



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



# DCPS Head Start Annual Report

2022-2023



# Message from the Head Start Director

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. 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 and has leveraged pre-kindergarten programming as a key tool for ensuring that all children, and especially those furthest from opportunity, have access to high-quality Pre-K programming, opening the system’s first Pre-K classrooms for four-year-olds in 1972 and expanding Pre-K seats significantly in the ensuing years. 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 I 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 supports to Head Start-eligible children and families in DC.

School Year 22-23 was an exciting and productive year for the DCPS Head Start program. This program serves 250 Head Start-eligible preschool children and families in six schools in DC’s Wards 7 and 8 DC. While Year 1 of this Head Start grant was largely characterized by our efforts to successfully emerge from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Year 2 was a year for returning to some sense of normalcy while simultaneously implementing innovative strategies for engaging and supporting our Head Start community. During the previous school year parents had indicated that they were interested in more opportunities to promote STEM-focused learning for their children at school and at home. As a result of this feedback, DCPS’ Head Start program offered a variety of new resources to support STEM-related learning for our students and families during the 22-23 school year. This included a partnership with Lab Rascals, a locally-owned science-education company whose mission is to provide hands-on, playful, STEM-based learning activities for young children, particularly children from communities that have historically been underrepresented in STEM fields. DCPS’ Head Start program also partnered with Food Prints, a community-based organization designed to integrate gardening, cooking, and nutrition education into the curriculum in hands-on ways.

This Head Start Annual Report highlights our successes in SY22-23, and we have much to celebrate. We look forward to continuing to develop our Head Start program in school year 2023-2024 and to building on our successes.

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

Cheryl Ohlson, Ed.D.  
Deputy Chief, Early Childhood Education Division  
Head Start Director



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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 Elementary 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.

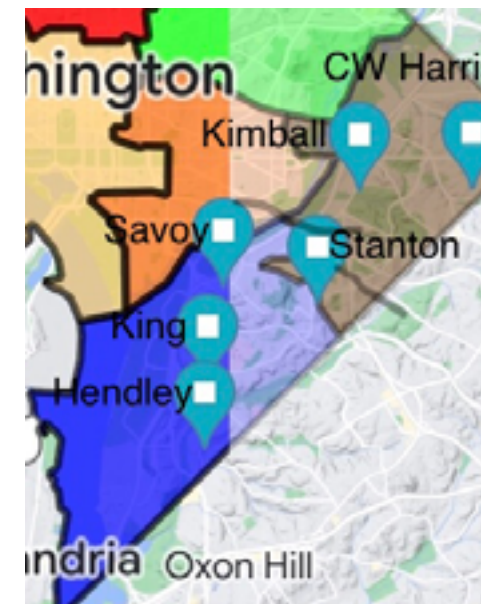
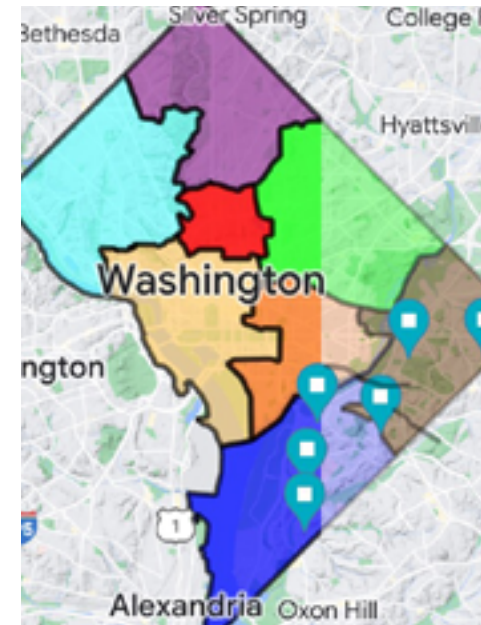
<sup>1</sup> The District of Columbia has charter schools which operate as their own, independent, local education agencies.







# Program Description



DCPS serves nearly 5,000 three and four-year-old children in 80 DCPS 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 3 and 4-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 seamless educational continuum for children and families. DCPS operates Head Start programming in 28 Pre-K classrooms located in six DCPS elementary schools: CW Harris, Hendley, Martin Luther King, Kimball, Savoy, and Stanton (See the maps on the left). 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 28 classrooms and utilize the term Pre-K/Head Start.

