

Mountain Projects, Inc.
Head Start and Early Head Start
Annual Report
2024-2025



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Mission Statement

Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start program is dedicated to providing income eligible children and families a comprehensive developmentally appropriate program that is culturally sensitive, nurturing, safe, in which children, families, and staff are inspired to reach their fullest potential.

Education Philosophy

Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start program's philosophy focuses on promoting school readiness through positive social and educational skill building. We are a comprehensive program for children ages 0-5, focusing on providing children and their families with educational, social/emotional, health, and nutritional opportunities throughout the classroom environment. Teachers establish patterns and expectations of success for each child in our program that will ultimately create a climate of confidence for present and future learning efforts as well as their overall development. Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start is an inclusive program for all children including but not limited to children with specialized services.

Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start staff is committed to providing families with encouragement and support in order for the parents to be their child's first and foremost teacher by encouraging literacy activities at home in addition to developing positive educational experiences so they can have a leadership role in their children's lives including future educational experiences. It is our belief that each child comes to Head Start bringing their own strengths, unique experiences, and different cultural backgrounds, ensuring that every child is treated with love and respect at all times. The Head Start teaching staff will utilize these assets as a foundation base to impact the future through every child we teach.



I am pleased to present the 2024-2025 Head Start Annual Report. This report contains information about our program, services, and this year's accomplishments.

During 2024-2025, Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start served a total of 133 children in seven classrooms operating 6.5 hours a day. Three of our classes participated in NC Pre-K, a state-sponsored school readiness program for 4-year-olds.

Our Early Head Start program served 67 children in seven classrooms operating 7 hours a day. We offer the center-based Early Head Start program for 32 children in Haywood County and 24 children in Jackson County.

All of our centers are licensed and have a 5 Star rating, which is the best in quality, teacher qualifications and curriculum. Our comprehensive program provides services to our families in the areas of Family Partnerships, Transition, Education, Health and Nutrition, Intervention, and Mental Health.



Christie Paxton
Head Start Director
Mountain Projects, Inc.

PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

The governing body shall have legal and fiscal responsibility for the Head Start program. Mountain Projects Board of Directors along with Policy Council works together to govern the Head Start/EHS programs. They are responsible for the direction of the Head Start program including: program design and operation, long and short-term planning goals and objectives. Policy Council representatives also work with the administrative staff to conduct the self-assessment yearly.

Head Start program leadership consists of three key entities: the governing body, Policy Council, and management staff. The governing body assumes legal and fiscal responsibility for the program. The Policy Council sets direction. Management staff oversee day-to-day operations. Together, they are a powerful force that provides leadership and strategic direction.

When innovative leadership, strong management systems, and well-designed services are working together, quality child and family outcomes are the results.

Parent representatives were elected by parents at each center to be Policy Council representatives. Members received orientation in September and annual Shared Governance Training in October. Policy Council meetings were held through Zoom based on parents preference.

Board of Directors

Board Chair – Rev. Carl Matthews

Vice Chair – Chris Weatherford

Secretary – Brandon Rogers

Treasurer – Bucky Dykes

Policy Council

Policy Council Chair: Cassie Rogers

Secretary: Savannah Pressley

Administrative Leadership

Executive Director – Patsy Davis/Si Simmons

CFO – Joni Elkins

Head Start Director – Christie Paxton

ERSEA Coordinator – Missy Gibson

Education/Mental Health Coordinator – Tabitha Justice

Health/Nutrition Coordinator – Laura Passmore



Head Start
 ...a fun place to learn
 and play

<p style="text-align: center;">Haywood County</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Patricia S. Turner Head Start/EHS 35 Peach Bloom Drive Canton, NC 828-648-6637 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Edwina G. Hall Head Start/EHS 384 Jones Cove Road Clyde, NC 828-627-0060 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Waynesville Head Start Head Start/EHS 489 Pigeon Street Waynesville, NC 828-564-2516 </p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Jackson County</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Fairview Head Start Head Start/EHS 453 Fairview Road Sylva, NC 828-586-4245 or 828-586-2528 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Kneedler Child Development Head Start/EHS 239 East University Way WCU Cullowhee, NC 828-293-2000 </p>	

Serving Haywood and Jackson Counties

For application information, please contact:

