

2023-24 WCCA HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PUBLIC

Head Start and Early Head Start is a comprehensive no fee program for income-eligible families. WCCA Head Start and Early Head Start serve children from birth through five years, and pregnant women. It provides children with a developmentally appropriate early childhood education to help them gain the skills needed to succeed in school. WCCA Head Start and Early Head Start is funded through federal and state grants, and through generous donations provided by WCCA Board Members, Policy Council Members, Parent Volunteers, Community Volunteers, Staff and Local Area Churches, School Districts, Doctors, Dentists, and many community service organizations.

Funding Sources and Budgetary Expenditures

2023-24 FUNDING SOURCES		2023-24 FEDERAL EXPENDITURES		2023-24 STATE EXPENDITURES	
U.S. Dept. of HHS – Continuation Grant	2,617,265	Salaries and Fringe	2,110,275	Salaries and Fringe	419,300
Minnesota Dept. of Education	481,044	Out-of-Area Travel	629	Travel	16,899
Pathway II Funding (State of MN)	112,500	Supplies	66,764	Office Expenses	6,947
Great Start Compensation (State of MN)	65,718	Contractual	253,282	Contractual	19,434
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (CACFP)	157,754	Other	159,086	Program Expenses	11,892
In-Kind/Non-Federal Match Contributions	654,316	Training	27,229	Staff Development	6,572
Total Funds and Contributions	\$4,088,597	Federal Expenditures	\$2,617,265	State Expenditures	\$481,044

Key Information

An estimated 537 children ages 0-4 from income-eligible families live in Wright County and western Hennepin County. Approximately 44% of eligible children were served by WCCA Head Start and Early Head Start.

	Average Monthly Enrollment	Participants Served	Families Served	Child Medical Exams Completed	Child Dental Exams Completed
Early Head Start	101%	49 children 9 pregnant women	38	80%	59%
Head Start	99%	182 children	164	86%	79%

Reviews

Agency Audit -The annual agency wide audit was conducted for funding year 2022. There were no audit findings or questioned costs of any program conducted by WCCA, including Head Start. The annual agency wide audit for funding year 2023 is currently in process.

Monitoring Reviews - During the week of November 26, 2018, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a remote Focus Area-1 federal monitoring review of the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The report followed in January of 2019 and showed no findings. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted the Focus Area-2 federal monitoring review the week of March 14, 2022. The monitoring review report followed April 22, 2022 with no areas of concern, no areas of non-compliance, and no deficiencies. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Monitoring Review was completed during March 2024 with two minor findings that were corrected.

Child Outcomes and School Readiness

WCCA Head Start & Early Head Start, along with all Head Start & Early Head Start programs nationwide, promotes the school readiness of low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. All Head Start programs are mandated to use research-based assessment methods that reflect the characteristics described in the Head Start Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-134, in order to support the educational instructions and school readiness of children in the program.

Early Head Start (EHS)

In January 2016, WCCA began home visiting services for infants, toddlers, and pregnant people. Currently Early Head Start (EHS) serves 40 children and pregnant people in the WCCA service area. EHS provides services throughout the entire year. Home visitors work closely with parents individualizing learning strategies and activities to help parents feel confident in their role as their children's first and most important teachers. Home visitors will continue to meet weekly with families and promote responsive and respectful learning environments by providing opportunities for exploration and meaningful play.

EHS home visitors provide weekly (90- minute) visits to enrolled infants, toddlers and pregnant people forty-six weeks of the year. Home visitors work closely with parents individualizing learning strategies and activities to help parents/guardians feel confident in their role as their child's first and most important teachers.

WCCA EHS uses the *Partners for A Healthy Baby Curriculum*, which is a nationally recognized, researched based home visiting curriculum. It addresses issues of child health and development within the framework of complex needs of expecting and parenting families. EHS assesses each child's progress using the online *Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)* assessment tool. The home visitors gather information to support children's learning and development. The

DRDP consists of the following eight (8) domains- Approaches to Learning-Self Regulation, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, Cognition Including Math and Science, Physical Development-Health. The focus of each domain is on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or behaviors that reflect each domain's developmental constructs.

Children's progress on the DRDP assessment is based on each individual child and the growth or regression that occurred. Other assessment tools, such as the tool used for Head Start children, show a child's assessments scores compared to overall average for the age. DRDP data is compiled and analyzed after each checkpoint (Fall/Winter/Spring/Summer). This data is presented to each individual family to show their child's progress and areas for growth and development. The data in table one below shows how infants and toddlers have made progress from the fall to spring checkpoint. As infants and toddlers continue to learn and master various skills, their development will progress from the left side to the right side of the DRDP data chart below.

Table 1: DRDP Group Progress Report (Early Head Start)

RE=Responding Earlier, RL=Responding Later, EE=Exploring Earlier, EM=Exploring Middle, EL=Exploring Later, BE=Building Earlier, BM=Building Middle, BL=Building Later, IE=Integrating Earlier

Approaches to Learning–Self-Regulation (ATL-REG)

The Approaches to Learning skills include attention maintenance, engagement and persistence, and curiosity and initiative. The Self-Regulation skills include self-comforting, self-control of feelings and behavior, imitation, and shared use of space and materials.

	RE	RL	EE	EL	BE	BM	BL	IE
Spring 2024		10%	43%	24%	24%			
Winter 2024	10%	10%	43%	38%				
Fall 2023	10%	19%	43%	29%				

Social and Emotional Development (SED)

The knowledge or skill areas in this domain include identity of self in relation to others, social and emotional understanding, relationships and social interactions with familiar adults, relationships and interactions with peers, and symbolic and sociodramatic play.

