

**District of Columbia
Public Schools
Head Start Program
Annual Report
2023-2024**



Early Childhood

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Message from the Director

DC Public Schools (DCPS) has long been at the forefront of providing high-quality early childhood education programming to the children and families in DC who can most benefit from such services. Opening its first Pre-K classrooms for four-year-olds in 1972 and expanding Pre-K seats significantly in the ensuing years, DCPS was one of the first public school systems across the country to recognize the important role that early childhood education plays in student outcomes. Over the last four decades, the district has leveraged pre-kindergarten programming as a key tool for ensuring that all children, especially those furthest from opportunity, have access to high-quality Pre-K programming. As part of its bold commitment to early childhood education, DCPS has invested not only in Pre-K access but also Pre-K quality, with a large and accomplished team of instructional coaches with extensive expertise in early childhood development, instruction, and learning; a robust family services team focused on providing comprehensive services to families in our Title 1 schools; and welcoming and engaging classroom learning environments. Our Head Start grant allows us to build on this foundation of quality early childhood programming and to provide even more targeted, robust, and comprehensive support to 250 Head Start-eligible children and families in DC's Wards 7 and 8.

School Year (SY) 2023-2024 was an exciting and productive year for the DCPS Head Start program. We saw children's love of math blossom through the implementation of the Building Blocks curriculum. We watched as they discovered science and literacy skills through play. And we saw the joy on their faces as they traveled to new field trip destinations.

This Head Start Annual Report highlights our successes in SY23-24, and we have much to celebrate. We are committed to building on our achievements and continuing to develop our Head Start program in SY 24-25 .

We look forward to partnering with families, staff, and our elementary school communities in the year ahead!

Dyana R. Smith

Director, Head Start Quality Assurance



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Mission & Goals of DCPS and the Early Childhood Education Division

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is the largest local education agency in the District of Columbia.

DCPS Vision: Every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life.

DCPS Mission Statement: Ensure that every school guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.

Within DCPS, the Office of Schools provides guidance and leadership to schools serving younger students and includes the Early Childhood Education Division (ECED), home to the DCPS Head Start program.

ECED Vision: Every child feels loved, safe, valued, engaged, and prepared to enter kindergarten and beyond with the social-emotional, language, academic, and thinking skills needed to thrive; Families are empowered to effectively support their children's growth and learning and to serve as powerful advocates and models for their children.

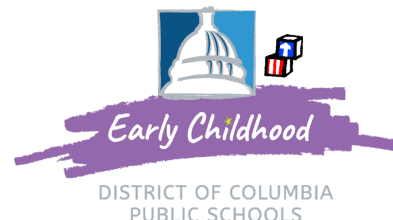
ECED Mission Statement: Our mission is to ensure that all DCPS Early Childhood programs guarantee that young children enter kindergarten fully prepared to thrive by providing nurturing, safe, equitable, and family-friendly learning environments. We view children as competent and capable learners, and value their voices and those of their families. We commit to engage, support, and challenge children through evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, anti-racist instructional practices, and to support family engagement and well-being for all families, and especially for those whose voices have historically been marginalized.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