Missy Gibson at 456-4546

Funded Enrollment

EHS – 56 children

HS Children -121

Children Served

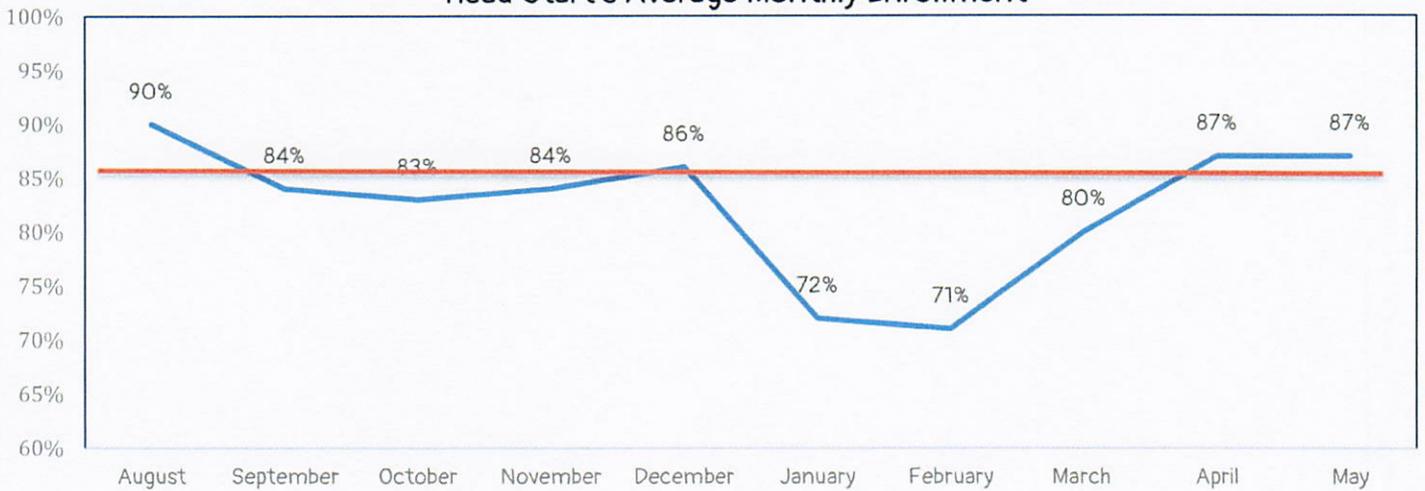
1 Year Olds
29

2 Year Olds
43

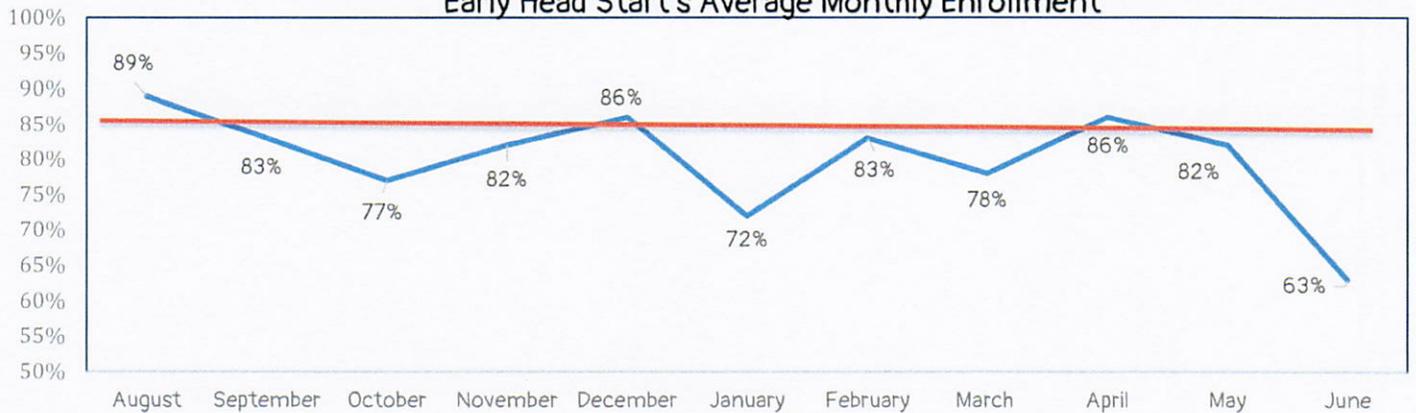
3 Year Olds
72

4 Year Olds
56

Head Start's Average Monthly Enrollment

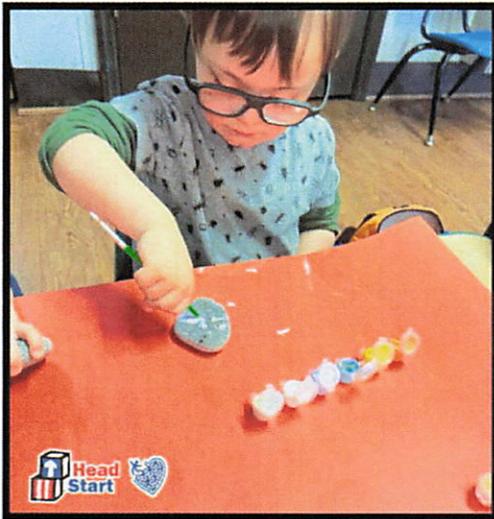


Early Head Start's Average Monthly Enrollment

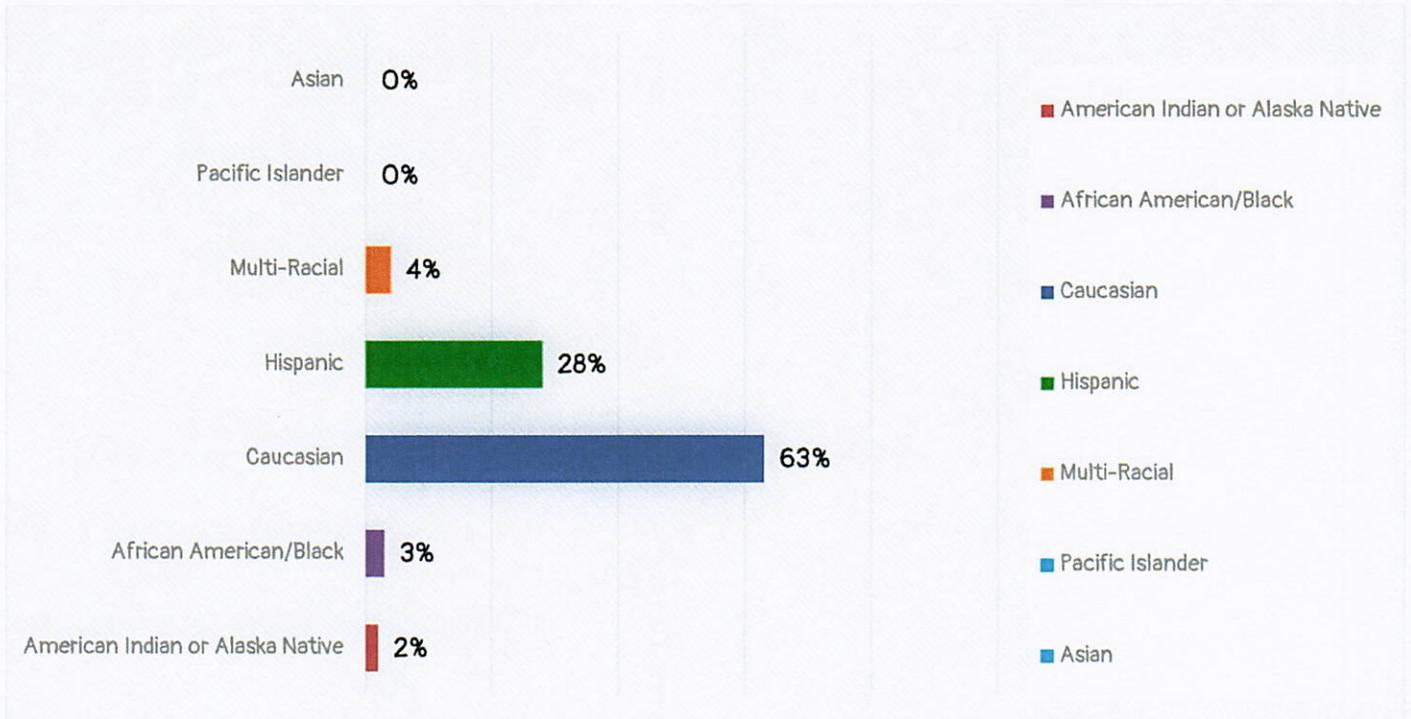


Eligibility

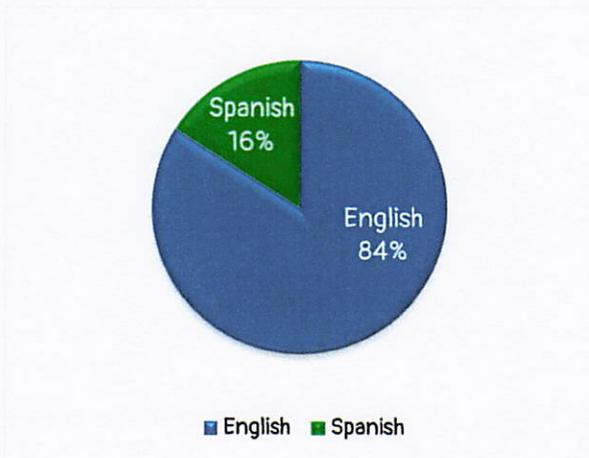
<p>Head Start's Poverty Guidelines are used to determine income eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start families.</p> <p>Families who meet the income guidelines are eligible for the Head Start program. Children experiencing