

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Head Start



Northwest Community Action 

MISSION STATEMENT

NWCA Head Start assists children in achieving appropriate physical and developmental growth. We also increase self-confidence and expand each child's ability to think, reason, and communicate. Head Start assists parents and families in improving their parenting skills, self-sufficiency, and the conditions in which they live, learn, and work.



Head Start Leadership Team

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Natasha Lee

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Head Start Director

Education Manager

Asst Education Manager

Asst Education Manager

Family Services Manager

Health Manager

Asst Health Manager

Office Assistant

IT/Data Management

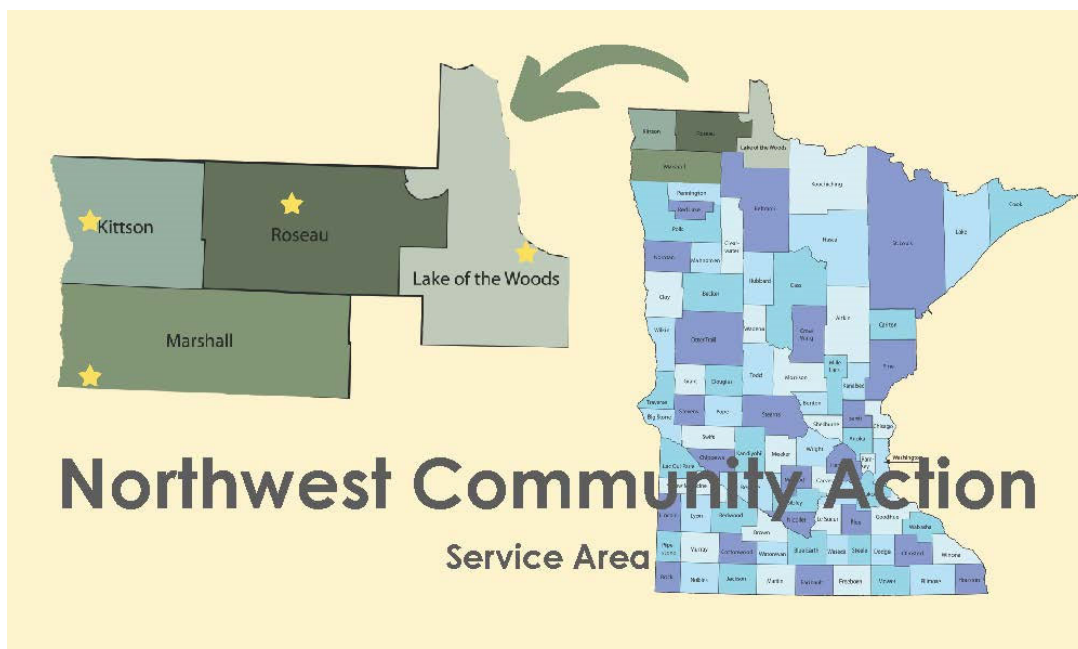
Head Start:

Serving families prenatal to age five

Northwest Community Action, Inc. (NWCA) provides comprehensive Head Start services to 299 children and their families in our four-county service area: Lake of the Woods, Roseau, Marshall, and Kittson counties. A total of 238 families were served, including those with children who have special needs or require individualized services. These services were offered in collaboration with local school districts.

Head Start services include home visits and centers located in area schools that provide nutritious breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. Additional offerings consist of medical screenings conducted in partnership with each county's nursing service, oral health screenings, and follow-up support. Head Start may assist with payment if a child is not covered by Medical Assistance (MA), MN Care, or other private insurance.

NWCA Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teachers. Parents have numerous opportunities to participate in educational activities within their service area. They can engage in Policy Council meetings both in person and virtually, attend local parent meetings, and collaborate with teachers during home visits. Additionally, conferences and home visits are conducted with each family throughout the year.



Five Year Program Goals

1. Northwest Community Action, Inc. (NWCA) Head Start supports children and families to develop skills to enhance their nutrition, health and well-being.
2. NWCA Head Start will support parents as lifetime learners and educators.
3. Children enrolled in NWCA Head Start will gain skills needed to transition successfully to their next developmentally appropriate stage.