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 eighteen staff in three teams: Instruction, Family Services, and Quality Assurance.



# Overall Program Data – DCPS Head Start 2022–2023 School Year

In school year 2022–2023 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 2022–2023	262
Percentage of Head Start Eligible Children Served in DCPS’ Service Area (Wards 7–8, Washington DC)	10.2%
Non-Head Start Children Served	151
Average Monthly Enrollment – Head Start Enrolled Children (November – June only)	250
Percentage of Head Start Enrolled Children Who Received Medical Services <i>(46 of 262 Head Start children served <u>were known to have received</u> medical services. Due to an inability to access care and records, it is unclear whether the remaining 82% received care or not)</i>	18%
Percentage of Head Start Enrolled Children Who Received Dental Services <i>(37 of 262 Head Start children served <u>were known to have received</u> dental services. Due to an inability to access dental care and records, it is unclear whether the remaining 86% received care or not)</i>	14%





# Education & Child Development

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



## Coaching

DCPS implements 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, 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 HS Practice Based Coaching cycle: a weekly LEAP seminar, classroom observations, and a weekly or bi-weekly coaching touchpoint which can include observation debriefs, co-planning, and/or instructional modeling debriefs.

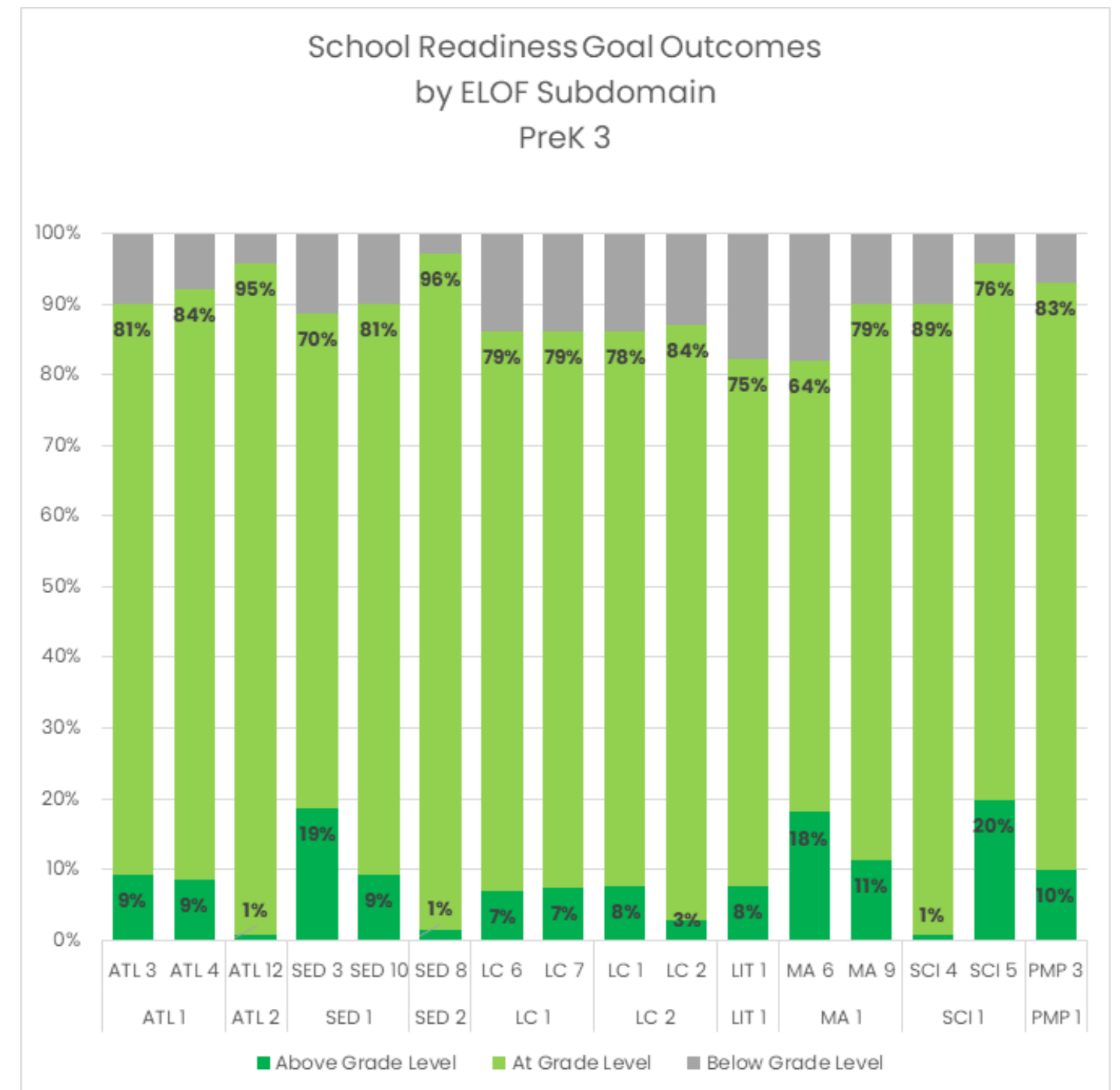






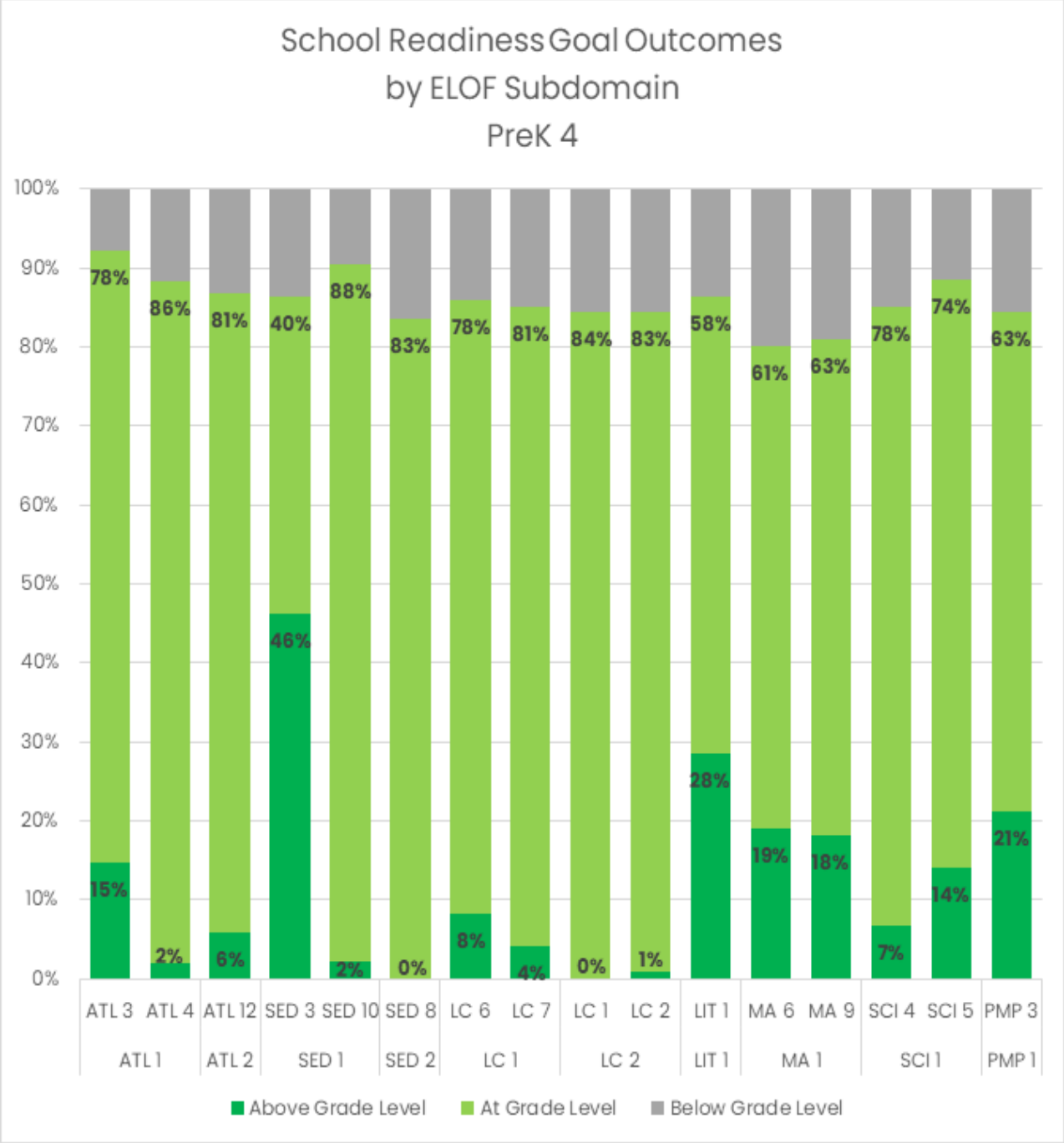
# School Readiness Goals

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



ATL Approaches to Learning  
 SED: Social and Emotional Development | S LC1: Language and Communication  
 LIT: Literacy  
 MA: Mathematics Development  
 SC: Scientific Reasoning  
 PMP1: Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development





