



**SKAGIT/ISLAND**  
**HEAD START**

SERVING SKAGIT & ISLAND COUNTIES

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023 / 2024



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## **Skagit/Island Head Start,**

a Skagit Valley College program, provides high-quality, happy, early-learning environments for children aged birth to five. We provide culturally responsive services to the entire family. We understand that each child's first and most important learning happens in the home, so we strive to work in partnership with families to ensure we are reaching the best possible outcomes for each child and family.

This report underscores key aspects of our activities during the school year 2023/2024. Throughout this period, the lingering effects of the COVID pandemic persisted, with an ongoing influence on our program operations. Even though we kept our teaching quality high during this time, we have continued to have trouble finding enough staff, which affected how many children we could enroll. To address this, we began several initiatives including program adjustments, offering more professional development, focusing on staff well-being, and making the hiring process easier by working with Human Resources.

These efforts are paying off! We have been more successful in hiring, which means we're gradually getting back to full enrollment. Our program adjustments during this time have allowed us to focus on rebuilding our team and making sure the children and families we serve get consistent, high-quality learning experiences.

The Community Assessment, which we updated for 2023/2024, did not change dramatically from previous years. However, it did highlight some important trends. It showed that transitional Pre-K and ECEAP programs are affecting the balance of the number of 3- and 4-year-olds who apply for Head Start and are seeking childcare, which could impact our waitlists in the future. The assessment also confirmed that even though inflation has slowed down a bit, prices are still high, and housing remains incredibly expensive. The high cost of living continues to be a major challenge for many families in our community. Food and housing insecurity are still the biggest worries for families, and the lack of affordable rentals and the excessive cost of buying a home make housing one of the community's most pressing needs. Perhaps in some part due to these stresses, child and family mental health remains a concern.

We are incredibly thankful for our dedicated staff. They have been flexible, resilient, and committed to our children and families throughout these challenging times. Their hard work is truly appreciated. SIHS is excited to be back on track and continuing to provide essential early learning services to our community.

Mary Ellen Lykins

*Mary Ellen Lykins*

Director

## Director:

- Mary Ellen Lykins

## Policy Council:

- Salomon Mbouombouo: 2023/24 Chairperson & Burlington Alternate
- Jessica Wells: 2023/24 Secretary & Jefferson Alternate
- De'Angela Anthony: 2023/24 Vice Chairperson & Pac Place Representative
- Brittany Schnug
- Natalie Mami: Oak Harbor Hand in Hand Representative
- Adelina Willburg: Burlington EHS Representative
- Ciara Parnell: Burlington PHS Representative
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- Brisenia Moore: SW EHS Representative
- Nicolette Tay: Oak Harbor Early Learning Center Alternate
- Stefanie Barragan: West View Representative
- Ismelda Menjivar Cartagena: West View Representative
- Erica Hernandez: Jefferson Representative
- Monique Reyes: Jefferson EHS Representative
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- Cadence Kinnee: Pac Place HB Representative

## Governing Board:

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- Ms. Mariko Doerner Vice Chair
- Ms. Kathryn Bennett
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- Ms. Flora Perez-Lucatero
- Dr. Christopher Villa SVC President & Executive Secretary to the Board of Trustees

## Donors

- B&J Sheridan
- Jerry H. Walton Foundation
- Richard & Eleanor Mallchok
- Moccasin Lake Foundation
- Norcliffe Foundation
- Skagit Community Foundation

## Mission

Building strong foundations for lifelong learning  
through family-centered, child-focused partnerships.

## Vision

We support children, families and each other to build resilience, strength and a sense of belonging to grow into their true potential and flourish. We join with families to make a positive difference in all of our lives and in the communities where we live, work, and learn.

## Values

In our work together, Skagit/Island Head Start embraces a shared commitment to these values in an integrated and measurable way:

**STRONG, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:** Creating a culture of belonging. Connecting staff children, families, and communities where all voices matter; honored through open, honest communication, and taking time to understand and build mutual regard.

**OPEN, ENGAGING COLLABORATION:** Cooperation, open-minded give and take, flexibility, shared decision making, engaging diverse talents and resources with a focus on common goals and passions.

**PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY:** Consistency, honesty, sharing thoughts, personal responsibility, confidentiality and professionalism.

**RESPECT AND ACCEPTANCE FOR ALL:** Recognizing, valuing, encouraging and supporting community with compassion for individual differences and perspectives, while demonstrating cultural competence.

**HIGH STANDARDS OF QUALITY:** Best practice at the core of decisions, professional development and personal growth, accountability and high expectations that are clearly understood.



## KEY OBSERVATIONS/INSIGHTS

Each year we assess our community data and the needs and circumstances of families in our program, to determine if our program structure and decision-making address those unique conditions. We use this data to help shape our future programming. The pandemic has had long-term impacts on the community that aren't necessarily obvious. Looking at the available data, as with the year prior, we see that childcare availability and stability, food insecurity, housing, employment, and mental health and behavioral impacts seem to be the main stressors on children and families. Many of the observations we included in our prior community assessment can be seen in this current year.

In summary:

- Staffing is a huge challenge - unemployment numbers are low, but businesses cannot fill positions which is making it hard to resume normal operations.
- Childcare availability has been unreliable - with staffing challenges and regular closures due to exposure, families have had to scramble to find alternative coverage - both locally and nationally.
- Childcare availability has decreased - our service areas lost childcare slots during the pandemic and many of these slots have not been replaced.
- Childcare for younger children seems to be of the most need.
- Food and economic stability remain a challenge.
- Inflation vs income continues to be a problem - goods are far more expensive and it seems this will continue.
- Housing stability has not improved - rent has continued to increase steeply and families are cost-burdened.
- Professionals have seen impacts on mental health for both children and families, and programs have seen this affect children's behaviors and also their well-being. The mental health of both adults and children has seen concerning changes towards more anxiety and depression.
- Opioid overdoses are alarmingly high.



This report covers the time period from September 2023 - August 2024. This was our third year of providing in-person services since the pandemic.

The program requested permission to reduce enrollment for program year 2023/2024 due to ongoing recruitment challenges. Cumulative and average monthly enrollment remained below average. This was due to staffing shortages hindering our ability to fully staff centers. We were unable to enroll more children, as we could not reliably and consistently ensure centers could stay open without backup staff to cover illness, breaks and to safely staff centers.

