2023	100%	100%
April 2023	100%	100%
May 2023	100%	100%
June 2023	Not operating	100%
July 2023	Not operating	100%
Aug 2023	100%	100%
Sept 2023	100%	100%
Oct 2023	100%	98%
Nov 2023	100%	100%
Dec 2023	100%	100%
Jan 2024	100%	100%

Results of the Most Recent Review by the Secretary and the Financial Audit

Office of Head Start conducted an onsite Focus Area 2 review from 4/24/23-4/28/23. The Focus Area Two (FA2) review is an opportunity for the program to demonstrate effectiveness in implementing a high-quality program to promote positive outcomes and school readiness for children and families. This focus area determines if the program is meeting the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), the Uniform Guidance, and the Head Start Act. The program had no areas of concern, no areas of noncompliance and no deficiencies.

The Independent Auditor’s report for the Fiscal Year February 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024 issued an unmodified opinion and reported no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies or audit findings on Federal Awards. It also reported no material weaknesses and no significant deficiencies on Financial Statements. A copy of the audit report is available at www.neicac.org.

Percentage of Enrolled Children that Received Medical and Dental Exams

	Head Start Children	Early Head Start Children
Medical Exams	100%	91%
Dental Exams	97%	85%

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC) Annual Early Childhood Programs (Head Start and Early Head Start) Report to the Public 2024

Parent and Family Engagement

[Family engagement](#) is at the heart of successful Head Start and Early Head Start programs and is critical to the full development of a child's potential. NEICAC's Early Childhood Programs are committed to helping each child and family achieve success through a comprehensive partnership that recognizes the parent's role as their child's first and most important teacher. Parent and family engagement begins at enrollment with the development of Individual Child Plans that incorporate the family's goals for their child. Regularly scheduled home visits/conferences provide on-going conversations on children's progress and at-home activities provide opportunities for parents to support children's skill development. 245 Head Start families were served during our program year, and 91% of them participated in home visits/parent conferences to discuss their child's screening and assessment results and their child's progress. Of the 132 Head Start families that completed our Parent Survey, 97% agreed that the Head Start program is helping their child to get ready for school. All 38 Early Head Start families who completed our survey reported feeling better prepared to be their child's first and most important teacher by participating in home visits and lesson plan activities. When Early Head Start parents were asked to list one or two things they have learned that has helped them, parent responses included, "How to play with my child and read to my child. "How to handle my child's tantrums." All respondents reported they would recommend Early Head Start to others. One enthusiastic parent replied, "It's just something you gotta try to truly understand how amazing it is!"

Another way parents and families contribute to the success of the Early Childhood Programs is through volunteer service. During the 2023-2024 school year, 258 Head Start parents volunteered their time or talents through participation in at-home activities, assistance in the classroom, sharing skills and knowledge with the classroom, participation on Policy Council, and/or engaging with ReadyRosie. Of the parents who completed our parent survey, 90% agreed that at-home activities are meaningful and provide my family opportunities to better understand how to support my child's learning at home.

ReadyRosie is an electronic learning tool that provides parents with short, modeled moment videos that demonstrate fun learning games to support their child's school readiness skills, and child development content specialists to answer questions. The two-way communication capability allows families to provide individualized feedback and assessment to their child's teacher. We had 148 registered caregivers that watched 2,194 videos collectively in the areas of language and literacy, math, social/emotional, and

health. Parent comments included, “Great[activity], he loves being involved and learning new things!” “Very good way to get a picky eater to eat!”

Using the ReadyRosie Family Workshops at Parent Meetings, we offered research-based parenting curriculum to support families with challenging behaviors, develop schedules and routines, and create math and literacy-rich environments at home.

Early Head Start parent/child socializations provide opportunities for children and families to interact together and build networks with other families. Early Head Start families enjoyed a fun mix of child development events that explored topics such as literacy, STEM concepts, and fine and gross motor development, and community fieldtrips to museums, libraries, parks, and a pumpkin patch. 100% of our survey respondents who attended playgroups reported that the parent education topics were informative and useful. Parent comments included, “Playgroups are enjoyable!” and “Good for children and families to participate [in].”

Families can participate in leadership development, decision-making, and program policy development through participation in the Early Childhood Programs’ Policy Council. This year, ten parents served as Policy Council Representatives. Parents provide valuable input on program design, policy development, and recruitment of children and staff. We also had several Parent Committees that helped plan and run family fun nights at their centers.

Together, parents and staff decide what roles parents and community agencies play in the provision of activities and/or resources to support children and families’ needs and interests. The Early Childhood Program has many community partners that contribute to successful outcomes for children and their families. Among these are area school districts, Keystone and Central Rivers AEA, Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness, and numerous health professionals.