homelessness and families receiving public assistance such as SSI or TANF are also eligible. Foster children are eligible regardless of income. Over income families are placed based on eligibility.</p>	Type of Assistance	EHS	HS
	100% Poverty	10	31
	Public Assistance	46	71
	Foster Child	1	5
	Homeless	4	11
	100-130%	3	6
	Over Income	1	13



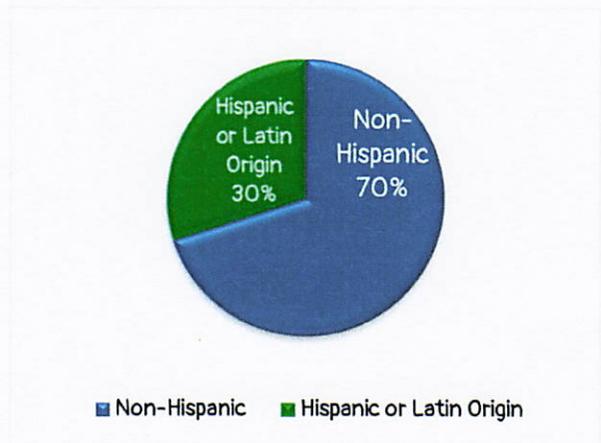
Profile of the Children in Head Start/EHS Race



Language



Ethnicity



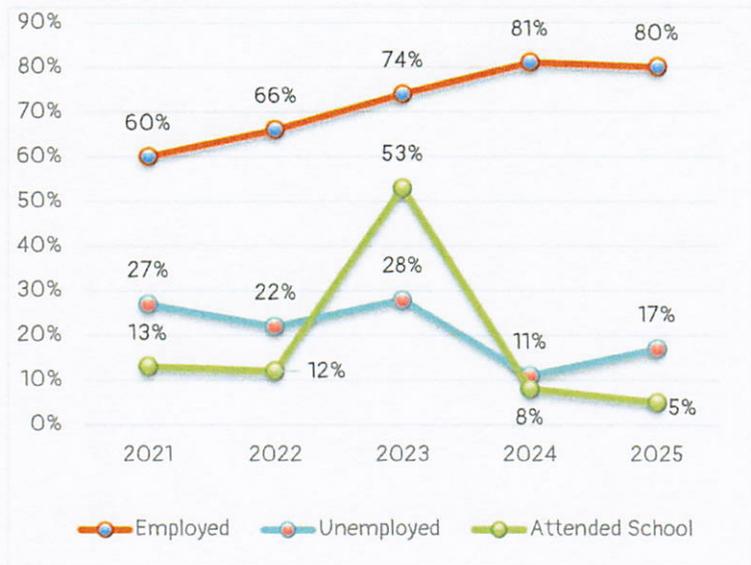


Employment/School

189 families were served during the 2024-2025 program year. Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start program served **90** two-parent households and **99** one-parent households.