Northwest Community Action, Inc. continues to provide Head Start services to families in Marshall, Roseau, Kittson, and Lake of the Woods counties in the Northwestern corner of Minnesota. Our service area is bounded west by North Dakota and north by Manitoba and Ontario. This service area covers 6,500 square miles, in which over 32,000 people reside. The communities range in size from 50 to 2600 people. Our entire service area is designated Medically Underserved, and 2 of our classrooms are located in areas of less than 1,000 individuals, and 50 percent of the families are eligible due to income guidelines.

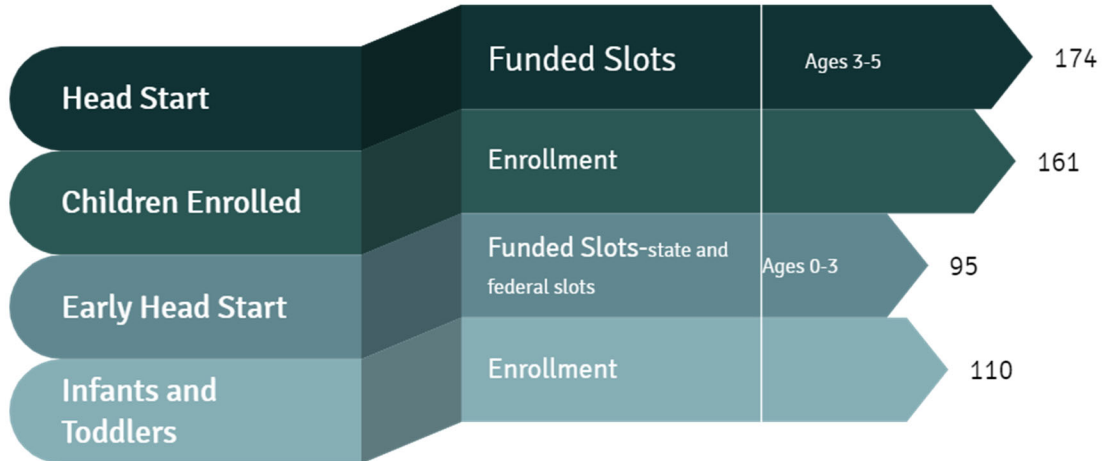
Policy Council

Parent committee meetings and the Policy Council encourage parents to be involved. This year's Policy Council comprises 10 Head Start elected parents who lead and make decisions about our program. The Policy Council participates in meetings with program management to evaluate and provide insight, encouragement, and community engagement. Our Policy Council members are valuable program members, and we appreciate their volunteer time and talents.



