

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC)
Annual Early Childhood Programs (Head Start and Early Head Start)
Report to the Public 2026

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

For the Fiscal Year February 1, 2025 to January 31, 2026, Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation received the following funding:

Funding Sources:	Amount
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	3,629,782
USDA Food Program	208,548
Wrap Around Child Care	220,398
Iowa Shared Visions	108,738
Community Empowerment Grants	35,570
Local Grants/Contracts	8,828
In-Kind	907,447
TOTAL FUNDING	5,119,311

Explanation of Budgetary Expenditures and Proposed Budget for the Fiscal Year Contract No. 07CH013028-01

07CH013028-01	Budget	Expenses
Personnel	2,068,787	1,987,608
Fringe Benefits	599,921	592,421
Equipment	156,000	154,290
Travel	11,142	8,441
Supplies	97,432	94,329
Contractual	5,150	9,813
Other Costs	333,881	434,575
Indirect	357,469	348,304
SUB TOTAL	3,629,782	3,629,781
In kind	907,446	907,447
TOTAL	4,537,228	4,537,228

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)

Month	Head Start Enrollment	Early Head Start Enrollment
Feb 2025	100%	100%
March 2025	100%	100%
April 2025	100%	100%
May 2025	100%	100%
June 2025	Not operating	100%
July 2025	Not operating	100%
Aug 2025	100%	100%
Sept 2025	100%	93%
Oct 2025	100%	93%
Nov 2025	100%	98%
Dec 2025	100%	98%
Jan 2026	100%	100%

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

Office of Head Start conducted an onsite Focus Area 1(FA 1) review from 3/10/26-3/12/26. The Focus Area 1 review is to ensure that the program has a solid foundation to provide high-quality program services. This focus area determines if the program meets the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), the Uniform Guidance, and the Head Start Act. The program had one area of concern, one area of noncompliance and no deficiencies.

The Independent Auditor’s report for the Fiscal Year February 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026 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%	93%
Dental Exams	100%	87%

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Parent and Family Engagement

Children and families are at the center of family engagement. NEICAC's Early Childhood Programs work closely with families to help every child succeed, recognizing that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Family engagement begins when a child enrolls in the program and an Individual Child Plan is created based on the family's goals for their child. Regular home visits and parent-teacher conferences provide opportunities to discuss each child's progress, and at-home activities help parents support their child's learning and development. During this program year, 154 Head Start families were served. Of the 122 families who completed the annual survey, 97% said that conferences and home visits were helpful and informative about their child's progress, and 98% agreed that the Head Start program is helping prepare their child for school.

Thirty Early Head Start families completed our annual survey. All respondents said their home visitor helped them learn ways to support their child's development at home. When asked what they liked most about Early Head Start, parents shared comments such as, "I like that my child gets excited to learn and play. He has learned so much," "I feel heard when I discuss my child's growth. It's a calm and respectful environment," and "They help me understand where my children are developmentally each week. Before, I didn't always notice the progress they were making." Parents also said the program helped them support their child's healthy development by providing information about dental care, the importance of regular medical check-ups, and healthy meal ideas. All respondents said they would recommend Early Head Start to other families.

Parents and families also contribute to the success of the Early Childhood Programs by volunteering. During the 2025–2026 school year, 200 Head Start parents volunteered 18,261 hours to the program! They helped by supporting their child's learning with at-home activities and ReadyRosie, assisting in classrooms, sharing their knowledge and talents with children, and/or serving on the Policy Council.

One way families stay actively involved in their child's learning is through ReadyRosie. ReadyRosie helps parents and caregivers teach young children through everyday activities at home. Head Start provides a free subscription for each family. The program sends short videos by text or email that show real families doing simple learning activities during daily routines like cooking, shopping, bath time, or car rides. For example, a video might show a parent counting apples at the store, talking about colors while folding laundry, or asking questions during story time. The goal is to help parents turn everyday moments into learning opportunities.

Throughout the year, 114 caregivers used ReadyRosie videos. Seventy-nine percent of families said ReadyRosie helped them learn fun, educational games to play with their child. The videos support skills in language and literacy, math, social-emotional development, and health. The program also allows families to share feedback and communicate with their child's teacher. Parents shared comments such as: "[my child] has always been good about sharing her feelings. This video was definitely helpful for when she has a harder time trying to tell me what's wrong," and after playing "Stomp the Letter," "he was able to start recognizing letters."

In addition, we use ReadyRosie Family Workshops during Parent Meetings and virtual parenting classes to support families with research-based parenting strategies. These workshops help parents handle challenging behaviors, create daily routines, and build home environments that support children's learning in math, reading, and literacy.