Average Monthly Enrollment

52.4%

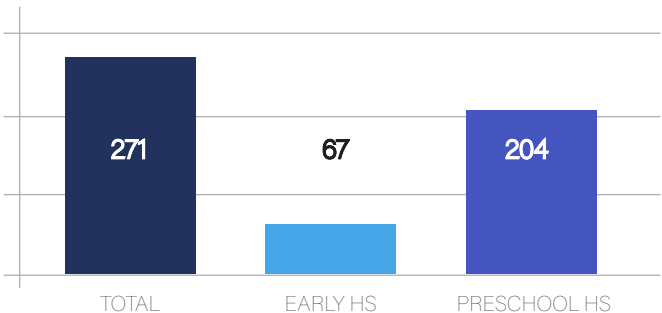
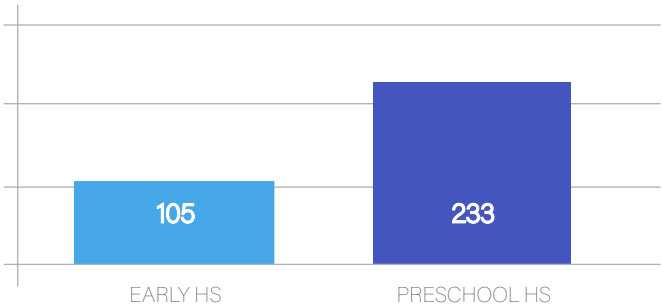


AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT  
Early Head Start

75.5%



AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT  
Preschool Head Start



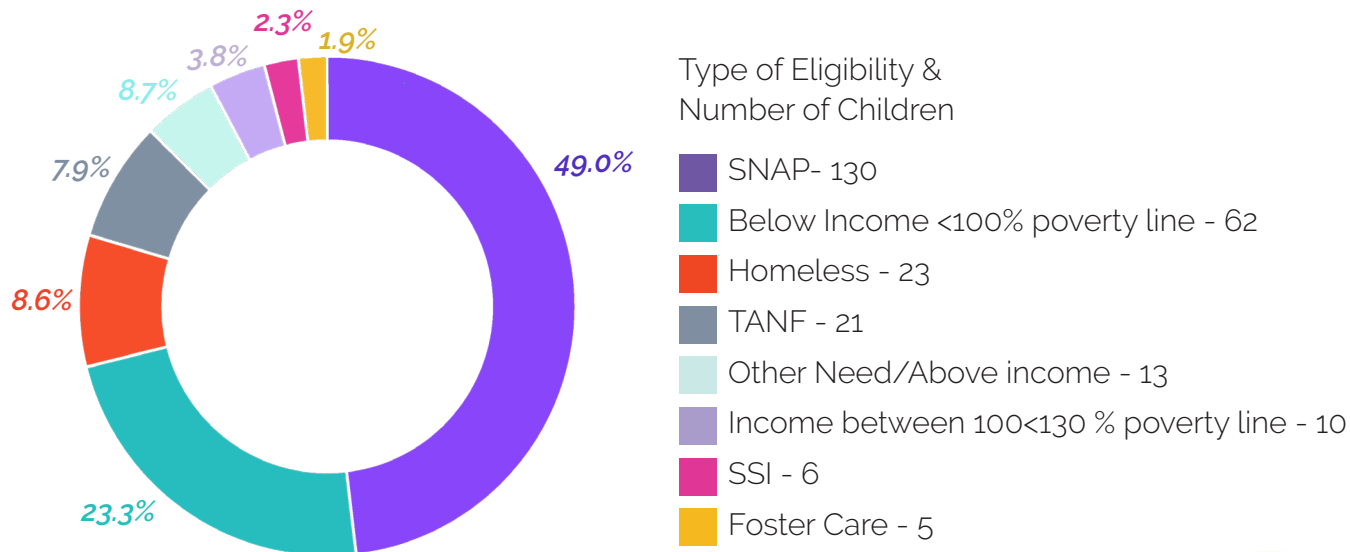
Total Funded Enrollment 338

In a regular program year our funding enables us to enroll 338 children at one time - 105 in Early and 233 in Preschool Head Start.

Total Cumulative Enrollment 271

We enrolled 271 children cumulatively over the program year.

## Type of Eligibility & Number of Children



Due to staff shortages, our average enrollment totaled about 64% of funded enrollment this program year. This has been a challenge for programs nationwide, and Head Start is working on different initiatives to address these post COVID workforce changes. We anticipate a return to full enrollment when we are able to hire a full complement of staff.



## Attendance

In the 2023/24 program year, consistent child attendance saw improvement from the prior year. The program continues to work towards meeting benchmarks in this area. We based attendance calculations on actual rather than funded enrollment.

84%

Average Daily Attendance  
Preschool Head Start  
142 children average daily attendance



82%

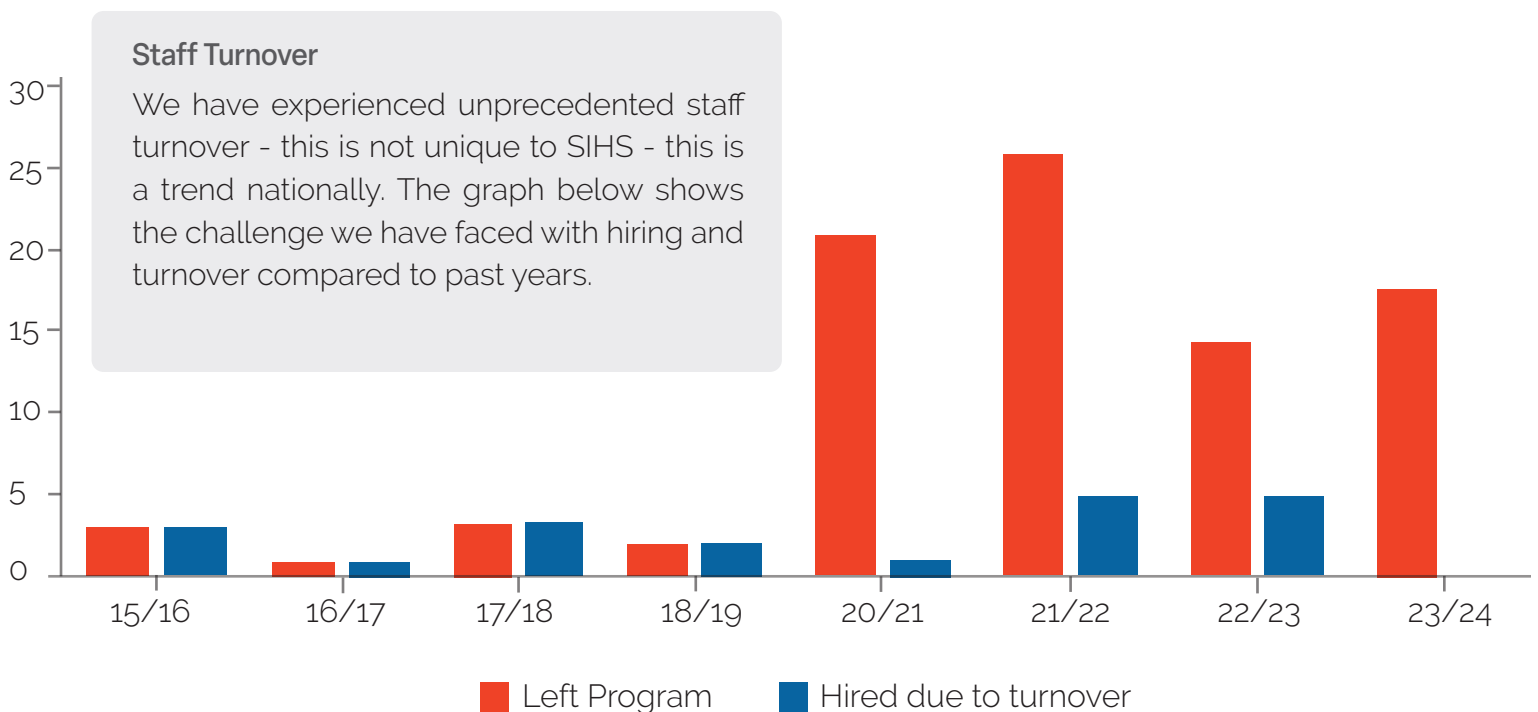
Average Daily Attendance  
Early Head Start  
33 children average daily attendance