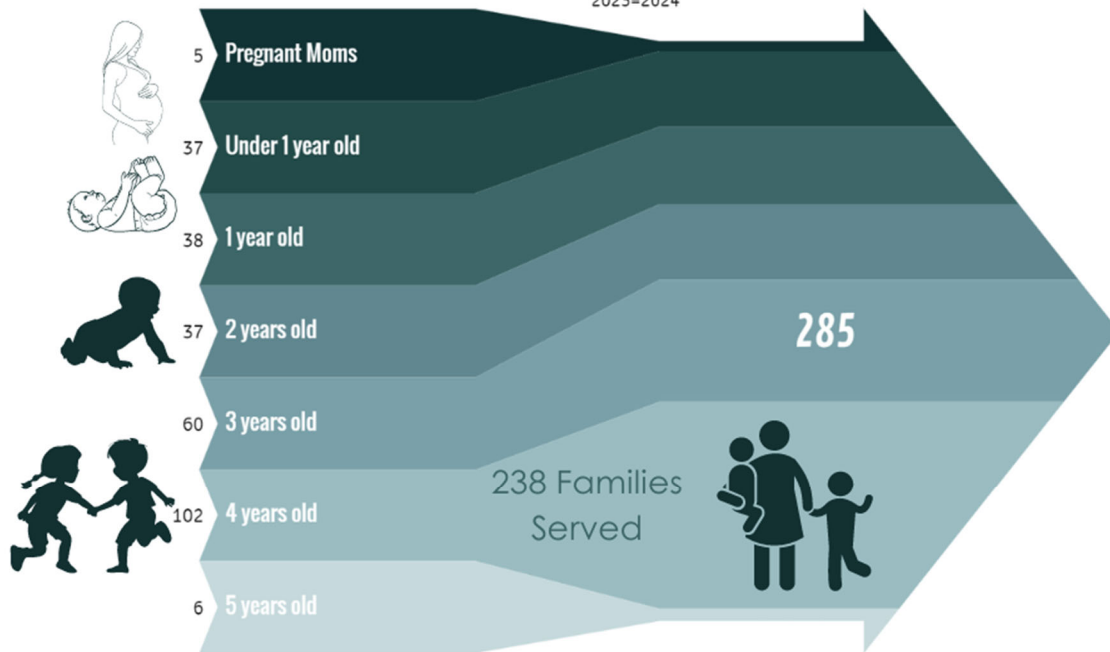
Who we serve

2023-2024 Head Start Enrollment



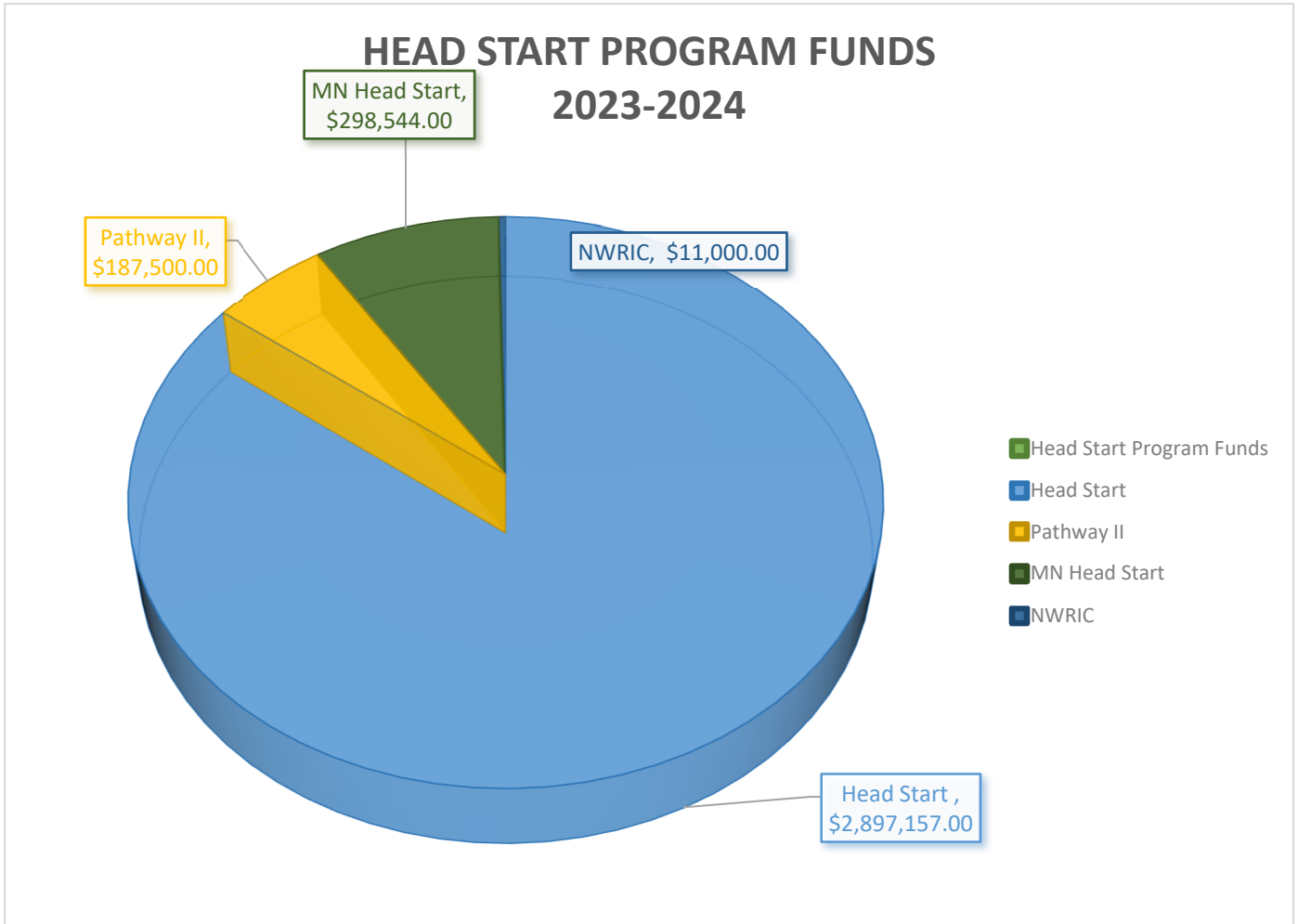
Head Start

2023=2024



Fiscal

Head Start is primarily funded with federal funds, and our programs receive additional support from state and local dollars.



