

**Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC)  
Annual Early Childhood Programs (Head Start and Early Head Start)  
Report to the Public 2025**

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

For the Fiscal Year February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025, Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation received the following funding:

<b>Funding Sources:</b>	<b>Amount</b>
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	3,629,782
USDA Food Program	263,105
Wrap Around Child Care	536,078
Iowa Shared Visions	225,239
Community Empowerment Grants	101,576
Local Grants/Contracts	7,544
In-Kind	907,447
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>5,670,771</b>

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

<b>07CH011393-05</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
Personnel	2,191,610	2,140,795
Fringe Benefits	680,529	658,044
Equipment	0	0
Travel	11,142	42,310
Supplies	58,276	88,551
Contractual	6,908	9,720
Other Costs	296,452	312,519
Indirect	384,865	377,843
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>3,629,782</b>	<b>3,629,782</b>
In kind	907,447	907,447
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,537,229</b>	<b>4,537,229</b>

**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 233/205 for HS and 80 for EHS)**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Head Start Enrollment</b>	<b>Early Head Start Enrollment</b>
Feb 2024	100%	100%
March 2024	100%	100%
April 2024	100%	100%
May 2024	100%	100%
June 2024	Not operating	100%
July 2024	Not operating	100%
Aug 2024	100%	100%
Sept 2024	100%	100%
Oct 2024	100%	100%
Nov 2024	100%	100%
Dec 2024	100%	100%
Jan 2025	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, 2024 through January 31, 2025 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](http://www.neicac.org).

**Percentage of Enrolled Children that Received Medical and Dental Exams**

	<b>Head Start Children</b>	<b>Early Head Start Children</b>
Medical Exams	100%	97%
Dental Exams	99%	94%

# **Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC) Annual Early Childhood Programs (Head Start and Early Head Start) Report to the Public 2025**

## **Parent and Family Engagement**

Children and families are at the heart of family engagement. 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. 201 Head Start families were served during our program year, and 95% of them participated in home visits/parent conferences to discuss their child's screening and assessment results, and their child's progress. Of the 110 Head Start families that completed our Parent Survey, 98% agreed that the Head Start program is helping their child to get ready for school. 29 of 30 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, "I've learned how to help my child learn.", "Games to stimulate my daughter's learning.", and "How to tame tantrums." In addition, parents noted how the program has helped them support their child's healthy development with information on dental care, understanding the importance of taking children to their medical check-ups, and healthy meal ideas. All respondents reported they would recommend Early Head Start to others.

Another way parents and families contribute to the success of the Early Childhood Programs is through volunteer service. During the 2024-2025 school year, 225 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, 96% 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 139 registered caregivers that watched collectively, 6,930 videos aligned with language and literacy, math, social/emotional, and/or health skills. Parent comments included, "It's a great website. I'm ready to help my child learn." And "Playing [Keep it Up] was fun! It's our new, everyday game!" The videos are a great way to support skill acquisition in a fun, engaging way. On the use of the Name Game video, one parent commented, "He struggled to name the letter, but he has tons of interest in doing the game."

We use the ReadyRosie Family Workshops at Parent Meetings and virtual parenting classes, to offer 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, fine and gross motor development, and community field trips to museums, libraries, parks, and other community-based venues. 100% of our survey respondents who attended playgroups reported that the parent education topics were informative and useful. One parent commented on how enjoyable playgroups are.” It is fun to meet new parents, and your child can meet new children, as well.”

Family engagement includes supporting parents as advocates and leaders. These efforts are most successful when programs create opportunities for parents and family members to share their voices and contribute to the program in ways that matter to the families. This year, twelve Head Start and Early Head Start parents served as Policy Council Representatives. Parents provide valuable input on program design, policy development, and recruitment of children and staff. We also had parents on Parent Committees that helped plan and run family fun nights at their centers.