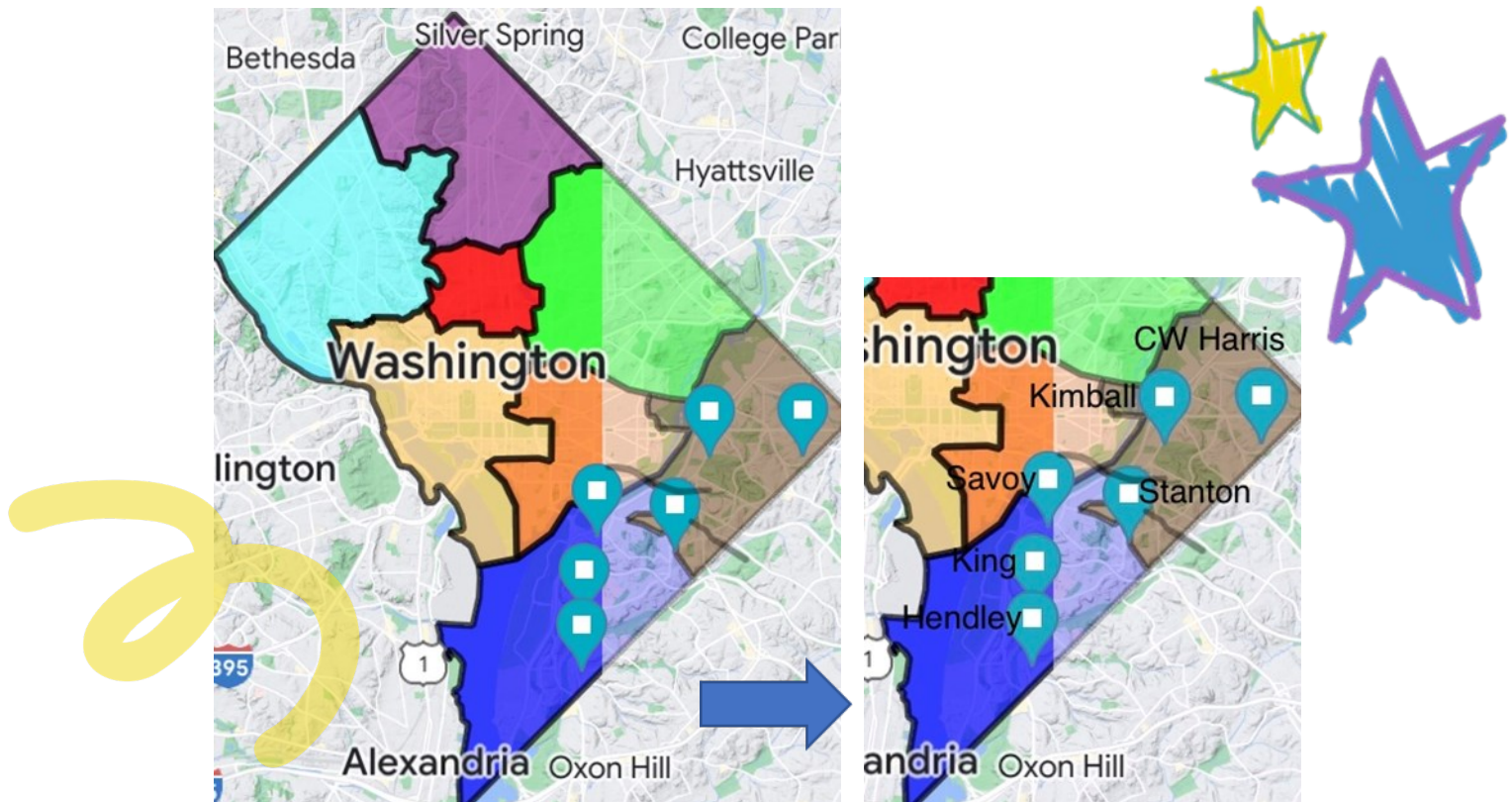
DCPS serves nearly 6,000 three- and four-year-old children in elementary schools across the District of Columbia and has long been at the forefront of providing high-quality early childhood education programming to the children and families in DC who can most benefit from such services. As a result of the District's bold commitment to early childhood education, DC now leads the nation in access to pre-K for both three- and four-year-olds and is a leader in many key quality indicators.

With the implementation of DCPS' Head Start program in SY21-22, DCPS is able to provide Head Start services and supports to children and families in DC's Wards 7 and 8 while also leveraging the resources of the larger school system and creating a seamless educational continuum for children and families. DCPS operates Head Start programming in 29 Pre-K classrooms located in six DCPS elementary schools: CW Harris, Hendley, Martin Luther King, Kimball, Savoy, and Stanton (See the maps below). In these six schools, DCPS serves both Head Start eligible and non-eligible children. A Cost Allocation Plan outlines the sharing of resources between Head Start funding and local funding from the DC government. This report, unless noted, will include all the children served in the 29 classrooms and utilize the term Pre-K/Head Start.