Federal Expenditure

Head Start Expenditures 2023-2024 Program Year	Total
Personnel	\$1,670,479.54
Fringe Benefits	\$641,585.83
Travel/Travel-Out of Area/Vehicles	\$69,932.37
Supplies	\$121,542.89
Training	\$11,820.37
Total	\$2,515,361.00

Audit

Our recent financial audit was completed on August 28, 2024. NWCA has implemented the Corrective Action Plan noted in the agency's audit, completed on August 28, 2024.

2023-001 Proposition of Journal Entries

The agency's consolidated financial statement was materially misstated before adjustments were detected due to audit procedures. Corrective Action Taken – NWCA has hired a fee accountant

2023-002 Reporting

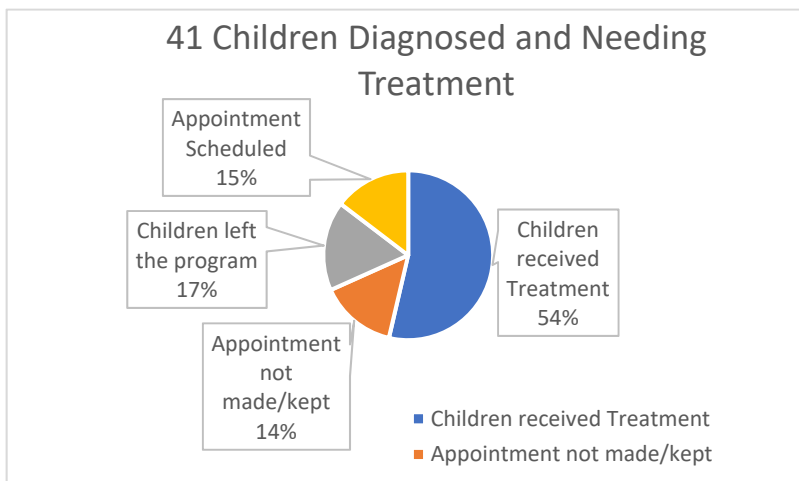
The agency is not in compliance with Uniform Guidance requirements Corrective Action Plan

2023-003 Reporting

The agency is not in compliance with reporting for Head Start Corrective Action Plan

Health

Our health-related services are well received by our families, with staff and community professionals collaborating to complete health and developmental screenings. During the screenings, children are assessed on dental, vision, and hearing tests and developmental screening tests designed to identify young children who need further testing or help with academic skills. Children have received early identification of hearing, dental, and vision needs.



This year, 159 children received oral health preventive care, and 151 completed a professional oral health examination. Tracking the recommendations for dental care indicates that 14% of the children with an indication for treatment had not completed their appointment.

NWCA Head Start children aged 3-5 years old have insurance and access to health care, and 100% of families that choose immunization are up to date. 97% of these children are currently in preventive and primary care. Of these children, 31% have been diagnosed with a chronic health condition.

Of families with children 0-3-years-old, 100% also have insurance and access to health care. 58% of the children are up to date for their preventive care, and 3% are documented with chronic health conditions. (NWCA 2023-2024 PIR Report)



Health connects to school readiness long before a child enters school. Healthy development continues to support learning throughout childhood and later life. "Health in the earliest years, actually beginning with the future mother's health before she becomes pregnant and lays the groundwork for a lifetime of well-being..." Children with healthy teeth are better able to eat, speak, and focus on learning. Daily oral health hygiene and ongoing care from oral health professionals help make sure that children have healthy teeth.