# CENTER & STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Annual Report 2023/2024



Our education philosophy is rooted in the belief that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. We work closely with parents to create a nurturing environment where children feel welcome, thrive and learn.

This year, we've made significant progress in hiring additional staff while our existing team has shown exceptional resilience and flexibility in meeting their roles and engaging families. We are also expanding opportunities for family involvement through volunteering and resumed conferences and home visits, offering flexible meeting options to strengthen teacher-family connections.



Kindergarten Preparation

In preparing children for kindergarten, our staff collaborates with parents and community members to set school readiness goals aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), state guidelines, and our curriculum.

We consider program data, and the unique needs of our diverse population, including dual language learners and children with disabilities. This comprehensive approach ensures children are well-prepared for kindergarten and future success.

We use an ongoing assessment published by Teaching Strategies to track progress toward individual readiness goals, and their curriculum, The Creative Curriculum, to foster learning through both structured and unstructured play.

SIHS Birth-to-Five Programming

1.

Language & Literacy
2.

Mathematics & Science
3.

Physical Development
4.

Social & Emotional Development
5.

Creative Arts & Approaches to Learning



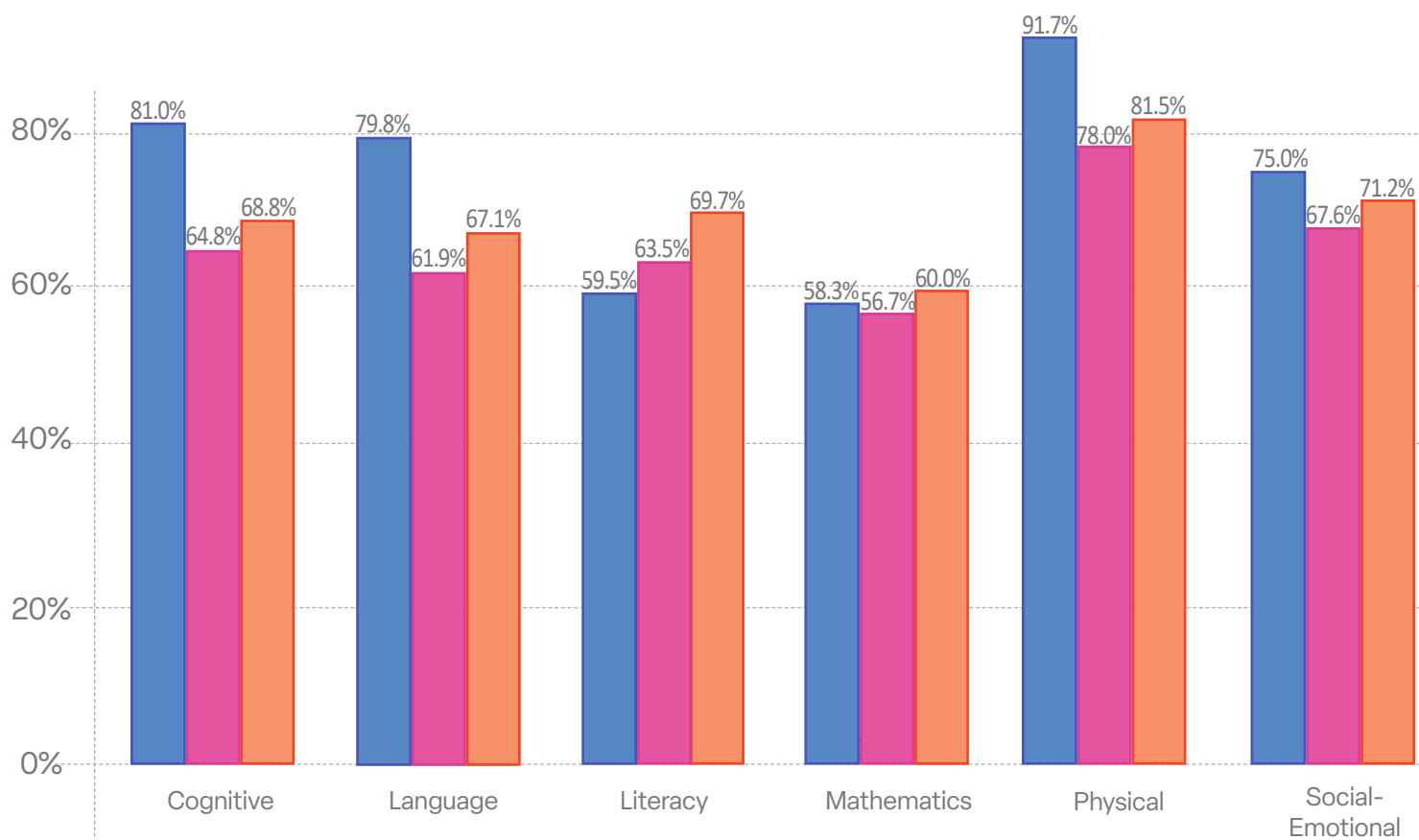
SIHS usually evaluates how our outcomes compare to children in our service area entering kindergarten, by looking at Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) data collected via WaKIDS. This is the first year we have been able to do this since the pandemic.