The District of Columbia has charter schools which operate as their own, independent, local education agencies.



Each classroom is staffed by a licensed teacher and a paraprofessional educator, and all classrooms operate for 6.5 hours or more per day. The Head Start grant also funds floater paraprofessionals in schools to assist with classroom ratios and staff breaks. The Head Start Central Services team includes nineteen staff in three teams: Instruction and Inclusion, Family Services, and Quality Assurance.



Overall Program Data – DCPS Head Start 2023-2024 School Year

In [school](#) year 2023-2024 DCPS served both Head Start eligible and non-Head Start children in DCPS' Head Start program.

Funded Enrollment (slots funded by DCPS' Head Start Grant)	250
Head Start Children Served During 2023-2024	259
Percentage of Head Start Eligible Children Served in DCPS' Service Area (Wards 7-8, Washington DC) ^[2]	4.1%
Non-Head Start Children Served ^[3]	113
Average Monthly Enrollment – Head Start Enrolled Children (November – June only)	250
Percentage of Head Start Enrolled Children Who Received Medical Services (104 of 259 Head Start children served <u>were known to have received</u> medical services. Due to an inability to access records, it is unclear whether the remaining 59.85% received care or not)	40.2%
Percentage of Head Start Enrolled Children Who Received Dental Services (122 of 259 Head Start children served <u>were known to have received</u> dental services. Due to an inability to access dental records, it is unclear whether the remaining 52.9% received care or not)	47.1%

^[2] In 2022, there were 17,269 preschool-age children residing in the District of Columbia. Of these children, 37% were living in the 17.1 square mile areas of Ward 7 and 8 (<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6748-child-poverty-by-ward#detailed/3/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/13834>)

Education & Child Development

DCPS' Head Start program utilizes the Creative Curriculum as its core curriculum. Additional supplemental content-based curricula, including Heggerty and Building Blocks, are also used to support the development of key kindergarten readiness skills.