(<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/healthy-children-are-ready-learn>)

School Readiness

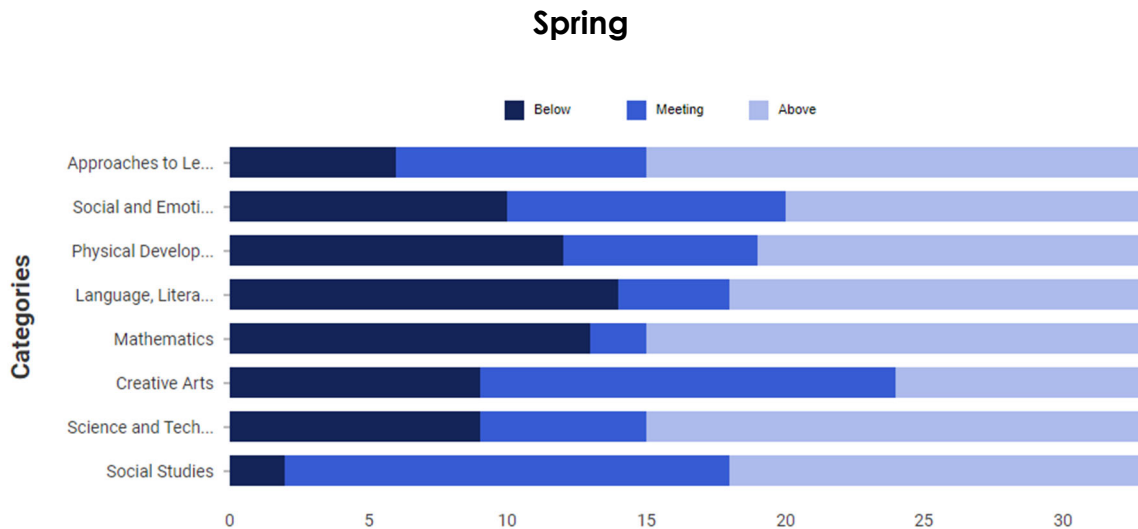
NWCA Head Start promotes parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Head Start parents have many opportunities to participate in educational activities in their service area. Parents participated in our Policy Council, and knowledge, attendance, and participation grew with each meeting. Parents attend local parent meetings and work with their teacher and their child on home visits. Additionally, four parent conferences are held with each family throughout the year.

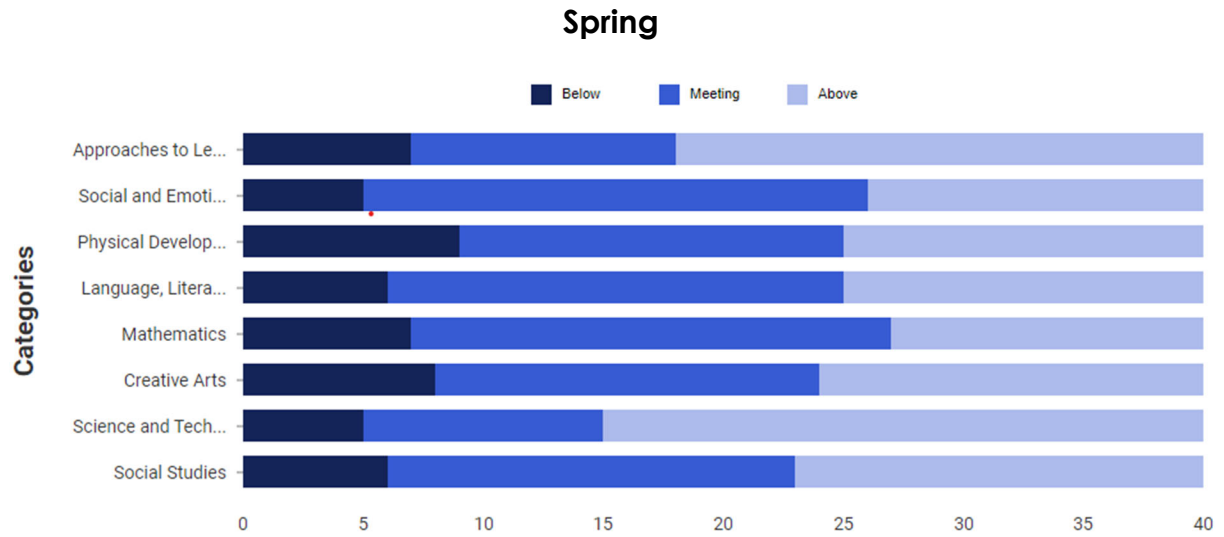
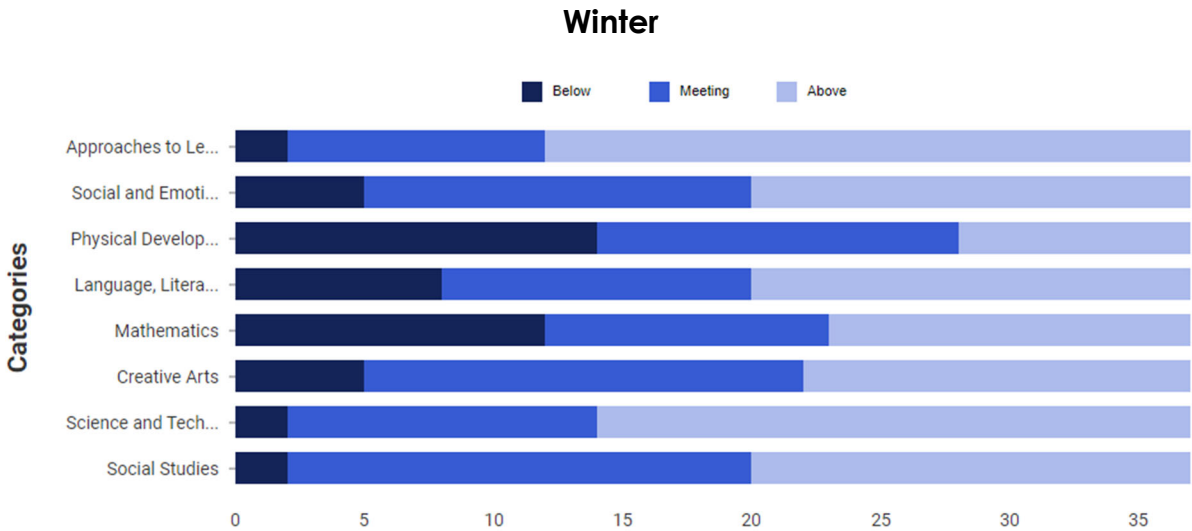
In Early Head Start, weekly (46 total) home visits of 1.5 hours are done with each enrolled child and a parent. The Buddy Group get-together is held twice a month for families in each local area, and activities, education, and information are provided for the children and parents. Parent engagement is emphasized, and literacy activities, budgeting education, mental health counseling, and crisis assistance are some parent support services that are provided.