	RE	RL	EE	EL	BE	BM	BL	IE
Spring 2024		10%	29%	38%	24%			
Winter 2024	5%	14%	29%	48%	5%			
Fall 2023	10%	24%	38%	29%				

Language and Literacy Development (LLD)

The LLD domain assesses the progress of all children in developing foundational language and literacy skills. These skills can be demonstrated in any language and in any mode of communication.

	RE	RL	EE	EM	EL	BE	BM	BL	IE
Spring 2024		14%	33%	5%	24%	24%			
Winter 2024		19%	29%	24%	24%	5%			
Fall 2023	10%	14%	43%	24%	5%	5%			

Cognition, Including Math and Science (COG)

The Math knowledge or skill areas in this domain include spatial relationships, classification, number sense of quantity, number sense of math operations, measurement, patterning, and shapes. The Science knowledge and skills in this domain include cause and effect, inquiry through observation and investigation, documentation and communication of inquiry, and knowledge of the natural world.

	RE	RL	EE	EL	BE	BM	BL	IE
Spring 2024		14%	38%	38%	10%			
Winter 2024	5%	14%	52%	29%				
Fall 2023	10%	19%	52%	19%				

Physical Development–Health (PD-HLTH)

The Physical Development knowledge or skill areas in this domain include perceptualmotor skills and movement concepts, gross locomotor movement skills, gross motor manipulative skills, fine motor manipulative skills, and active physical play. The Health knowledge or skill areas in this domain include nutrition, safety, and personal care routines (hygiene, feeding, dressing).

	RE	RL	EE	EM	EL	BE	BM	BL	IE
Spring 2024		5%	5%	24%	48%	19%			
Winter 2024		14%	5%	33%	38%	10%			
Fall 2023	10%	10%	19%	29%	29%	5%			

Head Start (HS)

WCCA uses the *Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers*, a research-based curriculum with 36 learning areas organized into nine broad domains (areas) of development and learning: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, the Arts. For Dual Language Learners, children are also assessed in the domain English Language Acquisition. These objectives include dimensions that are specific descriptions of the objectives. This curriculum is aligned with the Head Start *Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (ELOF), which has five overarching developmental domains – Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development. WCCA’s School Readiness Goals are aligned with the ELOF and the Minnesota Early Indicators of Progress.

WCCA uses an online tool, called *Teaching Strategies GOLD* (TSG), to track and aggregate Head Start children’s data. TSG uses observation-based assessment and follows widely held expectations for children, which enables a whole-child approach to assessment. TSG aligns with the *Creative Curriculum* and the 36 objectives with related dimensions. The TSG progressions show widely held expectations (WHE) for children’s typical development and learning, based upon their age. Overlapping areas allow teachers to see the full range of development at-a-glance, then plan activities and materials to foster further development and growth. The areas divide into three categories: below widely held expectations for typical children their age, meets widely held expectations for typical children their age, and exceeds widely held expectations for typical children their age. TSG can identify strengths and areas that need support for dual language learners, children with special needs, and children who are exceptional learners.

Children’s progress is typically noted by whole classrooms and individually three times per year during three checkpoint periods (Fall/Winter/Spring) to track children’s growth. At the end of the program year WCCA creates a comparative report from TSG that tracks the same children’s progress, from the start to the finish of the year, rather than a “snapshot” of children who may start at different times during the year. This report tracks the same cohort of children divided by age because the WHE for each group is different. The process of reporting on the same children from fall to spring gives a more complete depiction of progress across the whole program year.

WCCA Three-Year-Old Children’s Progress Across Fall and Spring Checkpoint Periods

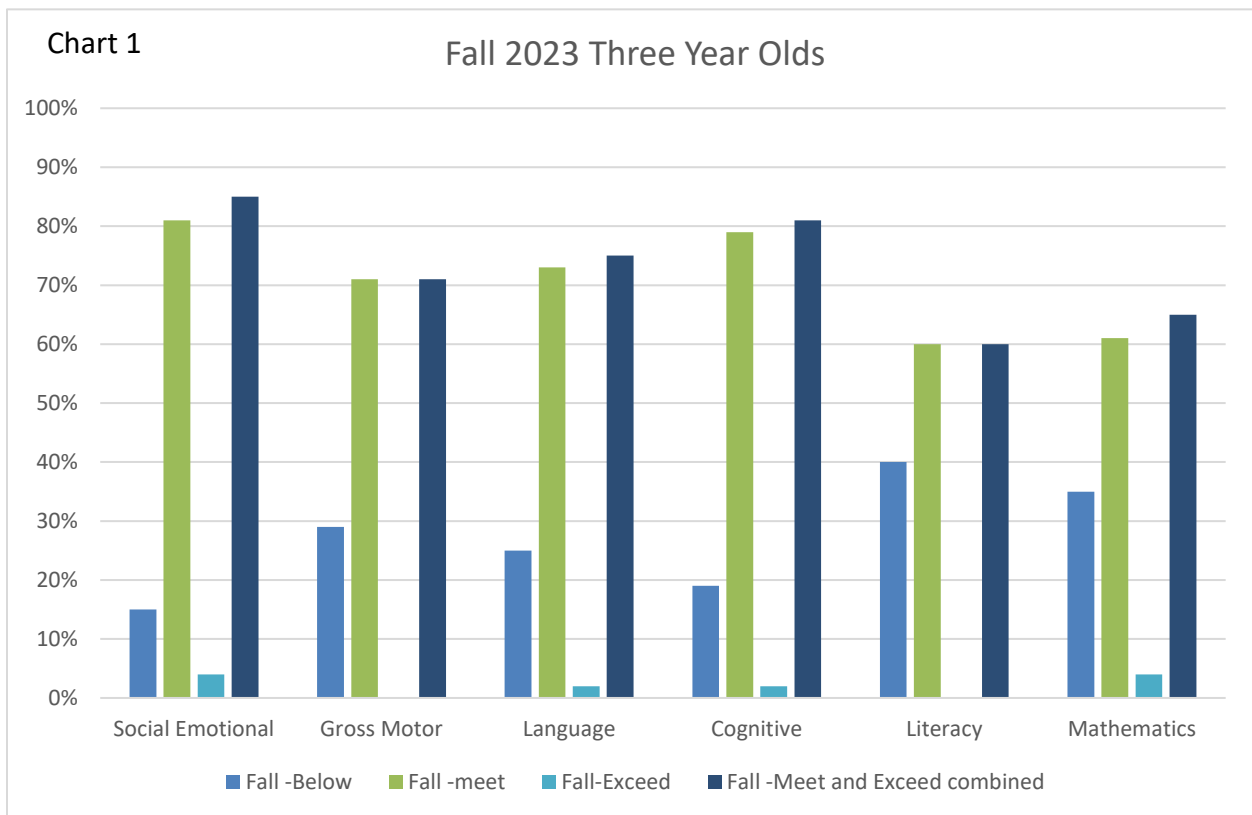
In the 2023-2024 school year, there were fifty-two three-year-olds enrolled from the fall to spring checkpoint periods. The graph below (Chart 1) shows the percentages of these children who were below, meeting, exceeding, and meeting and exceeding combined, on the TSG developmental continuum in fall. This baseline information allowed WCCA to track children’s growth and progress as the year continued.