Early Head Start parent-child playgroups give children and families a chance to spend time together and connect with other families. Families enjoyed a variety of activities that supported children's growth and development, including reading, science and math activities, fine and large motor skill development, and trips to local museums, libraries, parks, and other community locations. In our survey, 92% of families who attended playgroups said the playgroups helped them learn new parenting ideas and activities.

In addition to supporting learning at home and participating in program activities, family engagement also means helping parents become leaders and advocates for their children and families. Programs are most successful when parents and family members have opportunities to share their ideas and help shape the program. This year, twelve Head Start and Early Head Start parents served on the Policy Council. These parents provided important feedback on program planning, policies, and the recruitment of children and staff. Parents were also invited to join Parent Committees to help plan and organize family events at their centers.

Community partners provide valuable services and resources that support children, families, and staff. These partnerships help families stay connected to their communities and make progress toward their goals. The Early Childhood Program collaborates with many community organizations to promote positive outcomes for children and families. These partners include local school districts, Keystone Area Education Agency, Central Rivers Area Education Agency, Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness, and healthcare professionals throughout the region.

Positive Behavior Instructional Supports (PBIS)

Our program uses PBIS strategies as the foundation for supporting children's social and emotional development. Through large-group, small-group, and individual activities, children learn how to understand their feelings, build friendships, and solve problems they may face every day.

Teachers receive ongoing training and coaching to help them create caring and supportive classrooms. They learn effective ways to build positive relationships, teach social and emotional skills, and respond to challenging behaviors.

We also offer family workshops that give parents simple, practical strategies they can use at home to prevent and manage challenging behaviors.

Because friendships are important for children's emotional well-being and future success, we continue to teach skills that help children make and keep friends. These skills include asking others to play, sharing and taking turns with toys, and suggesting activities during play.

The effects of COVID-19 have continued to impact children's social and emotional development. Our Behavior Specialist played an important role in supporting both children and staff by helping address challenging behaviors and leading individual and small-group lessons that reinforced PBIS strategies. She also spoke at parent meetings and provided families with resources and strategies to use at home.

According to our Parent Survey, 86% of parents said they have learned new skills to prevent or minimize challenging behaviors at home because of the information and strategies they learned through 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 8 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" (WHE) 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 25-26 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 26-27 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 closely 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 continued our Creative Curriculum with Fidelity observations in the 2025-2026 school year. This year we completed the observation in all 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 25-26 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 regular TLC groups for staff with support from center managers. This year we had 8 out of 10 programs achieve high fidelity in the classroom. 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.

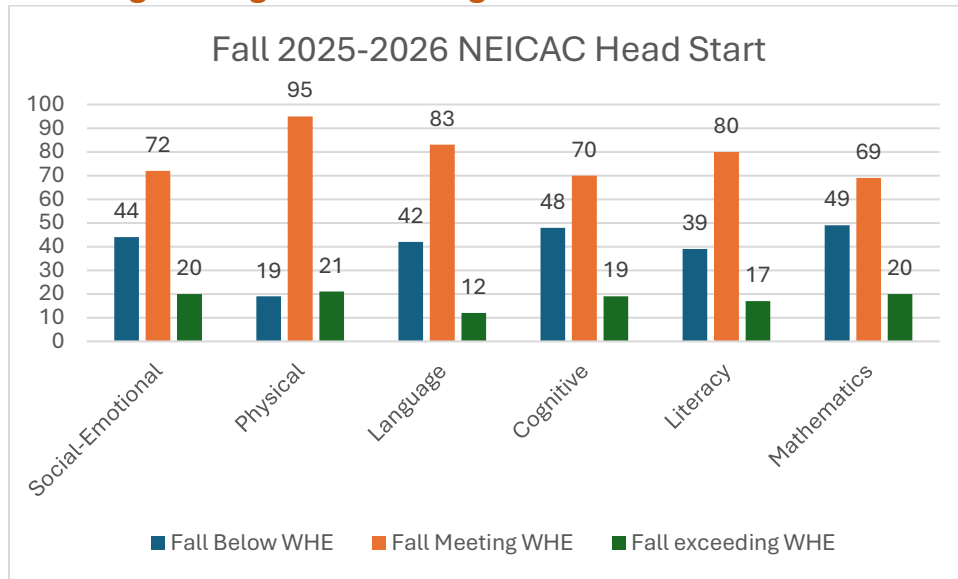
CLASS/Practice Based Coaching:

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 25-26 school year. This year we were able to meet with each group 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 after CLASS scoring is complete in all classrooms in Fall 2026. 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. While this was uncomfortable for new staff they all agreed 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 curriculum that we use as a program. 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. 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. Using TLC groups provides peer support for striving for excellence in the classroom.

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 25-26 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 2025-2026



Teaching Strategies GOLD Program wide Spring Data 2025-2026