Early Head Start continued to utilize the Child Observation Record Advantage (COR) for outcome and growth tracking. The COR works well in monitoring infant and toddler development, and during the 2023-2024 program year, there continued to be growth in all areas of development.

COR Advantage 2023-2024 Early Head Start

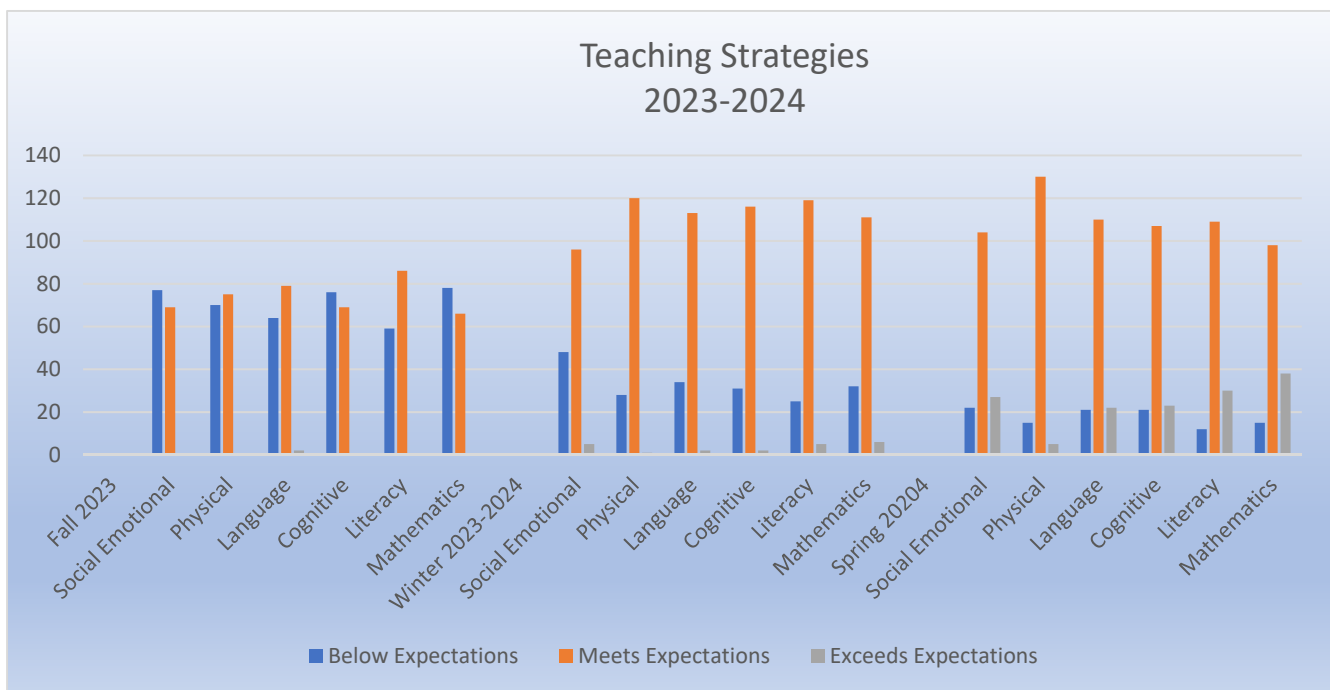




Early Head Start teachers utilize COR Advantage to provide a complete picture of each child's development. COR Advantage allows teachers to observe children's development through play and naturally occurring activities.



We continued our involvement in a project to aggregate child outcome data statewide using the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). The program documents child growth success and points to areas for improvement. The results will also help refine our efforts to optimize each child's development and transitions to kindergarten. During each school year, communications occur with kindergarten teachers in each school district to review