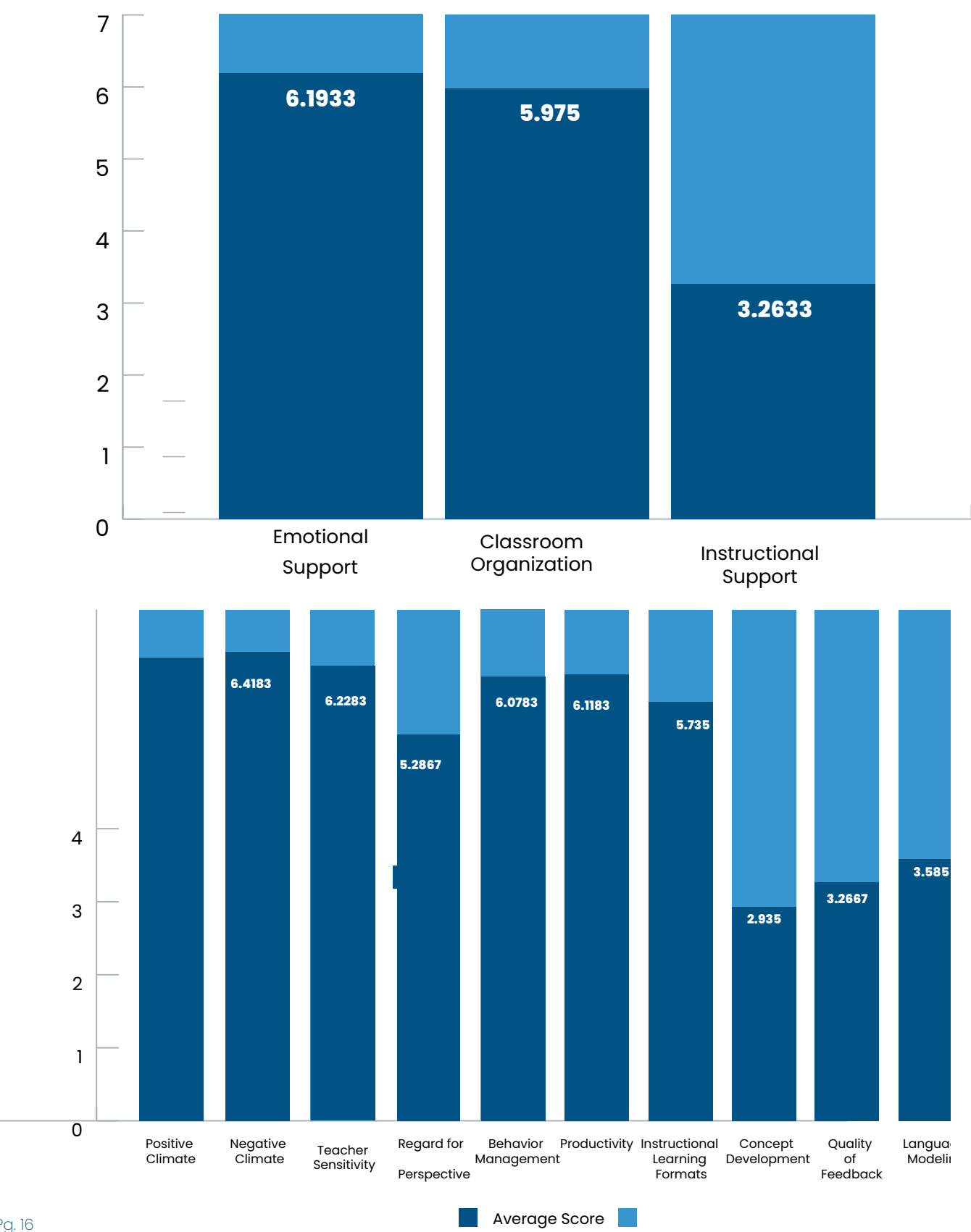
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