To ensure school readiness, WCCA Head Start uses the Creative Curriculum in combination with the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System (TSG) to measure children’s progress

throughout the program year. The tables below demonstrate how the children are meeting and exceeding “widely held expectations” (typical developmental range for the age).

Three-Year-Old Fall Checkpoint

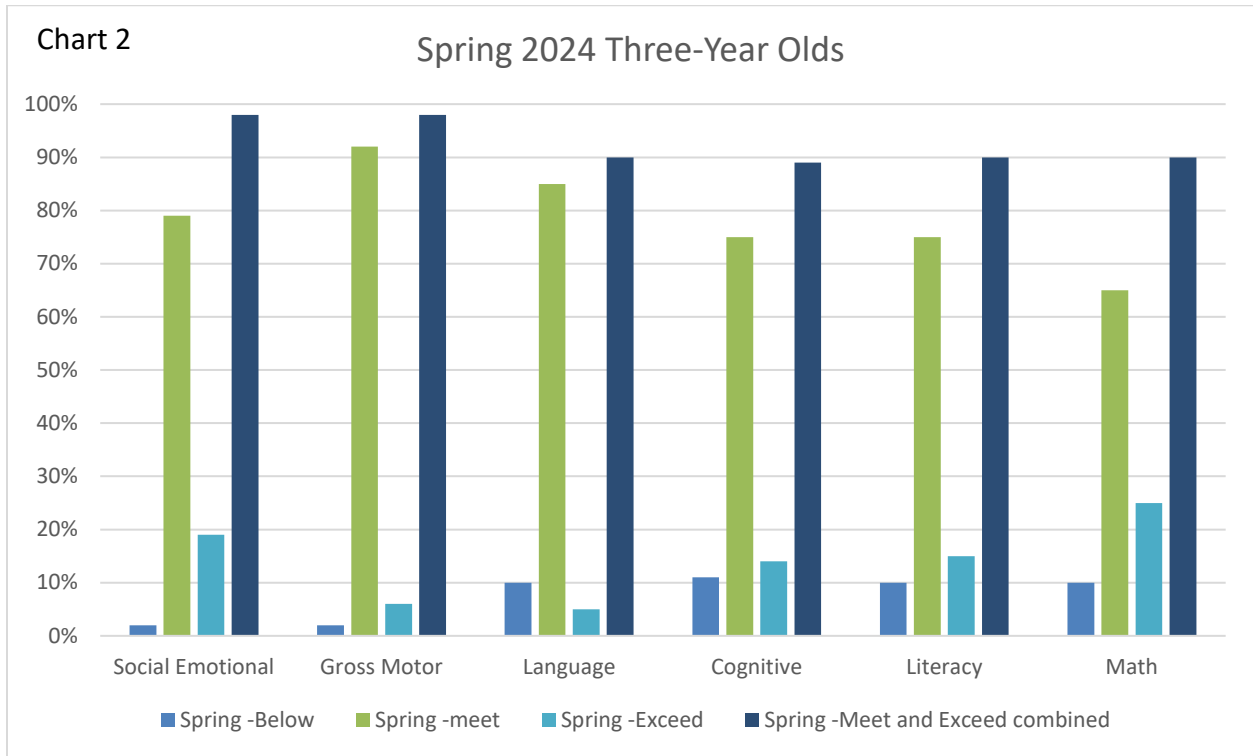
As shown in Chart 1, the three-year-olds started the school year in the fall with many children below the widely held expectations (WHE) for their age group. Historically the math and literacy domains have a higher percentage of children below the WHE in the fall and this was true for this year as well. Forty percent of the children were below the WHE for their age group in the literacy domain and 35% of children fell below the WHE in the mathematics domain. After checkpoints, the teachers met individually with the inclusion coordinator and the education coordinator to analyze their classroom and to make a plan to help support the children in their growth.



Three-Year-Old Spring Checkpoint

WCCA’s spring checkpoint data (Chart 2) shows how the three-year-old children made quite a bit of progress in all learning areas from the fall to spring checkpoint periods. The areas with highest concern in the fall, literacy and mathematics domains, showed some of the most growth. The literacy domain grew from 60% of children meeting WHE in the fall to 90% meeting WHE, of which 15% were even exceeding WHE. In the mathematics domain, the year ended with 90% of children meeting and/or exceeding WHE. It is also remarkable that 98% of the three-year-olds were meeting and/or exceeding the expectations of the age group in both

the social emotional domain and the gross motor domain. This shows how important it was for the education staff to plan intentional learning experiences to support growth in the three-year olds.