expectations and discuss transition experiences. Developmental growth and concerns are shared as appropriate. Memorandums of Agreement outlining transition activities and mutual school readiness goals are developed with each school district. Overarching goals and the developmental growth of kindergarten-bound children are included below. There was growth from fall 2023 to spring 2024 in all assessment areas, including Social-Emotional, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.



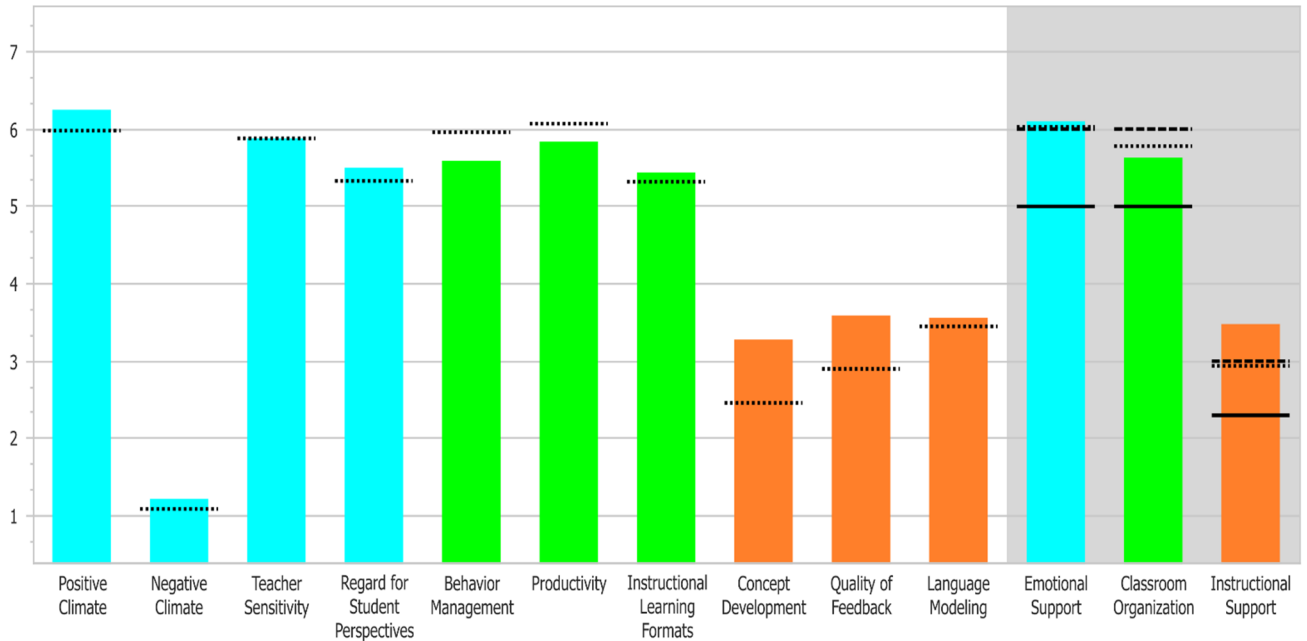
NWCA also participates in Minnesota Head Start Association (MNHSA) data collection and evaluation for School Readiness Outcomes. Participating with MNSA in this project provides information to showcase our efforts and identify areas of need. We analyze our assessment results across the state. For example, suppose a classroom shows higher or lower than average scores. In that case, we can compare across the state, dive deeper into our tools, classroom needs, and documentation, and act accordingly.