The following bar chart compares:

- 1) SIHS outcome data for four year olds in the spring of 2024, (exiting Head Start 23-24),
- 2) OSPI WAKid outcome data averaged for the seven school districts with whom we collaborate for children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2024, and
- 3) OSPI WAKid statewide outcome data for children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2024.

This chart uses OSPI data for low income children and those eligible for free or reduced lunch to more closely align to Head Start income eligibility, which is 100% of federal poverty (actually much lower than the free and reduced eligibility guidelines.) The percentage represents the average number of children that demonstrated the skills typical for a child ready to enter kindergarten in each domain.

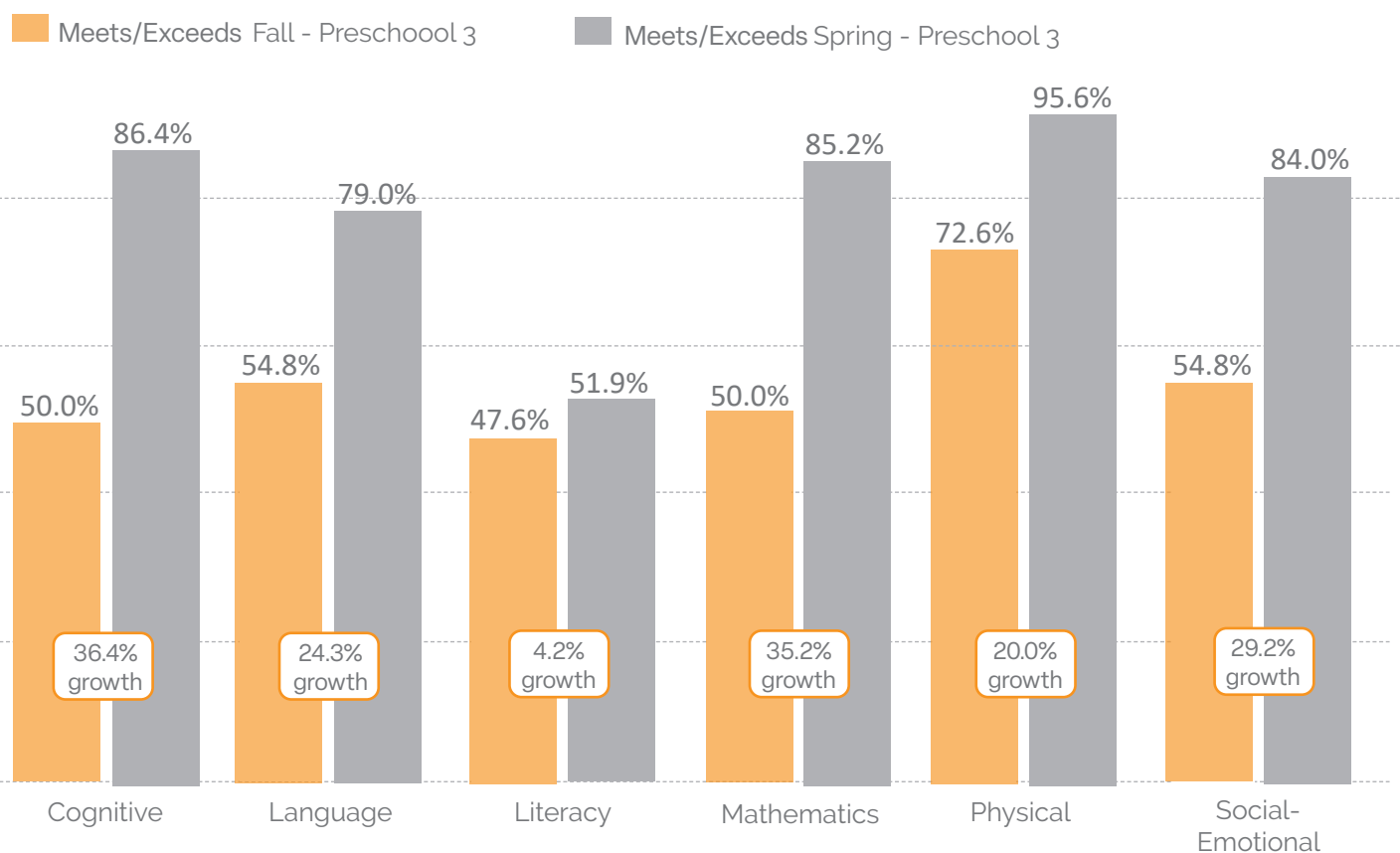
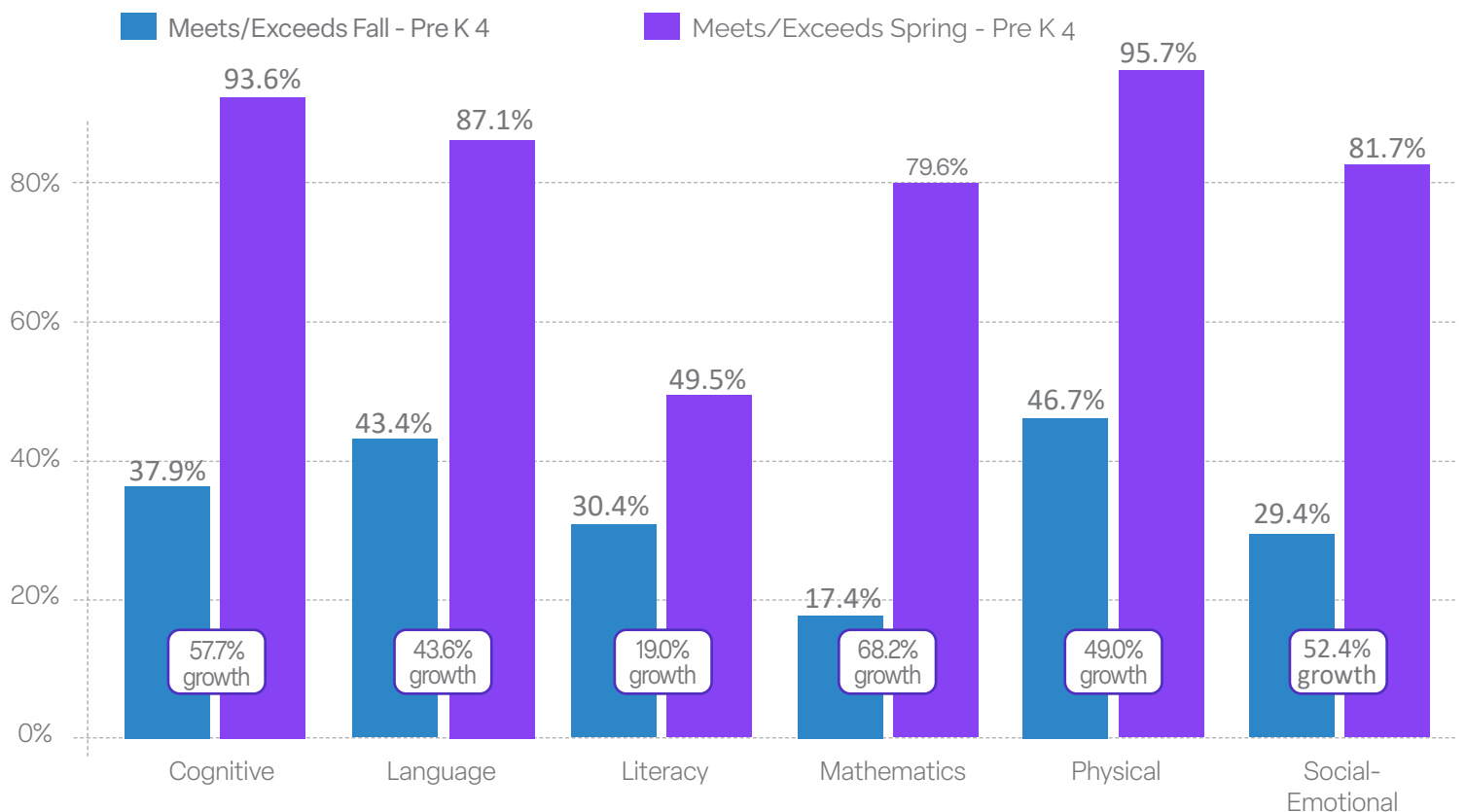
- % SIHS Pre K-4 Children Met or Exceeded Threshold (leaving SIHS 23/24)
- % Average of Comparable School Districts Met or Exceeded Threshold (entering kindergarten 24/25)
- % Average School Districts Statewide Met or Exceeded Threshold (entering kindergarten 24/25)