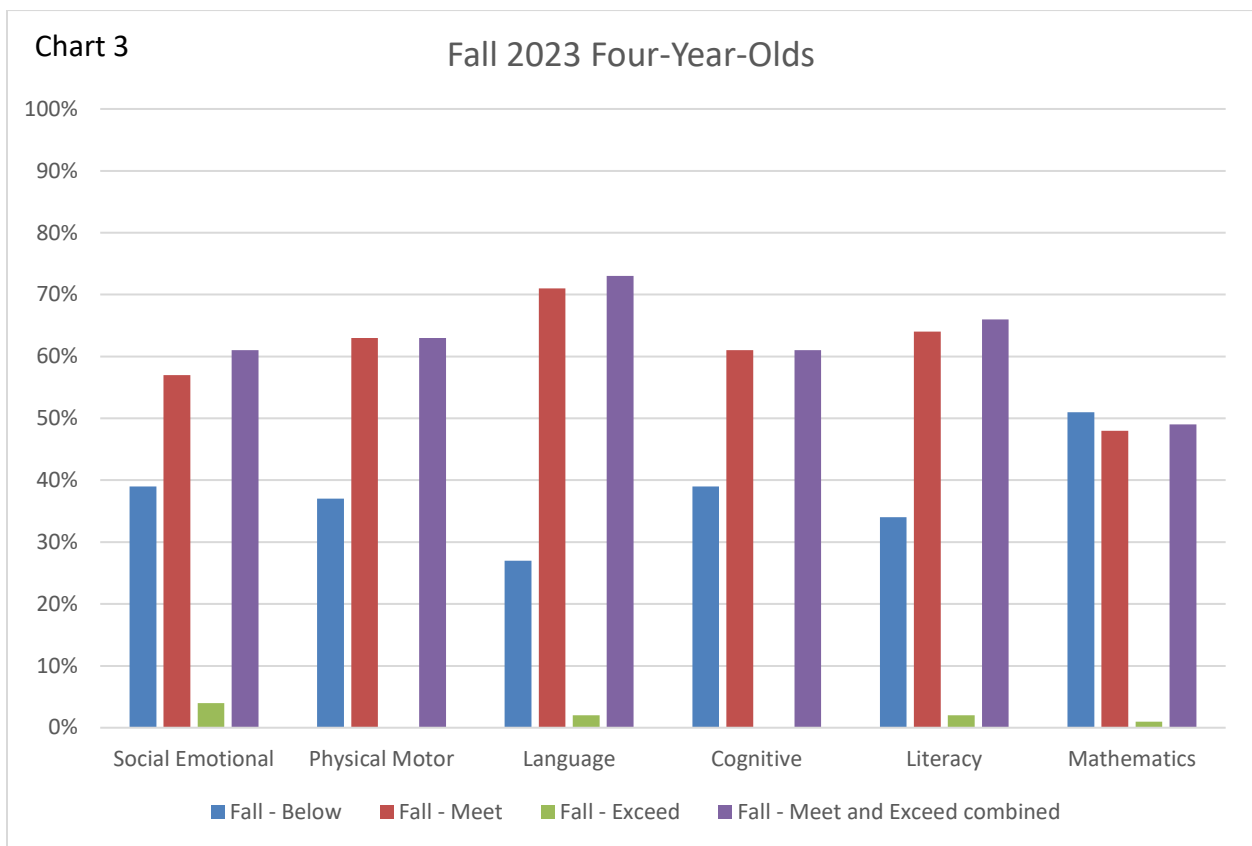
The table below, (Table 2), represents the 15 children (29% of 3-year-olds) that had an IEP at fall checkpoints. The area of greatest growth was the physical domain. In the fall, 47% of these children were below the WHE of their age group, but they ended the year with 93% of the children meeting the expectations. The other domain with greatest growth was the social-emotional domain which had the three-year olds finishing the year with 94% meeting and many exceeding expectations

Domain	Spring - Below	Spring-Meet	Spring-Exceed	Spring -Meet and Exceed combined	Meet & Exceed from Fall to Spring
Social-Emotional	6%	67%	29%	94%	+27%
Physical	7%	93%	0%	93%	+40%
Language	33%	67%	0%	67%	+27%
Cognitive	33%	53%	13%	67%	+13%
Literacy	27%	53%	20%	73%	+26%
Mathematics	26%	47%	27%	74%	+14%

WCCA Four-Year-Old Fall Checkpoint

In the 2023-2024 school year, there were 89 four-year-olds enrolled from the fall to spring checkpoint periods. The graph below, (Chart 3), illustrates the four-year-old’s fall development in the six TSG domains in comparison with the widely held expectations (WHE) for their age group. The skill levels by which four-year-olds are measured are more complex than the ones for three-year-olds are. The domains are the same, but the expectations are higher.

The children who were re-enrolled into WCCA’s program may have experienced what is known as the “summer slide”. This refers to students having a tendency to lose some of the achievement gains made during the previous program year because of the long break from Head Start over the summer months. The mathematics domain showed the most potential for improvement, having 51% of children below WHE. Another area for the potential of large growth was the social emotional domain; 39% of the four-year-olds were below the WHE for their age group.