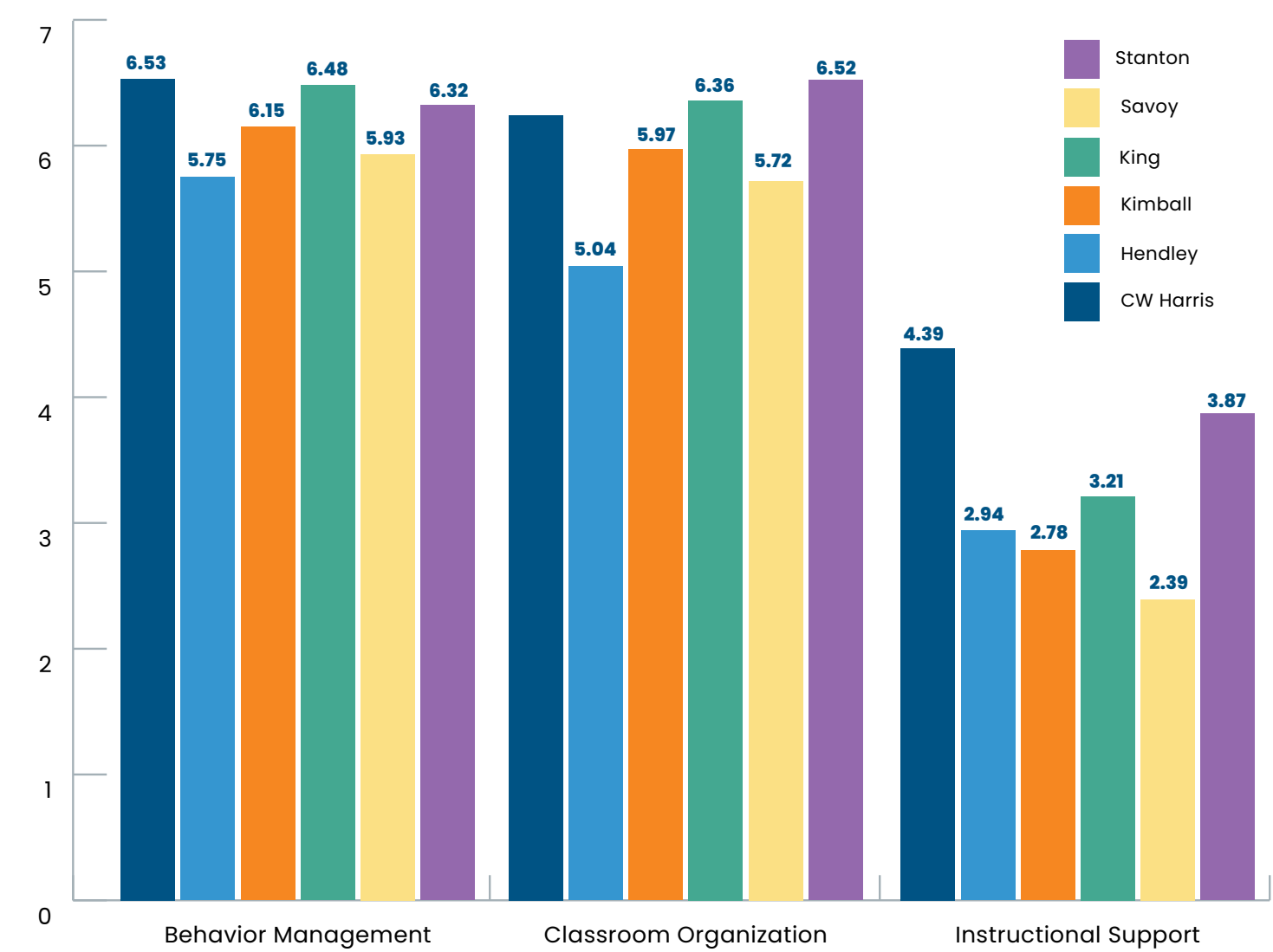