Positive Behavior Instructional Supports (PBIS)

Program-wide implementation of PBIS strategies is our foundational base to support children’s social and emotional well-being. A variety of large group, small group, and individualized instruction activities help children develop emotional literacy, friendship skills, and problem-solving strategies to navigate their everyday lives. Teaching staff receive regular training on current “best practices” and on-site coaching to ensure classrooms support nurturing and responsive relationships, provide high quality supportive environments, teach targeted social and emotional skills, and provide effective interventions for challenging behaviors. All Head Start staff received training this year on the updated PBIS modules. Family Workshops offered parents the opportunity to learn simple, consistent strategies to reduce challenging behaviors at home, as well.

Recognizing the importance of strong friendships in children’s social/emotional well-being and lifelong success, we continue to focus on peer mediated skills training that research shows

leads to an increased number of friends for young children. Strategies include helping children learn how to ask to play, share and trade toys, and suggest play organizers.

With the continued impact of Covid on children's social/emotional development, our Behavior Specialist was very instrumental in providing support to both children and staff to assist with challenging behaviors and conduct individual and small group lessons to reinforce PBIS strategies in the classroom. She also presented at Parent Meetings and offered support to families by providing resources and strategies for use at home. 77% of our Parent Survey respondents agreed that they are better able to handle and prevent challenging behaviors at home because of information and strategies they learned from Head Start.

NEICAC Prepare Children for Kindergarten

Preparing children for Kindergarten and success beyond Head Start is the daily focus for each child; therefore, NEICAC has fully embraced the School Readiness Initiative of Head Start.

School Readiness Goals

School readiness goals are regularly reviewed and revised as needed. Parent Policy Council is informed of student progress reports each quarter. Teachers use Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives in their weekly lesson plans to target the 36/38 learning objectives needed to help prepare children for Kindergarten. By utilizing the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework as a guide with our TS GOLD (Creative Curriculum) objectives, Iowa Learning Standards, and communication with our 10 school district partners, we transition children from Head Start into Kindergarten as smoothly as possible.

A complete set of Parent, Family and Community goals are incorporated to support the academic school readiness goals. These Parent Engagement goals acknowledge the important role parents play in the school readiness process and outline the importance of the parents' supporting children in their education. (*See PFCE Goals for details.*)

Teachers use the five Central Domains from the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, which align with the TS GOLD Learning Objectives in lesson plans. The central domains include: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language & Literacy, Cognition (includes mathematics development and scientific reasoning), and Perceptual Motor and Physical Development (including creative art). These domains are used in planning all the educational activities implemented in the classroom. In addition to the TS GOLD assessment (*See the School Readiness Alignment for details*) work portfolios and journals are created and artifacts collected throughout the year to monitor student progress. The TS GOLD program compares children's progress with "widely held expectations" to help demonstrate progress not only in individual achievement, but also with age-appropriate expectations that prepare them for Kindergarten. With parent permission, end-of-year snapshots created from TS GOLD data

are shared with individual school districts to help Kindergarten teachers plan for incoming students.

Parents participate in setting individual goals for their children during parent teacher conferences. Our program has the ability to fully utilize the parent portal in the Creative Curriculum Gold online assessment tool and will utilize this with parents program wide for the 24-25 school year. Parents may have access to their child's anecdotal assessments via the parent section on the- GOLD website at any time as well as have the ability to add anecdotal information about learning done at home. Teachers meet with parents at a minimum of four times per year: (2) conferences and (2) home visits. Staff strive for daily contact with parents to communicate about student accomplishments. Teachers work in close communication with Parents to create at-home activities connected to student goals in an effort to involve parents in their child's education. Parents are routinely invited to participate in classroom activities. Monthly parent meetings/family fun nights are held so parents can advise staff in developing and implementing program policies, activities, and services to ensure they meet the needs of the children and families.

Creative Curriculum with Fidelity

We resumed our Creative Curriculum with Fidelity observations in the 2023-2024 school year after the COVID pandemic limited our ability to do so. This year we completed the observation in some of our classrooms to gain a baseline score. With this score we were able to determine what classrooms we needed to support with coaching and what additional professional development we needed to provide to staff. Due to staffing issues and the need for Head Start managers to fill in to keep classrooms running we were not able to complete the observation in all classrooms. For the 24-25 school year we will be focusing on providing additional training for staff on the implementation of curriculum with fidelity. We will be providing this training through one-on-one coaching for staff that have been employed with NEICAC for longer than five years and through monthly TLC groups for new staff with less than five years in the classroom with support from center managers. This year we had 2 out of 15 classrooms that were in the mid-range of fidelity, with our staff turnover this was not a surprise to us. We plan to resume observations in the fall of 24-25..