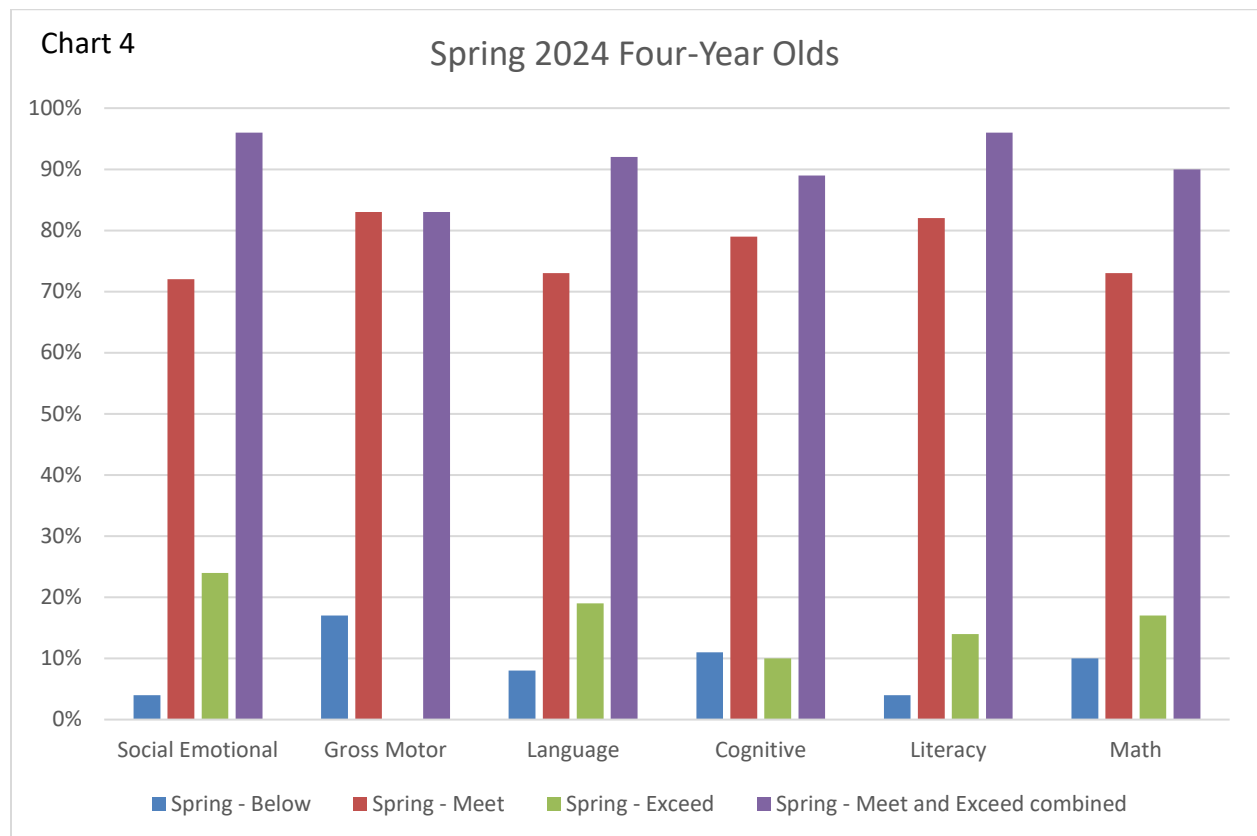


WCCA Four-Year-Old Spring Checkpoint

The spring results (Chart 4) show a significant increase in the number of children who were meeting or exceeding the WHE for their age across all domains.

The mathematics domain made great progress with a 41% increase in children meeting and exceeding the WHE for their age group. Knowing both three- and four-year-olds were struggling with mathematics in the fall, the teachers intentionally planned a variety of mathematic activities daily to help scaffold their children’s learning. In the winter, the coach began sending monthly videos along with reflection questions that focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) with the goal to include more hands-on science and math in the classrooms.

The four-year-old children also increased significantly in their social emotional skills. In the fall, 39% had been below the WHE in the social emotional domain. By the spring checkpoint period, 96% of this age group had been meeting/exceeding the WHE for their age in the social emotional domain. This year WCCA has rolled out more training focused on Conscious Discipline which is an adult first, trauma-informed, social emotional support curriculum. The education staff were taught ways to incorporate Conscious Discipline in their classrooms while parent meetings included a session on Conscious Discipline each month.



Of the four-year-olds who were in the program from fall to spring checkpoints, 29 children (33%) were on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Of those children, 55% were below the WHE for their age group in the physical domain and 52% were below in the mathematics domain in the fall. It was rewarding to see in the spring, there was a 35% growth in children meeting/exceeding WHE in both the physical and mathematic domains.

Domains	Spring - Below	Spring-Meet	Spring-Exceed	Spring-Meet and Exceed combined	Meet & Exceed from Fall to Spring
Social-Emotional	4%	83%	5%	86%	+31%
Physical	21%	79%	0%	79%	+35%
Language	17%	76%	7%	83%	+24%
Cognitive	17%	83%	0%	83%	+31%
Literacy	10%	83%	7%	90%	+28%
Mathematics	17%	79%	4%	83%	+35%