# CHILD GROWTH

Annual Report 2023/2024

These charts represent the average total domain scores (e.g. Language, Cognitive) for children in the fall and the spring. It also notes average child growth - shown as a percentage - between the fall and spring.



Our classrooms are fully inclusive, offering a wide range of services to children of all abilities. We work closely with specialized service providers and take a comprehensive approach to identify developmental and emotional concerns through required screenings, parent and teacher observations, and ongoing assessments.

In recent years, we've seen a rise in social-emotional and behavioral challenges, consistent with national trends. These issues are thought to stem from trauma related experiences, post-pandemic-related stress, limited socialization, and other unique challenges faced by children and families.

In response, we introduced a new social-emotional curriculum for children ages 3-5, focusing on resiliency and creating supportive environments. We are in our second year of implementation and this curriculum complemented nicely our approaches to executive function and self-regulation.

In the 2023/2024 program year under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

**32%** of our children had an Individualized Education Plan.

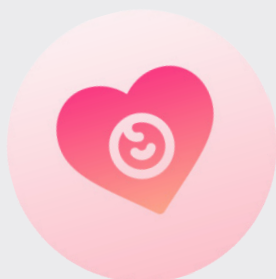
**21%** of our children had an Individualized Family Service Plan.

We continue to take a proactive approach, promptly referring children for school district evaluations when necessary. Our Head Start staff also follows up on all family needs and referrals to better anticipate a child's individual needs in the classroom.

Our teachers collaborate closely with school district service provider to ensure all children are making progress toward their individual education and developmental goals. Regular discussions around developmental milestones help teachers track progress, keeping parents informed and engaged in their child's development.

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

We expanded our mental health and behavioral health consultant hours to provide staff, children, and families with a variety of expert support options. Resources are regularly accessible via phone or teletherapy which has provided increased staff accessibility to our mental health consultant for ongoing wellness support.



Our children and families are the center of our program. We have a unique, diverse and vibrant family community. 270 families participated in our program this year.

## Family Training/Education/Employment

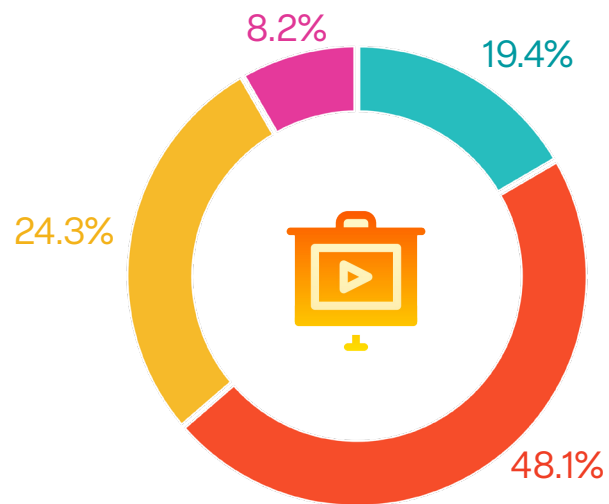
Parents employed full/part time or in job training/school:

Start of enrollment: 75.5%

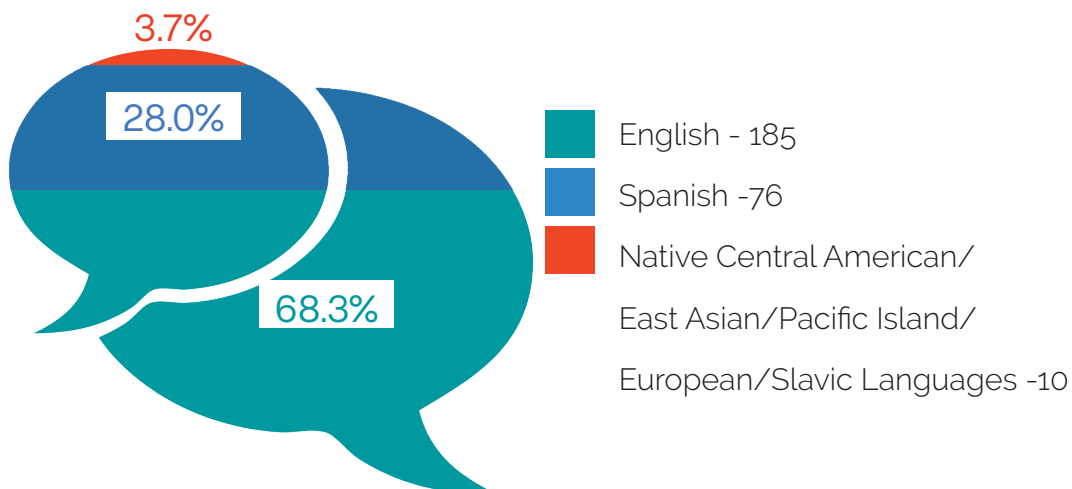
End of enrollment: 78.8%

## Parent Education

- Less than High School Diploma - 52
- High School Diploma/GED - 129
- Associate Degree - 65
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher - 22