CLASS/Practice Based Coaching:

NEICAC Head Start has established a coaching component within our professional development model to promote the teaching strategies outlined in the CLASS or The Classroom Assessment Scoring Tool. We continued our TLC groups during the 23-24 school year. We were forced to put the groups on hold because of staffing issues last year and were only able to meet twice. This year we were able to meet with each group monthly to do both some beginning learning on the use of the CLASS tool and some more in-depth learning with our seasoned staff. We also included a co-teacher group this year and were able to include all co-teachers in learning about the use of the CLASS tool. Due to staffing issues that required Head Start managers and specialists to sub in classrooms to keep them running, the CLASS observation was not done in all classrooms this year. We did look at previous years scores and teacher knowledge of the tool

and compared it to this year's information and it is very clear to us that our TLC groups have in fact been a very effective way to provide staff with knowledge of the CLASS tool. We are planning on once again using the TLC model to educate staff on the use of the CLASS tool beginning in October of 2024. We will resume meeting in person for TLC groups and once again - require teachers to tape a lesson to use a tool to build skills and practice through collaboration with peers. CLASS is a research-based scoring tool used to measure the emotional support children receive from teachers, classroom management and instructional support. CLASS is an integral part of the Head Start review process. NEICAC includes coaching models of professional development to support teachers in their instructional development. During the 2023-24 school year we started a TLC group of new lead teachers that began learning the very basics of the CLASS tool. We will work with staff throughout the year both in TLC groups and through one-on-one support from our program coach and center managers, and or the education specialist. We plan to meet with our co-teacher groups once again in the form of a TLC group for the 24-25 school year. This group is an important group because their support directly contributes to lead teacher success with this instrument. CLASS practices are best practices for all early childhood staff, educating co-teachers on how to use these practices to support leads is paramount to their success. We want all classroom staff to be educated in the use of best practice in the classroom, so children receive the best educational experiences possible.

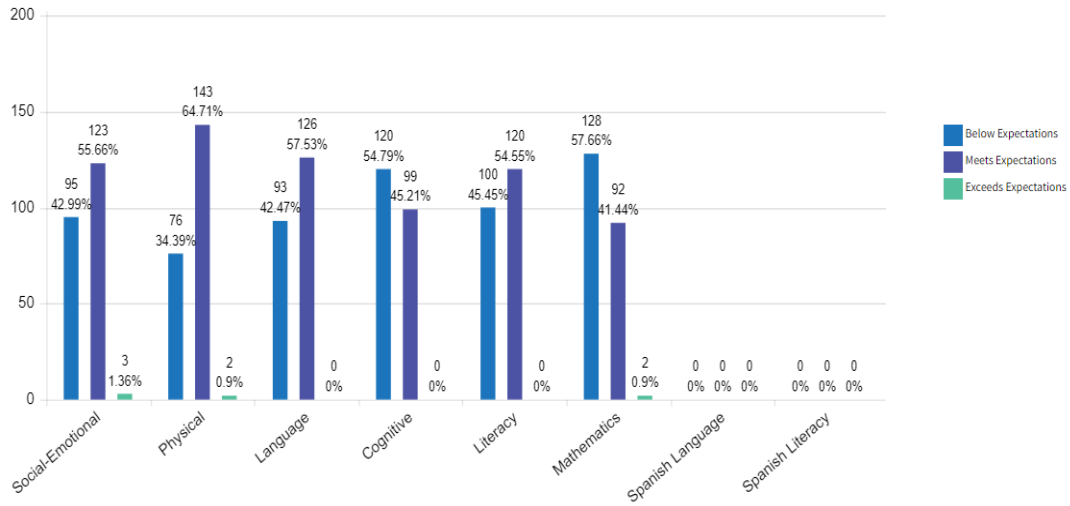
Transitions to Kindergarten:

Each classroom hosts an annual meeting between the Head Start teachers and the local school district Kindergarten teachers to share educational strategies and expectations. Most classrooms also offer individual transition activities in conjunction with Kindergarten classes. During the 23-24 school year we resumed monthly activities in district kindergarten classrooms. These activities include things like; visiting or transitioning to eating lunches in the cafeteria, riding the district school bus, visiting the school library for story time, and field trips to visit the kindergarten classroom. This year classrooms have visited kindergarten classrooms to participate in special story times; shared reading buddies; and spent a day in the kindergarten classroom learning about how their day will go next year. Kindergarten teachers are invited to the May parent meetings to share summer activities parents can do with their child in an effort to ensure children are ready for Kindergarten and answer any questions parents might have.

Teaching Strategies GOLD Program wide Fall Data 2023-2024

Iowa DE - Northeast IA Com Act Corp

Fall 2023/2024 - Widely Held Expectations



Teaching Strategies GOLD Program wide Spring Data 2023-2024

Iowa DE - Northeast IA Com Act Corp

Spring 2023/2024 - Widely Held Expectations