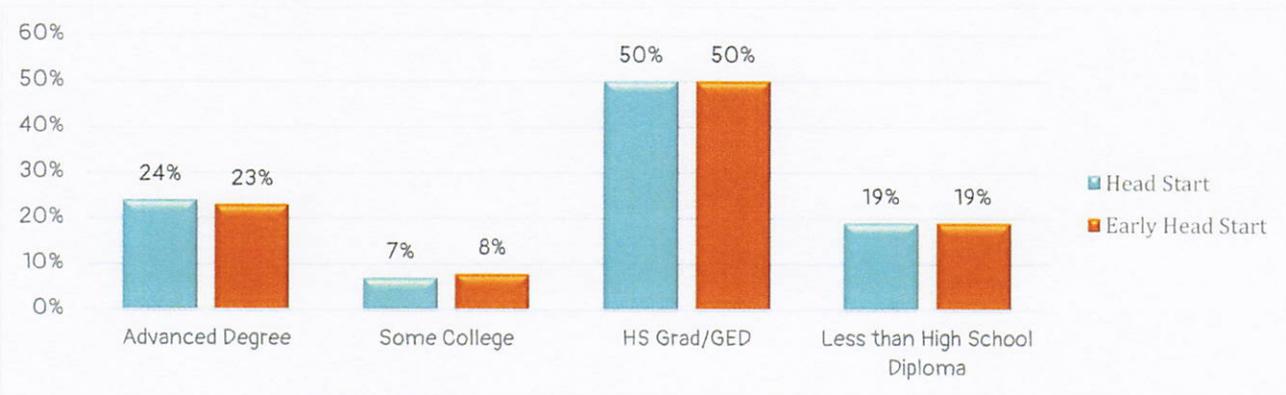
One-parent households increased by 1% from program year 2023-2024. Based on data collected in 2023-2024 to 2024-2025.

Family Dynamics



Note: A new tracking form was implemented in 2022-2023 program year to track number of families attending higher educational institutions. This new data form shows a decrease in parents attending higher institutions to further their education due to inflation.

Education Levels of Families

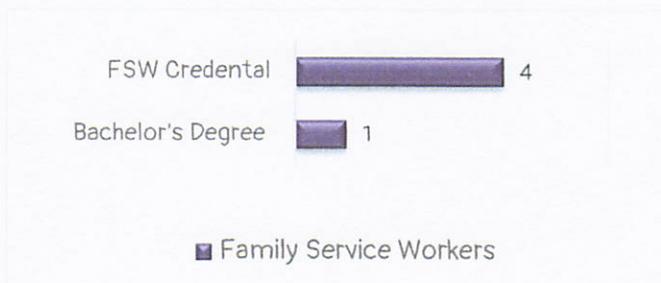
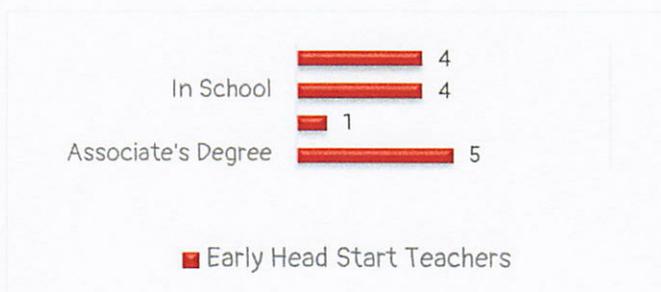
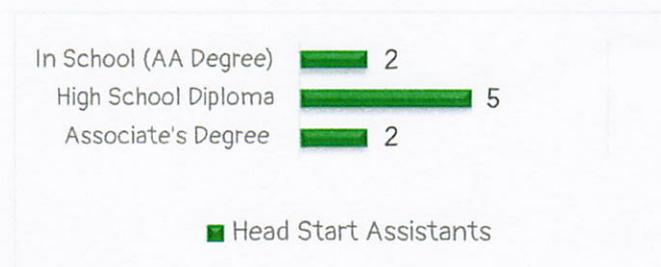
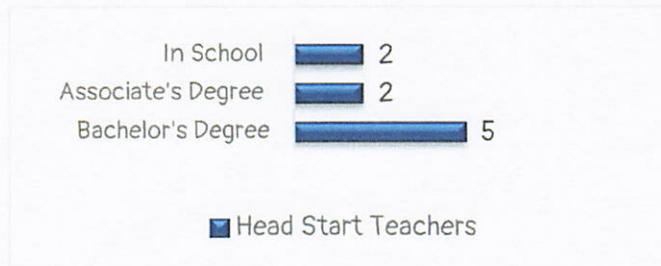


Head Start Qualifications

Mountain Projects, Inc. provides one lead teacher and one assistant in each of the seven opened Head Start classrooms. Center Supervisors are housed at each of the five sites to provide mentoring, and support to all teaching staff.