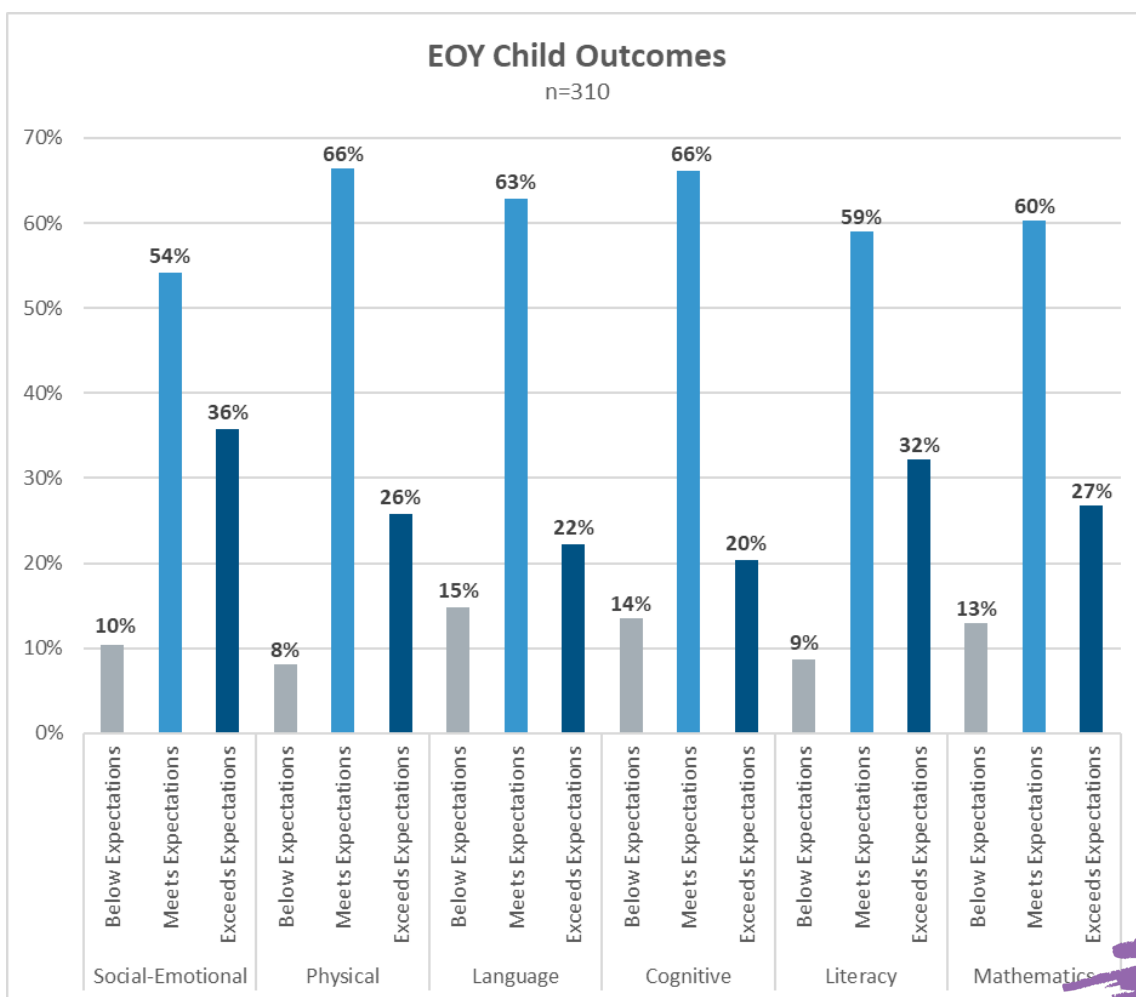
Coaching

DCPS PreK/Head Start employs three Instructional Specialists, each serving two schools. Instructional Specialists implement an innovative, job-embedded professional development model that fundamentally shifts the way that teachers engage in professional learning opportunities throughout the school year. This model, LEAP (Learning Together to Advance our Practice), is designed to help teachers become expert practitioners by engaging them in cycles of professional inquiry and learning within school-based professional learning teams that are led by expert early childhood instructional coaches.

The LEAP professional learning cycle consists of three essential components, aligned with the Head Start Practice Based Coaching cycle: a weekly LEAP seminar, classroom observations, and coaching touchpoints which include observation debriefs, co-planning, and instructional modeling.

School Readiness

DCPS Head Start utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) for ongoing assessment. DCPS Head Start School Readiness results are based on TSG and are shown below.



Screening, Evaluation & Disabilities Services

Head Start plays an important role in identifying three and four-year-old children with possible disabilities. As a Local Education Agency, DCPS is responsible for evaluating all enrolled 3 and 4-year-old students for whom a developmental delay or disability is suspected.

DCPS Head Start served a total of 64 children with active IEPs. Of the 64 children, 16 were enrolled in DCPS' self-contained Pre- K/Head Start classrooms for Early Learning Support (ELS).

These classrooms, located at C.W. Harris, Hendley, Savoy, and Stanton, are staffed by a full-time teacher certified in special education. In DCPS Pre-K/Head Start classrooms, IEP service hours are also delivered via related service providers who provide specialized services either in the Head Start classrooms, or in a therapy suite within the school.

Education Staff

DCPS hires Pre-K/Head Start teachers with bachelor's degrees or higher. The average salary for a DCPS Pre-K/Head Start teacher is \$93,917 per year. DCPS Pre-K/Head Start educational aides must have an associate's degree or higher and their average salary is \$36,633. DCPS educational staff reflect the racial identity of the children in the program. 99% of the Pre-K/Head Start children served this school year identified as Black or African American and 94% of teachers and educational aides self-identified as Black or African American.



Head Start enrolled, only.
DCPS 2021-2022 Program Information Report.