Community partners provide tangible child development supports and resources that families and staff want and need. These partnerships support parents’ roles as valued community members and their progress toward their goals for themselves and their children. 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. Family Workshops offer 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 lead 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. 91% 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. The 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 can fully utilize the parent portal in the Creative Curriculum Gold online assessment as well. This portal was utilized with parents' program wide for the 24-25 school year. Parents had access to their child's anecdotal assessments via the parent section on the- GOLD website at any time as well as having the ability to add anecdotal information about learning done at home. This portal was applied by some parents but not all. In the 25-26 school year we will make more efforts to educate parents regarding the parent portal and encourage them to utilize this valuable tool as a part of their child's education experience. 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 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 for staff. For the 24-25 school year we provided additional training for staff on the implementation of the curriculum with fidelity. Training was provided at preservice as a refresher to all staff and as part of our ongoing TLC groups. At the TLC groups we were able to provide more one on one training and focus on different pieces of the tool more in depth. We also developed and implemented a system for new staff who are just beginning to work with Creative Curriculum to learn about, implement and achieve fidelity in their classrooms. This process is a step-based process based on the individual needs and experiences of the new teaching staff. We have provided and will continue providing 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 3 out of 13 classrooms that met high fidelity expectations and 2 in the mid-range with 8 classrooms who began the step method of working toward fidelity. We as a program loved the step method for new teachers. It is giving them time to focus on one area at a time and to learn how to meet high fidelity in that area before moving on to a new area using expert coaching and support from center managers.

### **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 24-25 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. CLASS was done in classrooms this year with our seasoned staff scoring well overall. We did some one-on-one goal setting with this group of teachers with each one working on something a bit different. It has been very clear to us based on past and present data 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 2025-26. CLASS Scores for the new group of lead teachers were where we would expect them to be as they are learning about the tool. We utilized taping of lessons with this group and then we discussed the CLASS elements that were seen in the videos. It was a valuable tool and we plan to continue its use in the future. This year

we also taped and used our own staff as models for good CLASS skills. This was a good tool as the teachers in the videos were veterans and they were utilizing the curriculum that we use as a program. We will resume meeting in person and zoom 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 and we continued with that new group this year learning more about the CLASS tool and all the different dimensions and domains. We will work with staff throughout the year both in TLC groups and through one-on-one support from 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 25-26 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 experience possible.

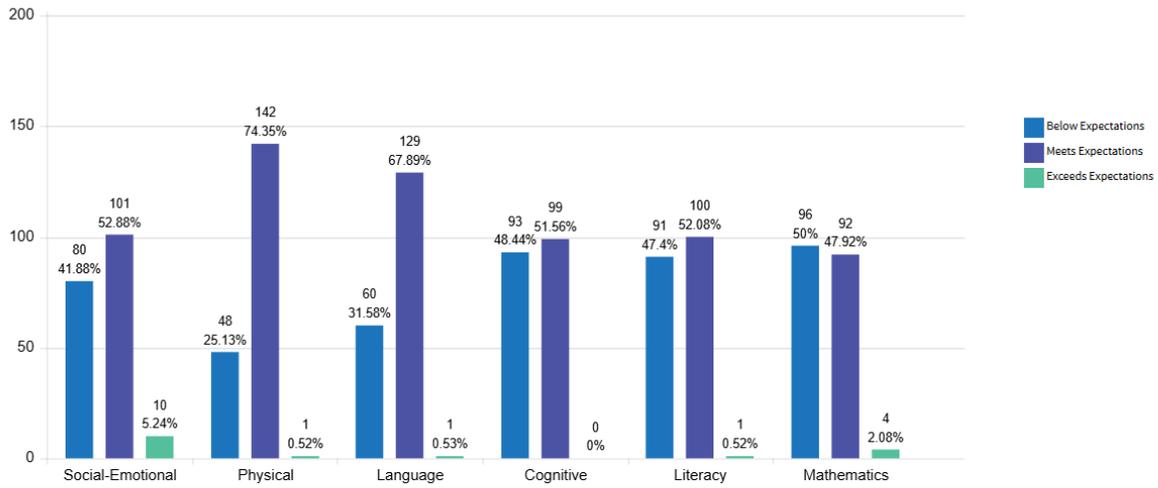
### **Transitions to Kindergarten:**

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 24-25 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 to ensure children are ready for Kindergarten and answer any questions parents might have.

## Teaching Strategies GOLD Program wide Fall Data 2024-2025

Iowa DE - Northeast IA Com Act Corp

Fall 2024/2025 - Widely Held Expectations



## Teaching Strategies GOLD Program wide Spring Data 2024-2025

Iowa DE - Northeast IA Com Act Corp

Spring 2024/2025 - Widely Held Expectations