Early Head Start classrooms have two co-teachers in each of the six classrooms.

Family Service Workers are also housed in each of the five sites throughout Haywood and Jackson counties. The education criteria for Family Service Workers is a degree from an accredited university in social work or human services or a Family Services credential which is offered through North Carolina Community Action Association through a virtual platform.



School Readiness

Why is School Readiness Important?

Children's experiences and skills and characteristics they develop during the first five years of life are critically important to a child's lifelong development. For children to reach their full potential during these early years, adults must provide an environment and experiences that promote growth and learning which influence brain development, language acquisition, problem solving, reasoning, social skills and emotional health.

School readiness to Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start Program means each child enters kindergarten ready to engage and benefit from their early learning environment and experiences. Each child is unique and an active learner, ready and excited to learn. Each family, teachers, school personnel, and community partners work together to provide developmental opportunities and experiences that incorporate the "whole" family in the educational experience as they move into the next phase of their educational process.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's definition of school readiness along with North Carolina Division of Child Development includes:

Ready children are physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively healthy.

Ready schools involve parents in their child's education, transition all students into public, private or charter schools and across grades and provide quality instruction and alignment from preschool to grade 3.

Ready families are healthy, educated, safe and stable and provide supportive environments rich with opportunities to learn and grow.

Ready communities are clean, and connected to the mainstream and offer resources, services, and support for families of young children.

Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start program utilizes Creative Curriculum, a researched-based curriculum which is fully aligned with Head Start Early Learning Framework and North Carolina's Foundations for Early Learning and Development.

School Readiness Goals

School readiness to Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start Program means each child enters kindergarten ready to engage and benefit from their early learning environment and experiences. Each child is unique and an active learner, ready and excited to learn. Each family, teachers, school personnel, and community partners work together to provide developmental opportunities and experiences that incorporate the "whole" family in the educational experience as they move into the next phase of their educational process.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

- ❖ Children will develop personal relationships with peers by engaging in cooperative play
- ❖ Children will increase their ability to control emotions internally and externally with self-regulation
- ❖ Children will increase their ability to take care of own needs appropriately

COGNITION

- ❖ Children will use a variety of strategies to problem solve, gather information and make predictions
- ❖ Children will develop an understanding of numbers and quantities within the classroom environment and individualized activities.
- ❖ Children will start to associate quantities with written numerals through hands-on activities.
- ❖ Children will be able to understand simple patterns through small and large group setting and individualizations

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- ❖ Children will increase vocabulary to express wants, needs, ideas, feelings, and to relate information and experiences.
- ❖ Children will increase their use of books in everyday routines to acquire literacy skills.
- ❖ Children will demonstrate knowledge of the alphabet by identifying and naming letters randomly.
- ❖ Children will demonstrate emergent writing skills by experimenting with writing tools and materials.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

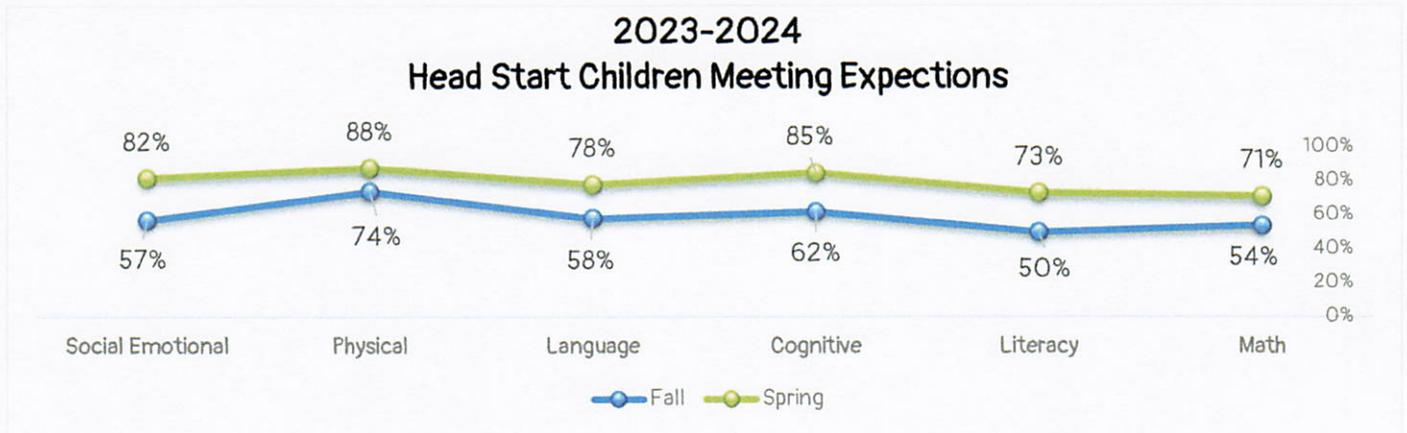
- ❖ Children will increase gross motor skills by demonstrating balance, strength and motor coordination for a wide-range of physical activities
- ❖ Children will increase fine motor skills by demonstrating hand strength and dexterity for controlling small muscles.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

- ❖ Children will increase their ability to begin and finish tasks with direct and indirect instruction

School Readiness Outcomes

Teaching Strategies Gold is a standardized ongoing assessment system to evaluate each child's development and progress. Teachers observe, and document each child's progress three times a year. Teachers share each child's progress through parent-teacher conferences or home visits.