CLASS Observation and HOVRS provide teachers with constructive feedback and areas to focus on for training. Requests for Conscious Discipline and Mental Health training are examples of requests that have resulted from observations.



NORTHWEST COMMUNITY ACTION HEAD START 2023-2024 CLASS SCORE AVERAGE

2020 National Average
Quality Thresholds - - - -
Re-competition Level _____



School Readiness and Transitions

Home visitors supported five pregnant women this program year. The mother transitions to the parent role in Early Head Start while the baby becomes the enrollee. As EHS children turn three, they are transitioned into the Head Start center as space and eligibility allow.

Head Start supports the transition from the center to kindergarten. All children receive a summer packet of activity ideas for parent-child interactions, giving them a foundation for their Kindergarten experiences. Activities sent home include literacy, math, social, creative arts, fine motor, gross motor, and science exploration.

Head Start children visit the kindergarten classrooms in preparation for the next school year. Kindergarten teachers introduce themselves to the children throughout the year. They may speak to parents at spring parent meetings because the Head Seals in the cafeteria are eaten at the same time as the kindergarten. Hence, the Head Start children are familiar with the kindergarten teachers.

At 30 months, home visitors and parents develop a transition plan for each enrolled child. The Busy Buddy meetings are often held in our Head Start centers, which provides additional opportunities for children to visit and become comfortable in the classroom.



School Readiness Goals

School readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs.

- It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.
- Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Physical Development and Health

1. Children will acquire and maintain a high level of physical health, including being up to date on physical and dental checkups and immunizations.
2. Children will demonstrate an increased ability to care for their own needs appropriately. They will become more independent and resourceful, getting needs met.
3. Children will demonstrate increasing control of large muscles for movement, navigation and balance consistent with their chronological and developmental level.
4. Children will demonstrate increasing fine motor strength, coordination and agility for use in self-care, manipulation of materials and exploring their environment.

Social Emotional Development

1. Children will be able to manage feelings appropriately and self-regulate with regard to their emotions, attention span and behavior.
2. Children will demonstrate positive, appropriate social relationships with family members, peers and other significant adults.

Approaches to Learning

1. Children will demonstrate a positive approach to learning through persistence, attentiveness, engagement and curiosity.
2. Children will show an increasing ability to express themselves through sound, movement, visual media and role play.

Language and Literacy

1. Children will demonstrate increasing skills in comprehension and use of more complex and varying vocabulary.
2. Children will demonstrate increasing proficiency in using language to communicate needs, wants and for self-expression.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. Children will use math skills in everyday routines as appropriate for their developmental level with increasing competency in counting, comparing, relating and problem solving.
2. Children will engage in exploring their environment through observation, imitation, manipulation, and curiosity.
3. Children will demonstrate skills to solve problems, find multiple solutions, and answer questions.

Family Engagement



Head Start centers hosted two parent meetings; of the four parent conferences, at least two are scheduled at the family's home. In Early Head Start, in addition to the home visits, we host Busy Buddy groups twice a month.

Our families are invited to volunteer during events and participate in our Policy Council. The Policy Council had eleven active members participate in this program year. NWCA had 287 volunteers in our program.

Professional and motivational speakers are provided, including our Mental Health Consultant, Health Professionals, and Mitch Factors. Some activities include birdhouse making, gardening, and visiting farms, firehouses, and post offices.



Partnering with families includes setting goals on family outcomes. The most common goals were financial stability, school readiness, and transition support. Families made gains of 63% in their family outcomes