## Primary Language Spoken



129 dual  
language learners



	Hispanic/Latine	Non-Hispanic/Latine
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7 (2.58%)	3 (1.11%)
Asian	0 (0.00%)	2 (0.74%)
Black or African American	1 (0.37%)	3 (1.11%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0 (0.00%)	3 (1.11%)
White	116 (42.80%)	84(31.00%)
Biracial/Multi-racial	10 (3.69%)	14 (5.17%)
Other	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.0%)
Unspecified	28 (10.33%)	0 (0.0%)

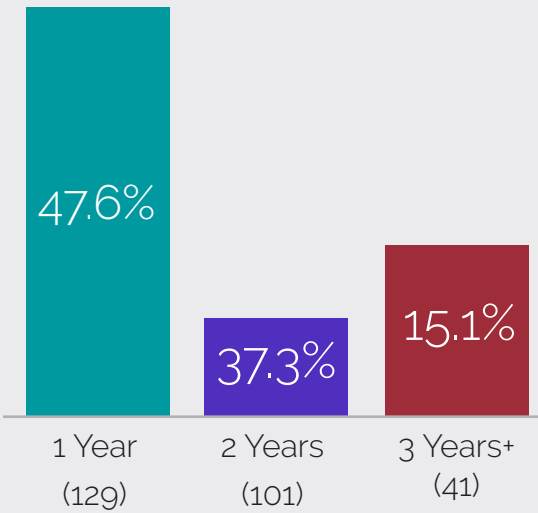
70% of our children/families identify as Hispanic or Latino/Latine origin or ethnicity.

Family Composition

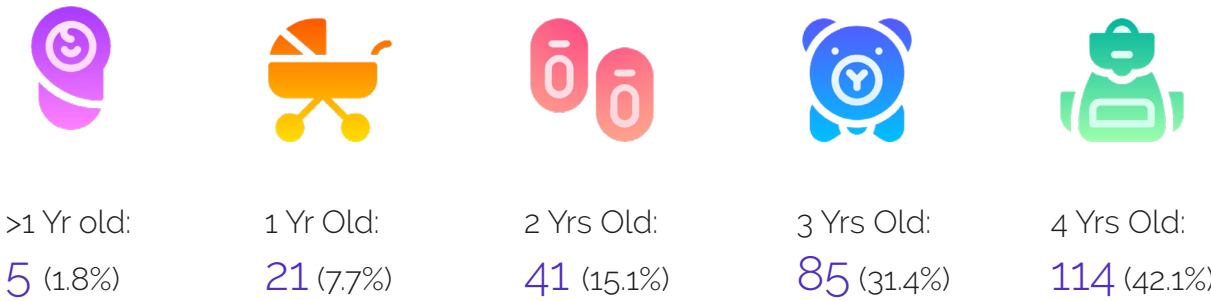


6% of families had a primary caregiver other than a biological parent

Length of Time Enrolled

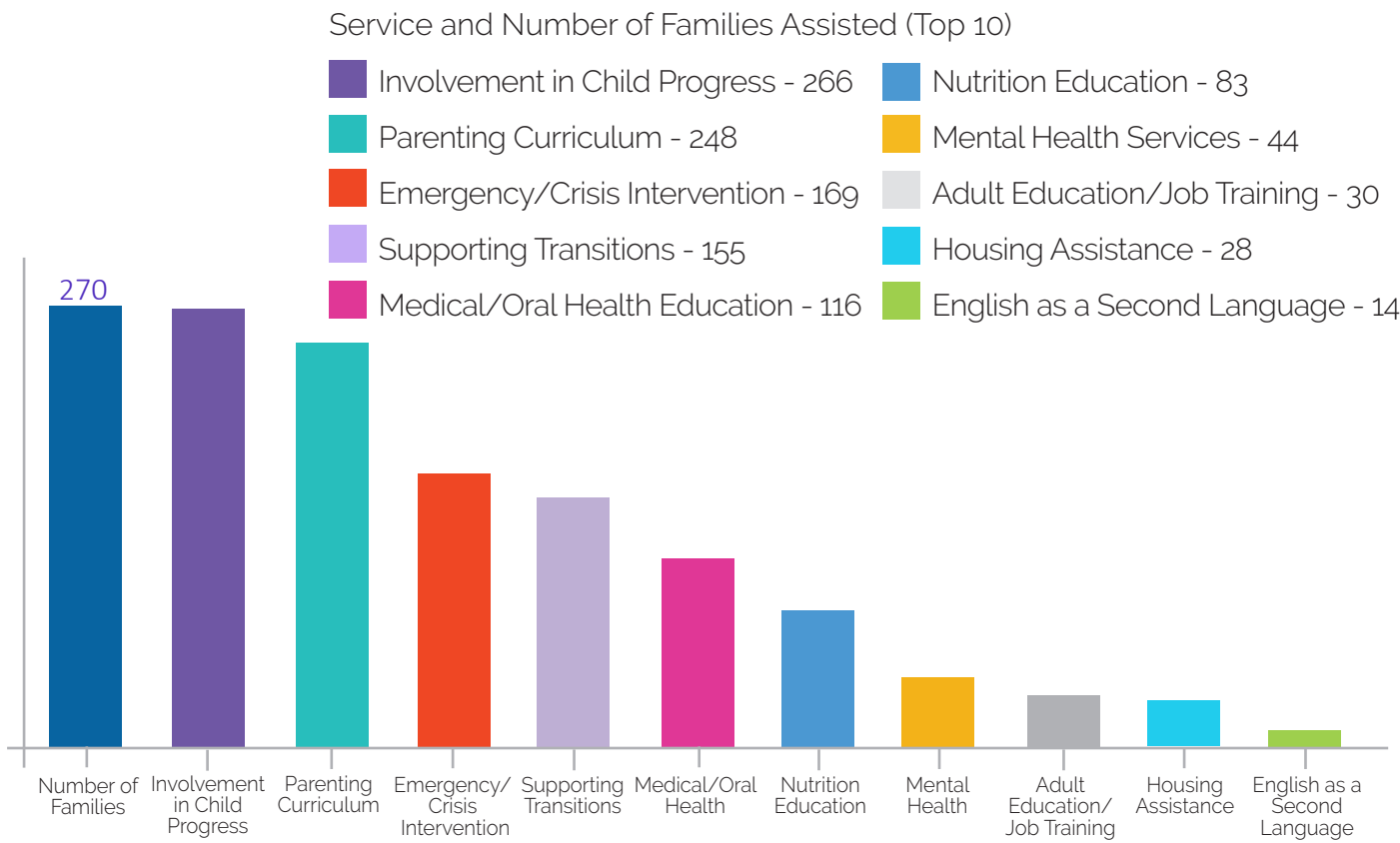


Our Children's Ages:



We provide or link whole families to services. Families can request this assistance at any point during the program term.