Based on the 2024-2025 data, Mountain Projects, Inc., Head Start and Early Head Start's overall scores in social/emotional, cognitive and mathematical development are areas that the program needs to adjust teaching practices so every child can reach their potential.

Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start's Administrative staff have analyzed the data and will provide professional development activities during pre-service and throughout the 2024-2025 program year.

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

Transition Activities

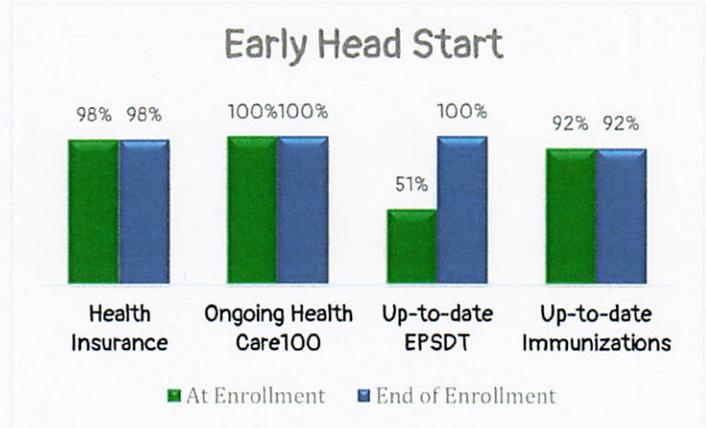
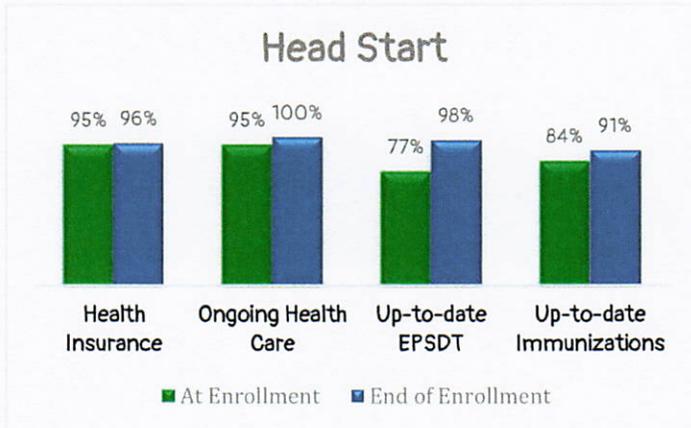
- ❖ Education Coordinator worked with teaching staff to complete portfolios to be sent to each child's prospective school
- ❖ Kindergarten readiness parent meetings were held for parents at each center.
- ❖ IEP Transition meetings were held for children with special needs



53 children transitioned to kindergarten

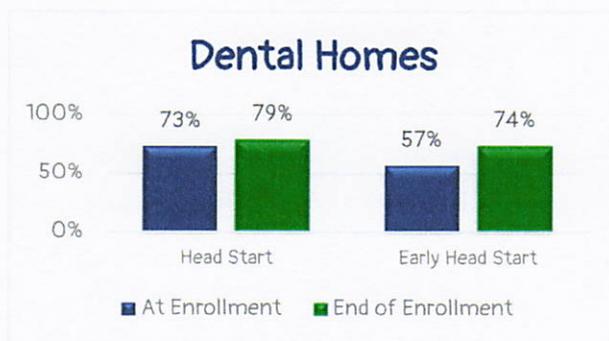
Head Start Comprehensive Services

Health Data



- Screenings are completed within the first 45 days for newly enrolled children. Family Service Workers work diligently with parents to ensure physicals, immunizations, and dental screenings are completed within 90 days based on Head Start Performance Standards.
- Growth assessments are completed twice a year to measure each child's height and weight.

Dental



Preventive Dental Care

- Head Start: **62%** received dental screenings in 2024-2025 program year.
- Most dental practices do not accept Medicaid, and we have struggled to find dental homes for children who are enrolled in our program.

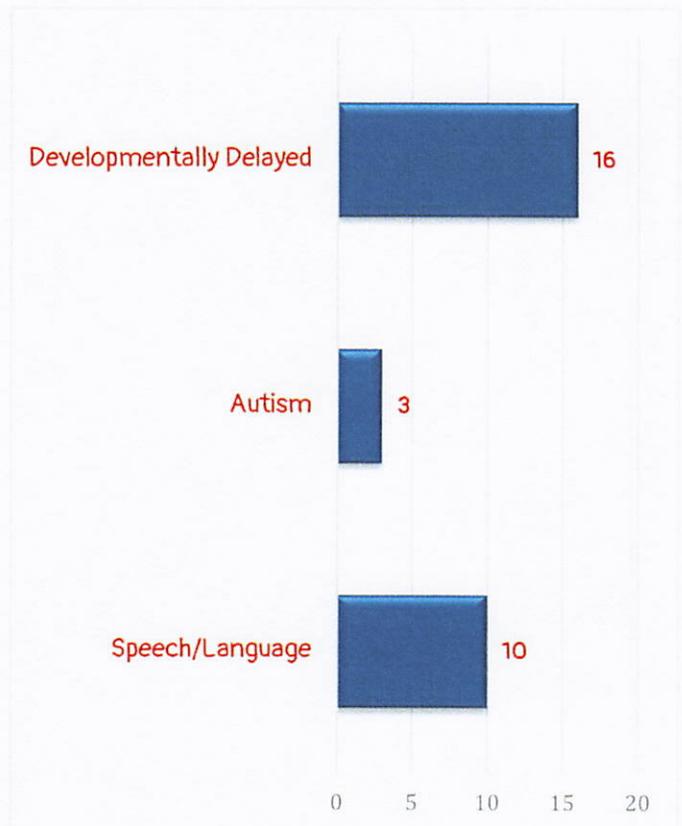
Mental Health Services

Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start program contracts with KARE (Kids Advocacy Resource Effort) to provide services including classroom and individual observations, trainings for staff, parent consultations and referrals. KARE also provided ongoing Mental Health consultations to families and staff.