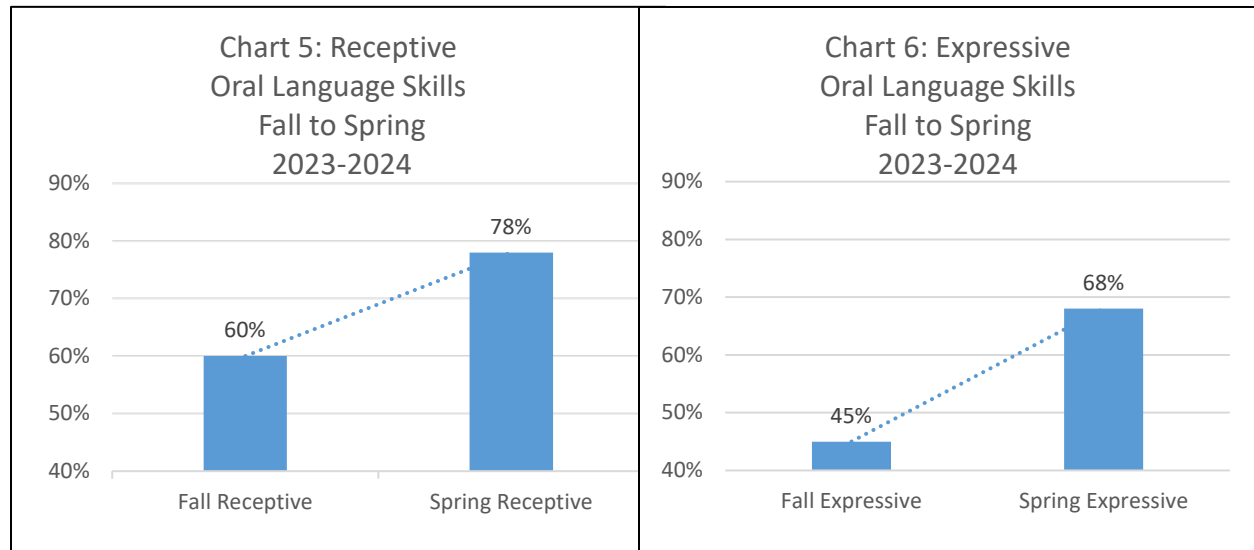
Dual Language Learners

WCCA Early Head Start assesses English language development (ELD) using the DRDP assessment. The ELD developmental continua assesses English Language and literacy development for children who arrive at preschool or kindergarten from homes where a language other than English is used. ELD does not open until preschool view, therefore no EHS children were assessed on ELD this year due to their ages.

WCCA Head Start uses the *Oral Language Proficiency Rubric/Matrix (OLPRM)* to assess two mandated outcomes for the non-English-speaking children: receptive language (listening to and understanding English), and expressive language (progress in speaking English). Research suggests children who are learning English and are gaining an understanding of vocabulary and semantics are often less sure about their abilities to speak and communicate with peers and adults. When children are shy or unsure about their English skills, it can take them longer to feel comfortable to take verbal risks in English to get their needs met or make connections with others. Teachers use strategies like modeling and repetition to support dual language learners. They encourage children to learn from each other. Adults with the children speak slowly and clearly and try again if the children do not respond right away. Head Start expected children to make gains in both areas as the program year progressed as they became comfortable as the charts below demonstrate.

Charts five and six illustrate the children who are Dual Language Learners and have been in the program consistently from the fall to spring checkpoint periods. These charts show the continual progress these children have made in understanding English and expressing themselves in English verbally. During the program year, there were 20 Head Start children who were a Dual Language Learner; Eighteen of these children attended the entire program from

the fall to spring checkpoint period. The skills of learning to both understand and to use a new language are broken up into 6 steps on the OLPRM. As there are no widely held expectations per age for learning a new language, the charts show the percentage of the 6 steps mastered averaged among the 18 children.



School Readiness Outcomes

The Head Start/Early Head Start’s Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) represents the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to prepare children for kindergarten. This information will help adults better understand what they should be doing to provide effective learning experiences that support important early learning outcomes. This framework is grounded in research for what young children should be able to do and know during these years.

WCCA updated the School Readiness Goals in 2024 to broad aspirational goals with measurable outcomes using the Head Start/EHS Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), information from the schools in our districts, the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, and input from WCCA parents and staff. The goals continue to be reviewed and updated annually.

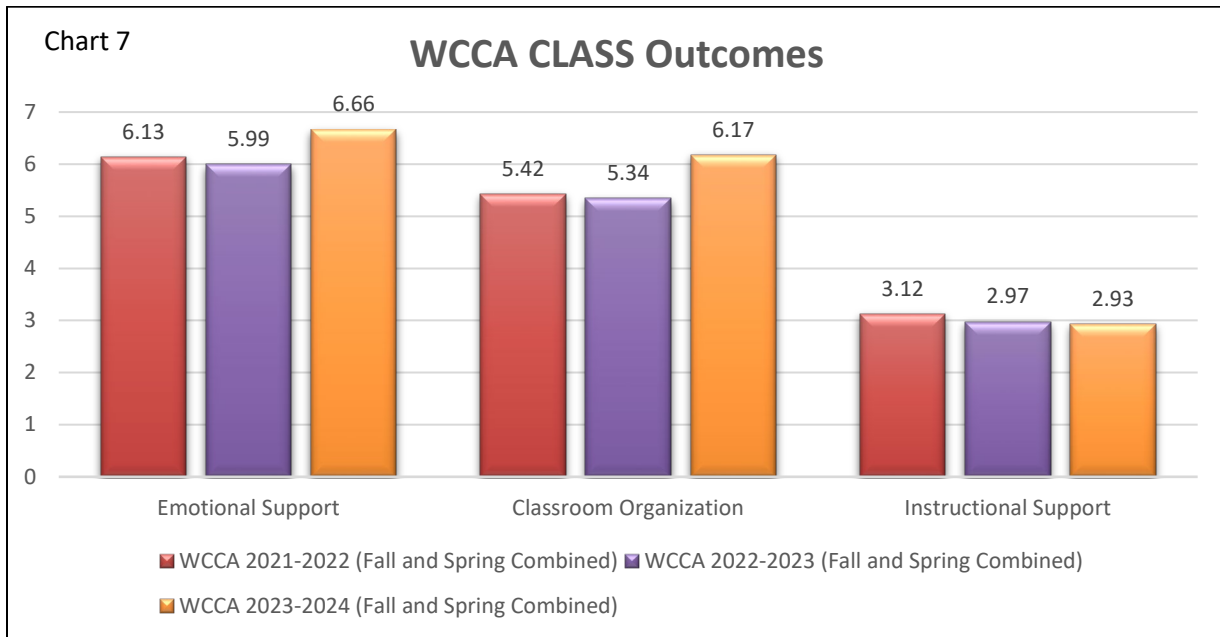
WCCA is secure knowing the activities provided give children opportunities to learn and practice important skills, which gives them a strong foundation for kindergarten, which will carry them all through school and beyond.