Family Service Provided



Parent Curriculum

We use ParentPowered as our parent curriculum. It is a research-based text messaging program for families that sends fun facts and tips for activities to boost their child's learning. Families can opt in or out, and participation has grown over time.

Spring 2024 family survey highlights from 245 respondents:

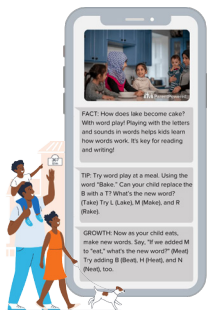
100% of families found the text messages easy to read and understand

96% of families said the texts helped their children grow their literacy skills

100% of families said ParentPowered has improved their relationship with their children

88% of families said that ParentPowered increased their confidence in supporting their children's learning

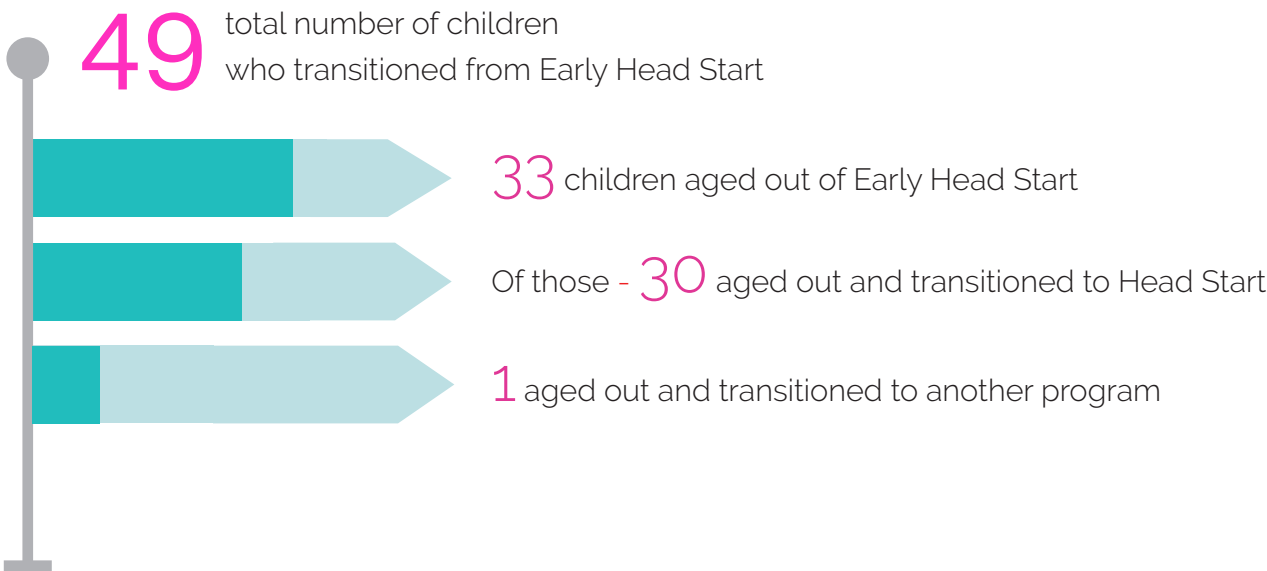
58,408 messages cover 6 curriculum units were sent in program year 2023/2024!



## Transitions

SIHS has a system in place to help children who are transitioning from one program type to the next (i.e., Early Head Start to Head Start, and Head Start to public school). This transition process requires that each child who is transitioning has a plan in place, and the families of children transitioning from Head Start to Kindergarten are kept informed about important district enrollment activities prior to the child's actual transition in order to prepare the child, the family, and the new program.

### Early Head Start



### Head Start

98 number of children who are transitioning from Head Start to Kindergarten



To assess our effectiveness in meeting parent needs, we conduct a fall strengths, needs, and interests survey to gather information about families and children when they enter the program. In the spring, we follow up with a family outcome survey to evaluate how well families feel their needs have been addressed.

This year our response rate was 59% of enrolled families, up from 53% in the prior year but still below response rates prior to COVID. The data we collected remains valuable for our program, revealing that:

- 97% of families found the program very helpful to their child
- 92% said overall the program was very helpful to the family
- Out of the families that indicated they needed help:
  - 86% found the program very helpful with learning to encourage creative play at home and about their child's needs/learning delays
  - 85% found the program helpful with learning to value their child's strengths
  - 80% found the program very helpful with encouraging creative play at home

Contrasting Child Growth and How Helpful Families Found the Program

Family Outcomes Survey and Gold Data



Definitions (excluding "Did Not Need Help" responses):

Low Helpfulness: Families who responded "Very Helpful" on fewer than half of the questions in the Survey

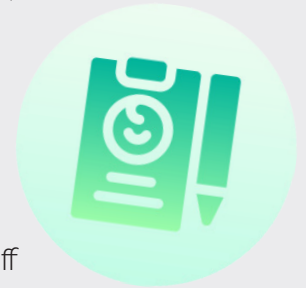
Moderate Helpfulness: Families who responded "Very Helpful" on 50% to 80% of the questions in the Survey

High Helpfulness: Families who responded "Very Helpful" on more than 80% of the questions in the Survey

Progress / Thriving: Children who are consistently "at or above age expectations" or who move into "at or above age expectations" on the majority of core domains.

Potential Concern: Children who are scoring consistently below age expectations, the score is declining, or not keeping up with age expectations on a majority of core domains.

Many families are now catching up on missed medical, dental, and vision appointments that were postponed during the pandemic. However, challenges such as limited provider availability continue to affect access to care. Finding specialists, particularly for vision follow-ups and dental care, continues to be difficult in certain areas. Staffing shortages remain a significant barrier, especially for younger children under the age of four. Families are navigating these challenges by relying on support from Head Start staff, who provide information and resources to help locate available providers.