Twenty-four children were provided with mental health consultation throughout the program year.

Disability Services

Head Start Disability Services by Category



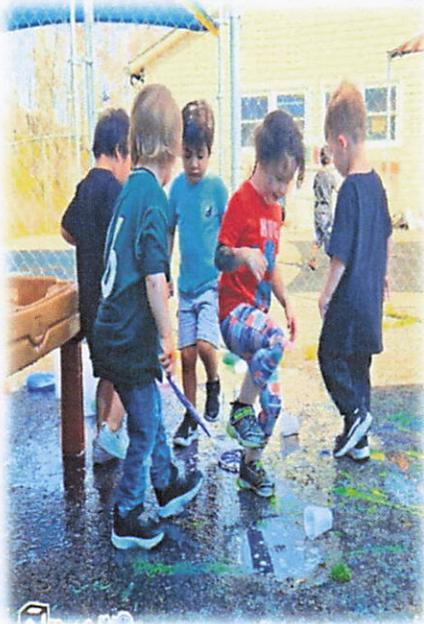
Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start program has MOUs with Haywood and Jackson County schools and the CDSA (Child Development Service Agency) to provide evaluations and services to children. Collaboration with outside agencies is vital to all children enrolled in our program to receive specialized services to meet their individual needs based on North Carolina criteria for special needs.

In 2024-2025 program year, **22%** of Head Start children and **31%** of Early Head Start children have been determined eligible for special education and related services.

Services for Families

A strong parent-child relationship is essential to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being. When families face challenges that cause stress, including poverty, homelessness, pandemics, natural disasters, and job loss, their health and wellness can be negatively impacted. Family Service Workers work closely with all parents to connect them with resources and services within our community. Each Family Service Worker is assigned to a center to be able to build positive relationships with each family. Goals are set at the beginning of the year with the Family Partnership Agreements and continue to work with parents throughout the year. Immediate needs are addressed at enrollment to ensure all families are given information and resources and followed up throughout the year.

Parent Engagement



All Head Start and Early Head Start parents spent time completing home activities with their children. Parent Activities are an extension of classroom instruction. Some activities included matching, sorting, counting, reading to their child, etc.

In Haywood County, there were 148 volunteers who provided 25,455 hours of service.

In Jackson County, there were 126 volunteers who provided 13,942 hours of service.



151 families received crisis intervention services, including food, clothing or shelter



185 families received parenting classes through Ready Rosie, the parent curriculum

Thank you



Agencies and places who volunteered time, services, and donations to the program during the 2024-2025 program year.

- ❖ Community Donations of Food and Clothing for Head Start
- ❖ Anna's Kiddie Korner
- ❖ Balsam Mountain Preserve provided food boxes at Christmas for Jackson County
- ❖ Sylva Shopping Support – provided food boxes for Jackson County children sponsored Children at Thanksgiving
- ❖ Long's Chapel United Methodist Church
- ❖ Mountain Federal Credit Union
- ❖ Crabtree United Methodist Church
- ❖ Christmas Connection
- ❖ Blue Ridge Books
- ❖ Haywood County Rotary Groups
- ❖ Private Sponsors
- ❖ Healthy Blue
- ❖ United Christian Ministries

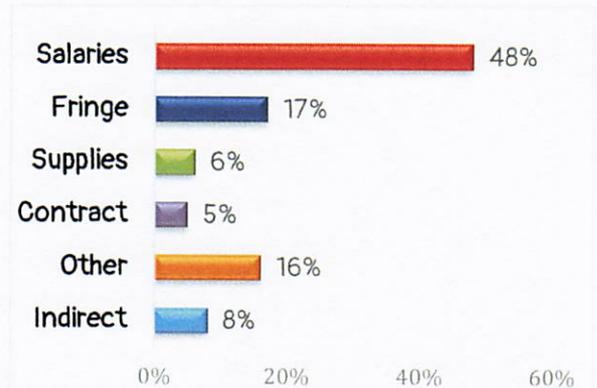
Funding Sources

Head Start	\$1,999,146
Early Head Start	\$1,259,725
NC Pre-K	\$99,173
Subsidy (Wrap-Around)	\$98,529
CACFP Reimbursement	\$186,322
Dogwood Foundation Grant	\$338,219
Total Income	\$3,981,114