WCCA Head Start is a member of the *Minnesota Head Start Association* (MHSA). One of the Association’s goals is to improve Head Start programs and policies by identifying common concerns and sharing strategies to analyze and improve children’s outcomes. Based on an

earlier report for the Minnesota Department of Education*, it was recommended by *Teaching Strategies Gold* and the MHPA, that an overall proficiency rate of 75% (based on total points) in each domain, is an appropriate measure of skills required for children to be successful in kindergarten.

CLASS Outcomes

WCCA Head Start uses the *Classroom Assessment System (CLASS)* to assess the quality of teacher-child relationships in each classroom. The CLASS is a valid and reliable measure of effective teacher-child interaction. Research verifies the vital links between how teachers present information, facilitate, and extend children’s understanding, promote children’s higher thinking, and encourage children’s language development and vocabulary. WCCA uses data collected from the CLASS assessment to help improve teaching through mentoring, focus professional development, and make programmatic decisions. Teachers and other staff working directly with children in the classroom are assessed in the fall and again in the spring. Reliable raters observed teachers for twenty (20) minutes, and then scored results, in three continuous cycles. The cycles are averaged to determine the overall scores. The CLASS tool assesses the domains of Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.



As shown in Chart 7, from the 2021-2022 program year to the 2022-2023 program year, we saw a decrease in scores in all three domains. In August of 2023, all teaching staff received four hours of training on Classroom Organization. This was the domain that the largest growth was made from the 2022-2023 school year through the 2023-2024 school year.

The Office of Head Start has two types of thresholds that align with the three Pre-K CLASS domains, shown in Table 4. Programs scoring below the quality thresholds on their federal CLASS monitoring observations receive support from the regional Training and Technical Assistant network on the domain(s) below the threshold. Programs scoring below the competitive thresholds on their federal CLASS monitoring observations must re-compete for their funding.

Table 4

	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
National Quality Threshold	6	6	3
National Competitive Threshold	5	5	2.3

WCCA’s averaged scores met the quality threshold in both the emotional support and classroom organization domains. The average scores are .07 away from meeting the instructional support threshold. WCCA feels additional training and support for all education staff will significantly bring up the organization’s average and meet these standards. Future coaching will focus on indicators within the dimensions of concept development and quality of feedback in the instructional support domain.

Family Engagement

Parent and family engagement in Head Start and Early Head Start is about building relationships with families that support family well-being; supporting strong relationships between parents and their children; and nurturing ongoing learning and development for both parent and children. This results in children who are healthy and ready for school. At the beginning of the participants enrollment, WCCA Head Start uses a locally designed assessment to help parents identify strengths and needs. At the end of the program year, we complete the assessment again with some additional questions to measure whether our efforts are meeting the needs of the families we serve.

Monthly, we offer parent meetings and family engagement events for Head Start and Early Head Start families. These events give families the opportunity to connect with local resources. During the 2023-24 program year, we started using the Conscious Discipline Parenting Education Curriculum. This curriculum provides a comprehensive approach that empowers parents with skills that create a safe, connected, problem-solving environment for families. It has been found to improve parenting knowledge and skills, increase parents' ability to manage their own emotions and respond to children's challenging behaviors, and improve emotional management and behaviors in children. We offer opportunities for parents to attend our Conscious Discipline parenting groups monthly at the same time as family engagement events and parent meetings, as well as a separate five-week group session.

WCCA has a Policy Council made up of elected Head Start and Early Head Start parents. The Policy Council meets once a month to review program reports, receive updates on individual classrooms and programs, and make decisions that impact the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This is a great chance for parents to develop leadership skills, network with other parents, advocate for children, and represent the voice of the children and parents in the program.

During the 2023-24 program year, 179 Head Start and Early Head Start parents and guardians volunteered in our program in some capacity, which is an increase from 147 the year before. Parents can volunteer as a member of the Policy Council, attending classroom parent meetings, volunteer in the classroom, or participate in specific at-home activities with their child.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Outcomes

At the beginning and end of the program year, parents fill out a Strengths and Needs Assessment. Parents self-report on questions from each of the seven areas of the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework to determine their strengths and needs. For the 2023-2024 program year, we gathered information from 132 Head Start and Early Head Start families.

Outcome 1: Family Well Being

Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security

Housing

Throughout the program year, three families reported being homeless, and all three families acquired housing at some point during the program year.

Food

At the beginning of the year 87% of families reported frequently or always having enough food to eat while 1% reported rarely or never having enough food to eat. At the end of the year 93% of families reported frequently or always having enough food to eat while 1.5% reported rarely or never having enough food to eat.

Financial Stability

At the beginning of the program year, 17% of families reported that they were not able to consistently meet their basic financial needs. By the end of the program year, this decreased to 9%. At the beginning of the program year, 61% reported that they were able to consistently meet their basic financial needs. By the end of the year, this increased to 66%.

Health

The number of enrolled children and pregnant women had some type of medical and dental insurance in place remained at 97% throughout the program term.

Mental Wellness

By the end of the program year, 47% of families reported rarely or never struggling with depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders.

Outcome 2: Positive Parent-Child Relationships

Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

Parenting Skills

46% of families received research-based parenting education with our Conscious Discipline curriculum. 53% of survey participants stated that they would like to learn new or additional parenting skills.