Family Services

The DCPS Head Start program employed seven Family Service Specialists (FSS) tasked with parent engagement and case management at the six Head Start schools. Head Start FSS supported one or two elementary schools and managed an average caseload of 36 Head Start children and their families. FSS worked closely with school staff and developed relationships with parents, Social Workers, and classroom staff. They conducted Head Start eligibility determinations, identified critical needs, and connected families with community resources.

The Family Services teams in coordination with school staff and Central Services team members sponsored back-to-school playdates in the fall, parent education opportunities, and other events, including end of year transition fairs that promoted family engagement.

Highlights of Family Service work include:

Assisting with Basic Needs. FSS supported families to access school uniforms, diapers, toiletries, and food.

They partnered with organizations like Martha's Table to access groceries for families.

Transportation Access. FSS issued families Metro cards so they could ride the train or bus to health care, job interviews, and public assistance appointments.

Attendance Support. FSS participated in school-based attendance teams to identify chronic absenteeism and support families with attendance barriers.

Kindergarten Transition. FSS participated in transition events and talked with families about what to expect.

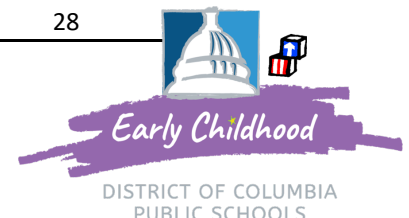
Individualized Case Management. Many families experienced challenges from housing loss to grief. FSS supported families to access resources based on their specific needs.

Activities	Total Number
Individual contact with families	3,117
Family Goals and Partnership Agreements	215
Referrals made to community services	769
Events or activities held for Head Start families	122

Mental Health

DCPS Head Start has three Mental Health Specialists who are full-time licensed clinicians that provide health, wellness, and social-emotional learning services to Head Start children and families. Each specialist is assigned to two schools and works in a tiered approach model. Based on the needs of the child, clinicians conduct classroom observations with Instructional Specialists and provide strategies to teachers (Tier one); provide in-classroom supports to one child or a small group of children (Tier two); or provide clinical services to children and when applicable a family member, outside of the classroom (Tier three). This tiered approach ensures that there is limited time the child must be outside of the classroom and that children with the highest need are able to receive individualized support.

Activities	Total Number
Tier One	36
Tier Two	49
Tier Three	28



Special Initiatives

In addition to rich classroom **learning experiences** provided by teachers and paraprofessionals, children also had the opportunity to extend their learning beyond the classroom. Each Head Start school had the opportunity to attend two field trips. Children had the opportunity to visit the National Zoo in Washington DC, Port Discovery in Baltimore, MD, and the Little Town's Children Museum in Bethesda, MD. Classrooms also partnered with Wolf Trap Center for the Arts to bring music and movement into the classroom.

Exploring **race and equity** continues to be a focus for DCPS as we seek to become an anti-racist school district. As part of this effort, Head Start teachers participated in a series of LEAP seminars designed and led by Head Start Instructional Specialists that focused on the importance of identity. Additionally, Head Start staff from each service area participated as members of the division-wide race and equity committee designed to examine procedures, review curriculum and identify staff training from an equity lens.

Professional learning was a priority for DCPS Head Start in SY 23-24. Principals at the six Head Start schools attended CLASS training, led by a Head Start Instructional Specialist. Family Service Specialists attended training which included case management and motivational interviewing, to enhance their work with families. Mental Health Specialists participated in a variety of training and certification programs including Grief and Trauma, LGBTQIA Mental Health Supports and Prenatal Well Being to better support the children and families they serve. Instructional Specialists attended Race and Equity Training, Multi Language Learner and CLASS trainer certification programs. Quality Assurance team members participated in financial and health training and the Data and Evaluation Manager had the opportunity to Attend the Head Start Management Fellows Program.





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THE TEACHER

I need to take a break.

NIKE



SWOOSH

JUST DO IT.