# CLASS SCORES

Average Class Score by Domain



Class Score by School and Sub-Domain





# Screening & Disabilities Services

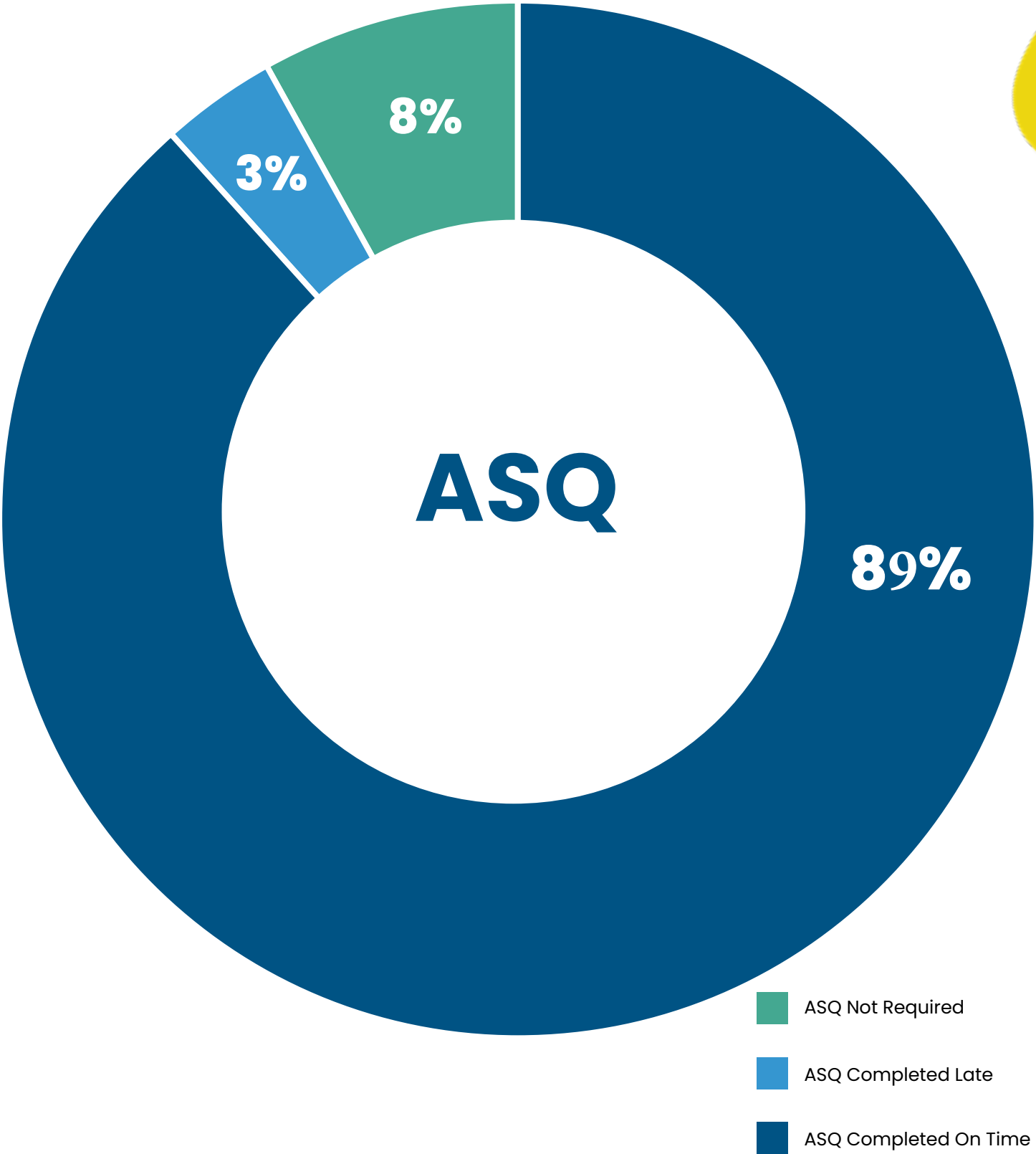
The graphic describes the important role Head Start plays in identifying three and four-year-old children with possible disabilities. Teachers screen every 3-4 year-old enrolled student who doesn't have an IEP. Teachers screen using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). As shown, 97% of children either had an IEP or were screened using the ASQ.

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 54 children with active IEPs. Some were placed by the LEA in 3 of DCPS' self-contained Pre- K/Head Start classrooms for Early Learning Support (ELS).