Childcare

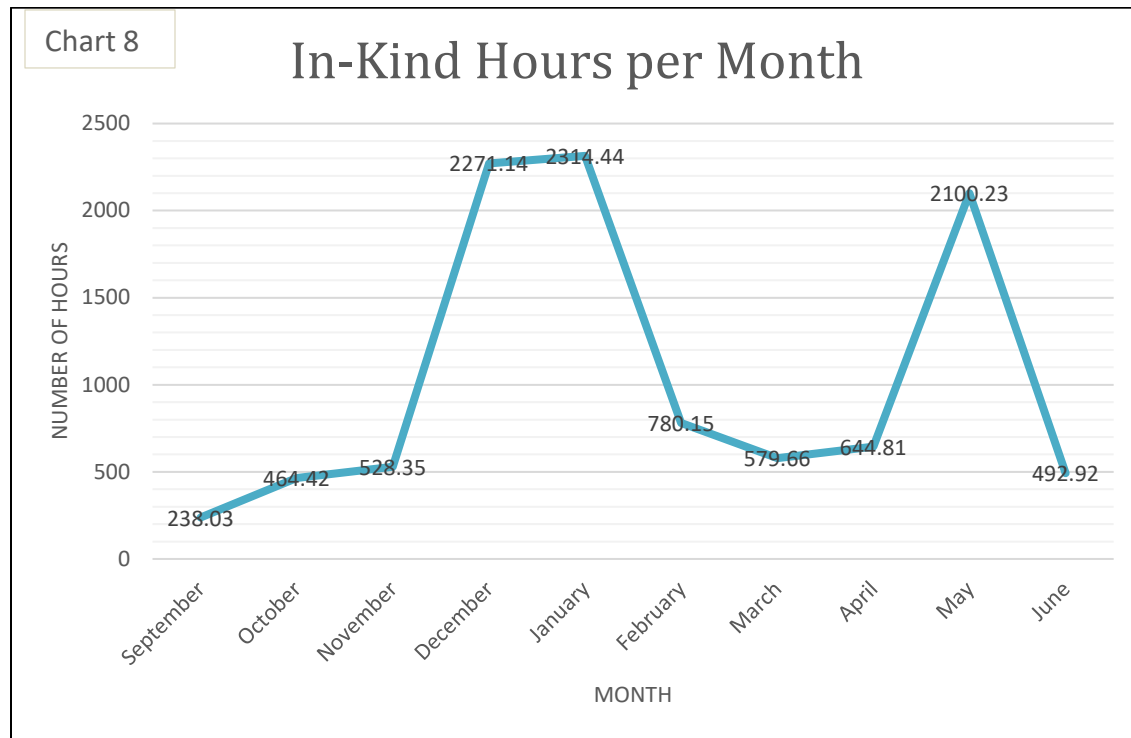
At the beginning of the year 61% of families reported always or frequently having childcare that met their family's needs. At the end of the year that number increased to 70%.

Outcome 3: Families as Lifelong Educators

Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

Parent Involvement

We tracked the number of hours of in-kind contributions from parents/guardians, specifically parent/child at-home activities, volunteering in the classroom and attending monthly parent meetings. Total in-kind hours from parents/guardians fluctuated throughout the year, with a large increase in December, January and May, as shown in Chart 8 below.



School Readiness

97% of families felt that the program helped them to set goals for their child's development and education.

Outcome 4: Families as Learners

Parents and Families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers and life goals.

Education & Training

We track employment and training at the beginning of the program year, and again at the end of the program year. Table 5 below shows the percentage of families who were in each category at the end of the program year.

Table 5	Percent of Families
Employed, in training or attending school	76%
Maintained employment from beginning to end of program year	57%
Were unemployed and are now employed	10%
Consistently unemployed	12%
Were employed and are now unemployed	1%

Family Growth and Stability

78% of families set goals for themselves throughout the program year. 98% of families surveyed felt that the program staff worked with them to set or attempt to set goals.

Outcome 5: Family Engagement in Transitions

Parents and families support and advocate for their child’s learning and development as they transition to new learning environments

At the beginning of the year, 87% of families felt confident about advocating for their child and were comfortable with the process of transitioning to new learning environments.

Outcome 6: Family Connections to Peers and Community

Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal and informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

The percentage of families who reported participating in community events increased from 74% to 77% over the course of the program year.

Outcome 7: Families as Advocates and Leaders

Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

Leadership and Advocacy

The percentage of families who felt comfortable speaking up for their child's educational needs increased from 93% to 98% throughout the program year.

Volunteering

This year we had 13 parents volunteer in classrooms which is an increase from just 7 in the previous year. Prior to COVID, center volunteers were common, but since COVID, center volunteers have decreased overall.

Community Needs Assessment

WCCA's most recent Community Needs Assessment was completed in October 2022. An annual update was completed in October 2023.

Survey respondents indicated the strengths of the communities in our service area were:

- Friendly communities, a feeling of family, family-oriented, close-knit community
- Peaceful, quiet, safe
- Small-town, small-town feel, close to the cities (Twin Cities metro area)
- Good school systems
- Community involvement, community events, available resources

Using the assessed information, our team identified 30 things that area residents need. The 30 needs range from how our **communities need more affordable housing** all the way to **individuals need more physical activity**. While others state that **communities need jobs that fit the qualifications of the local work force** and another says that **individuals need more childcare openings for children under the age of three**. Each one of these 30 statements are supported by data from focus groups, census information, assessments and other statistics.

In addition, WCCA participates in the Wright County Community Health Collaborative, who recently completed their Community Health Need Assessment. This data identified priorities of mental health and well-being, dental care, and substance misuse.

WCCA Head Start and Early Head Start are committed to working with families to ensure they are provided with the resources they need. As part of a Community Action Partnership, we are able to refer families to many services within our agency including energy assistance, WIC, insurance, housing programs, and tax assistance. We continue to work closely with our local county financial assistance program to assist families in applying for SNAP, TANF and childcare assistance.