With the changes to Washington State's immunization requirements, families have become more engaged in keeping their children's immunizations up to date. Staff work closely with families to explain the new requirements, ensuring that children receive the necessary vaccinations before enrollment or classroom participation. Head Start programs are placing a stronger emphasis on supporting families through better communication. Staff are working to ensure parents are aware of health screening deadlines, immunization requirements, and any gaps in care, while also assisting families in overcoming barriers such as transportation or finding healthcare providers. Changes in intake procedures and policies have helped streamline the process for families, reducing the risk of care gaps. By partnering with the health department to offer capillary finger pokes, we made lead screenings more accessible at our Skagit centers, leading to an increase in the number of children up to date on their screenings.

## By the end of the program year:



**100%** of children had  
HEALTH INSURANCE and

**99%** had a  
MEDICAL HOME (provider)

**92%** of children were  
up-to-date with MEDICAL EXAMS and  
age appropriate PREVENTATIVE and  
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE (increased  
72% from enrollment)



**96%** of children had a  
DENTAL HOME (provider)

**96%** of children were  
up-to date with DENTAL EXAMS

**30** children needed dental  
treatment, of the children,  
**22** received treatment

We conducted:



263 (97%)  
hearing screenings

2 diagnosed with a  
chronic hearing problem



264 (96.0%)  
vision screenings

40 diagnosed with a  
chronic vision problem



90 %  
of children were  
up-to-date with  
IMMUNIZATIONS  
(& 4% were exempt)

Nutrition

Staff screen all children for nutritional risk within 90 days of enrollment, Staff offer nutrition referrals to the family for individualized support for children who are in the bottom or top percentiles (at risk for obesity or underweight).

212 CHILDREN  
received growth assessments

9 CHILDREN  
had a BMI below the 5th percentile

34 CHILDREN  
had a BMI over the 85th percentile

51 CHILDREN  
had a BMI at or above the 95th percentile



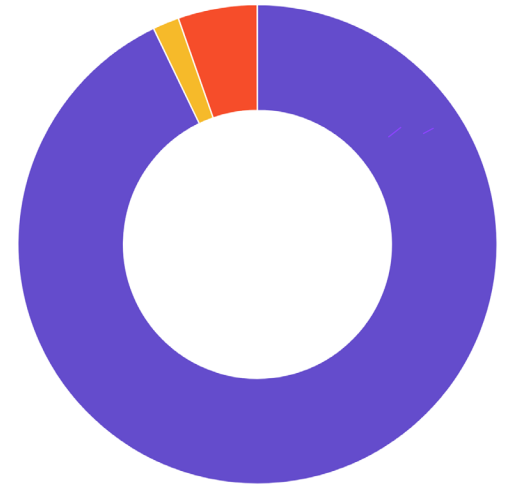


# FISCAL INFORMATION

Annual Report 2023/2024

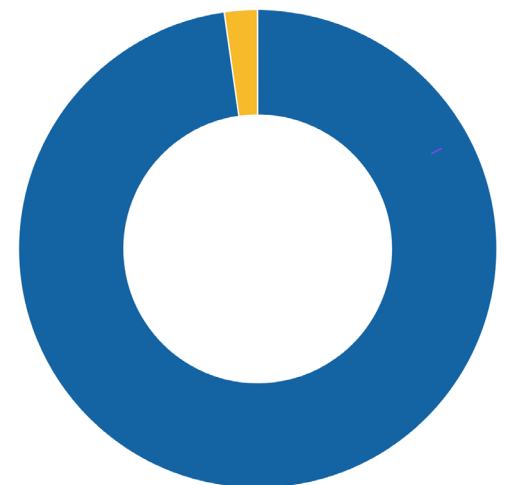
<b>Explanation of Expenditures for 2023/2024 fiscal year (not finalized):</b>	<b>Amount</b>
➤ ACF - Head Start/Early Head Start Grant	\$9,630,715
➤ Total ACF Grants	\$9,707,677
➤ Estimated Federal Share of Expenditures	\$9,014,637
➤ Estimated Unobligated	\$519,854
➤ Non-Federal Share (waived)	\$0
➤ USDA Reimbursement	\$173,146
➤ <b>Total Estimated Expenditures for 2023/2024</b>	<b>\$9,187,783</b>

\*Estimate only, year is not yet closed out and so final numbers are not yet available.



■ Estimated Federal Share of Expenses (92.9%)  
■ USDA Reimbursement (1.8%)  
■ Estimated Unobligated (5.4%)

<b>Proposed budget for 2024/2025 fiscal year:</b>	<b>Amount</b>
➤ ACF - Head Start/Early Head Start Grant	\$9,053,401
➤ Total ACF Grants	\$9,130,363
➤ Non-Federal Share (waived)	\$0
➤ USDA Reimbursement	\$209,000
➤ <b>Total Estimated Expenditures for 2024/2025</b>	<b>\$9,339,363</b>



■ ACF - Head Start/Early Head Start Grant (97.8%)  
■ USDA Reimbursement (2.2%)



In 2020 a Focus Area 1 monitoring review was conducted with no areas of non-compliance identified.

In 2023 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Head Start (OHS) conducted a Focus Area 2 monitoring review for all areas of the program. SIHS received an excellent review with only one small area of non-compliance identified during the visit. A solution was drafted and implemented immediately. There were no fiscal findings or concerns.

In 2023 SIHS was selected to conduct a pilot project for a new Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) review system. The pilot project was completed successfully and SIHS passed all areas with excellent scores.

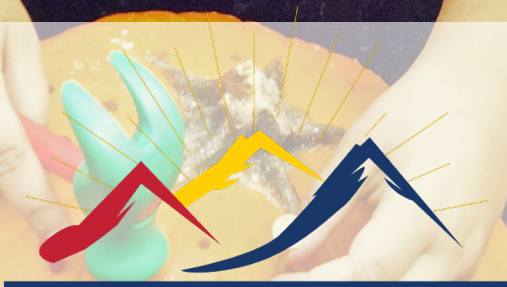
Emotional Support scores showed SIHS has a high-quality program which indicates rich and supportive environments with caring and sensitive teachers. Classroom Organization scores were also in the "high quality" range, which is the positive result of training and coaching intentionally implemented over the last 4 years to provide children with predictable and safe environments.

Our Instructional Support scores are rising as teaching staff become more and more grounded in providing children with interactions that scaffold more complex thinking.

The Washington State Auditor's Office fiscal audit of Skagit Valley College conducted in September of 2022 reported no areas of noncompliance.







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HEAD START**

SERVING SKAGIT & ISLAND COUNTIES

Annual Report

2023/2024