These rooms are staffed by a full-time teacher certified in special education. In self-contained and inclusion Pre-K/ Head Start classrooms, IEP service hours are also delivered via related service providers<sup>2</sup> who provide specialized services either in the Head Start classrooms, or in a therapy suite within the school.

<sup>2</sup> Speech, occupational and/or physical therapy.







## 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 degree or higher and their average salary is \$36,633. DCPS educational staff closely mirror the children served in terms of race. 99% of the Pre-K/Head Start children served this school year were Black or African American<sup>3</sup> and the majority of the teachers and educational aides were also African American.



# Family Services



The DCPS Head Start program employed six Family Service Specialists (FSS) tasked with parent engagement and case management. Each FSS supported one elementary school and managed a caseload of 50–60 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, made referrals, and supported teachers in the classroom.

The Family Service team worked diligently to entice parents back to schools after the pandemic. They sponsored back-to-school playdates in the fall, monthly parent trainings, special events (e.g., muffins with moms and donuts with dads) and an online book club.

## 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.
- *Planning School Events.* FSS planned and implemented school-based events for families, including back-to-school nights, a math night, end-of-year picnics, and holiday parties.
- *Attendance Support:* FSS participated in school-based attendance teams to identify chronic absenteeism and support families with attendance barriers.
- *Kindergarten Transition.* FSS led transition events, talked with families about what to expect, and visited kindergarten classrooms with students.
- *Individualized Case Management.* Many families experienced losses (e.g., COVID, home fires), trauma and community violence. FSS supported families to access resources and financial support such as burial assistance.

Activities	Total Number
Individual contact with families	3,124
Family Goals and Partnership Agreements	236
Referrals made to community services	68
Events or activities (including virtual meetings) held for Head Start families	119
Kindergarten transition activities for families	12





## Mental Health

DCPS Head Start is fortunate to have three full-time licensed clinicians to provide individualized clinical services to Head Start children and families. Each clinician is assigned to two schools to conduct classroom observations, coach and guide teachers, provide clinical services to children, and refer families to community providers. Clinicians are trained in Parent Child Interaction Therapy and play therapy modalities and also supported teachers with suggestions for managing classroom behavior.

Activities	Total Number
Observations of Individual children by mental health staff	88
Students identified (by parent, teacher, or Mental Health Specialist) as needing services	41
Students receiving individual mental health services from Head Start Mental Health Specialist	22



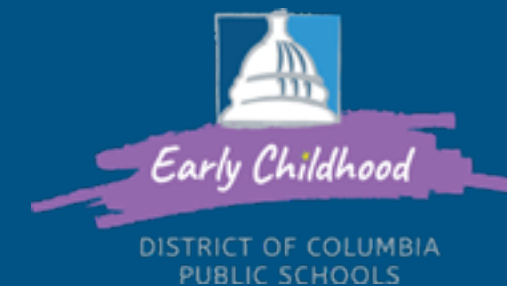
# Special Initiatives

COVID made it impossible for staff to take Pre-K/Head Start students on field trips for the past several years. Those extended learning opportunities are significant for children experiencing poverty. Field trips resumed this school year with classes traveling to a local park, the Baltimore Aquarium, the DC Children's Museum and the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

DCPS also partnered with two organizations to bring learning experiences into the Head Start classrooms. Food Prints, a program of Fresh Farm (<https://www.freshfarm.org/>) brought hands on cooking and gardening experiences to students and teachers. Each school also received age-appropriate gardening and cooking equipment allowing Head Start teachers to continue incorporating activities into their curriculum. Lab Rascals (<https://www.clublabrascals.com/>) brought hands on STEM learning experiences to classrooms. Lab Rascals also held family STEM nights where children were able to experiment with their family and take home an activity.

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 staff participated in series of workshops held by the Early Childhood Education Division. Dr. Howard Stevenson engaged the division staff in several interactive sessions to learn how to respond to issues of racism both personally and professionally. Several Head Start staff also participated in a division-wide race and committee designed to examine procedures, forms and staff training from an equity lens.

**Wellness for teaching staff** was a priority for DCPS Head Start in SY 22-23. Teachers, aides and floaters were served appreciation luncheons in the spring to allow them a break from the classroom and a warm healthy meal. Several schools also offered these staff chair massages during their lunches and breaks.



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