Program Expenditures

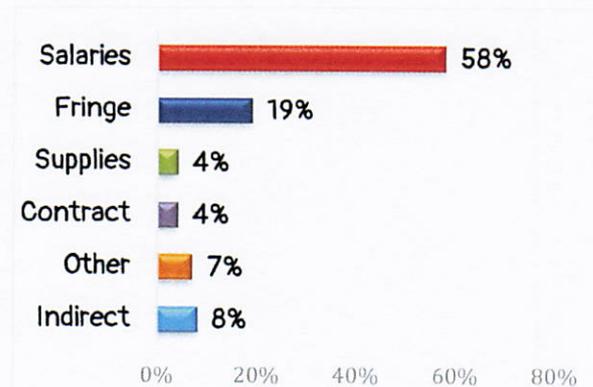
Head Start

Budget Line Item	Budgeted	Expenditures
Salaries	\$1,008,428	\$856,730
Fringe Benefits	\$423,539	\$315,577
Supplies	\$101,063	\$100,283
Contractual	\$74,843	\$95,914
Other	\$224,199	\$297,774
Indirect Costs	\$167,074	\$144,206
TOTAL	\$1,999,146	\$1,810,484



Early Head Start

Budget Line Item	Budgeted	Expenditures
Salaries	\$711,791	\$661,968
Fringe Benefits	\$298,953	\$224,857
Supplies	\$54,437	\$48,759
Contractual	\$29,682	\$50,550
Other	\$54,510	\$83,672
Indirect Costs	\$110,352	\$99,117
TOTAL	\$1,259,725	\$1,168,923



Professional Development

Head Start		Early Head Start	
Budgeted Amount	Expenditures	Budgeted Amount	Expenditures
\$20,979	\$19,717	\$19,223	\$15,093

Public Funding

Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start Program collaborated with NC PRE-K Program and received \$99,173 in funding for 20 children in three (3) NC Pre-K /Head Start classrooms. This also includes Hurricane Helene funding.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a program that is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture. The purpose of CACFP is to improve the nutritional quality of meals served to children in child care centers and child care homes, and adults in day care. The program improves the nutritional quality of meals and snacks in three ways:

1. Setting requirements for the kind and amount of food to be served.
2. Providing money (reimbursement) to eligible programs and providers for meals that meet requirements.
3. Requiring periodic training and monitoring for staff in participating organizations.

As greater numbers of young children are in child care, the CACFP program becomes more important in helping to assure that infants, toddlers, and young children are served nutritious meals and snacks as part of a healthy lifestyle. Mountain Projects, Inc. Head Start program was reimbursed an established percentage for every meal (breakfast and lunch) and every snack that we served to enrolled children. For 2023-2024, we received a total of \$172,745 in subsidies for meals/snacks served to enrolled children.

Non-Federal Match

2024-2025	MATCH REQUIRED	MATCHED EARNED
Head Start & Early Head Start	\$776,567	\$776,567

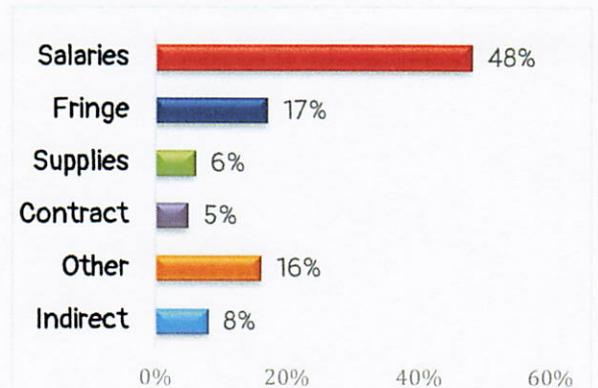
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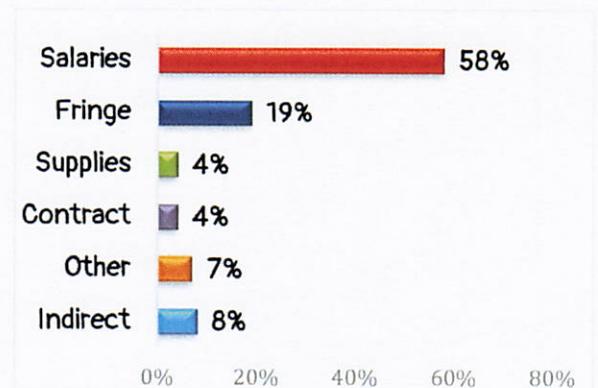
Head Start

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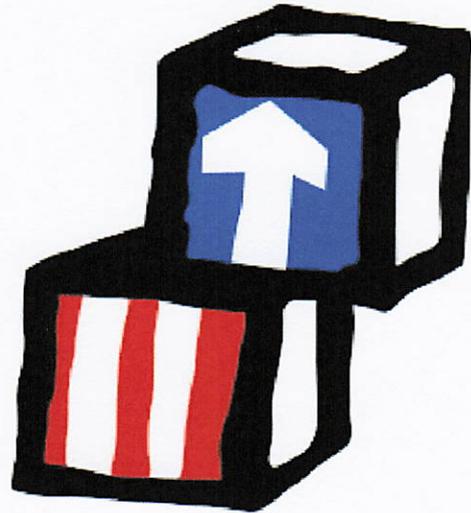


Audit

Mountain Projects Inc. audit is presented each December at the governing board meeting. A copy of the final audit is published on Mountain Projects Inc. website.

Did you know...

The Head Start Logo
tells a story.



- ❖ The two squares represent early childhood by suggesting building blocks.
- ❖ The arrangement of the blocks represents stairs by which this can be accomplished.
- ❖ The vertical stripes represent the child and parent.
- ❖ The arrow pointing upward represents the direction out of poverty and on to the future.
- ❖ The colors red, white, and blue represent the United States and the many opportunities it provides for its citizens.