



NORWESCAP
Head Start & Early Head Start



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



ABOUT NORWESCAP

Norwescap is a private, nonprofit corporation, established in 1965, serving the low-income population in Northwest NJ. We offer a comprehensive array of strategies, programs, and services to create opportunities and change lives. At Norwescap we believe everyone should have access to high-quality educational opportunities which is why we provide educational services to young children, support youth and emerging adults in pursuing educational opportunities and help adults get an education that can fuel their careers. Norwescap is committed to supporting educational endeavors from birth through adulthood and beyond.



NORWESCAP HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START

Norwescap has provided high quality Head Start programs since 1965. Our programs promote the school readiness of young children from low-income families through the delivery of free education, health, nutrition, mental health, and social services.



HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START MISSION

Enhance the development of low-income pregnant mothers and children 0-5 in supportive partnership with their families and in collaboration with the community through the delivery of education, health, nutrition, mental health and social services.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY



Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start provides services to 381 children and families in four counties of New Jersey. Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties are in the northwest region in the state. The geographical location and rural environment allow for an innovative approach to the delivery of services.

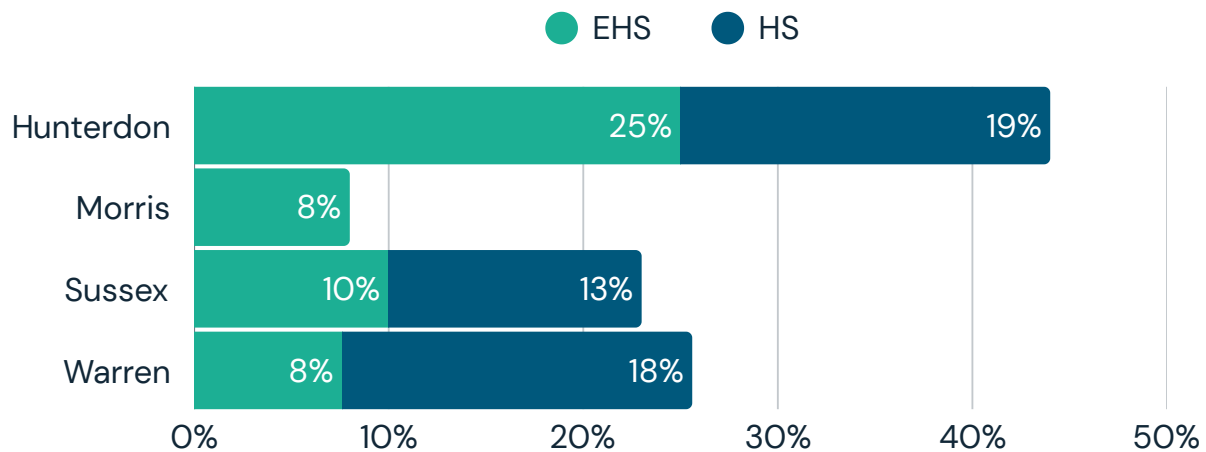
SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF HUNTERDON, MORRIS, SUSSEX, AND WARREN COUNTIES

Across 1,746 square miles.

Within these counties, there is a wealth gap for a portion of the population resulting in “pockets of poverty.” Meeting the needs of this vulnerable population is challenging for many different reasons. The Norwescap Head Start Community Assessment provided the opportunity to analyze the assets, needs and trends in each community. The Community Assessment also provided the opportunity to collectively discuss ideas on the groups’ ability to leverage resources in order to close gaps.

HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START POPULATION CONCERNS

High concentrated areas of poverty often lack basic resources to allow individuals to obtain and maintain sustainability. Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) has identified those catchment areas within each county. The percentages listed below indicate the HS/EHS services provided to the estimated eligible population within each catchment area of the county.



CONCERNS, GAPS, AND TRENDS

During the 2024-2025 Community Assessment, assets, gaps and trends within each of the four counties were identified. The areas of concern and key trends remain relatively constant within the four counties and are similar to the concerns raised during the 2023-2024 Community Assessment.



HOUSING

The cost of housing in New Jersey is extremely high and places a significant financial burden on every Norwescap Head Start family. The average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in the counties we serve ranges from \$1,850 to \$3,100, well out of range for a family of three living at the federal poverty level of \$26,650. Thus, virtually every one of our families is spending more than 30% of their income on housing, qualifying them as housing insecure. Households paying more than 30% of their income on rent are as follows: Hunterdon County 46%, Morris County 42%, Sussex County 48%, and Warren County 47%.

Some families are sharing housing to defer costs. Multiple families are living in one dwelling in which housing costs and childcare is shared among dwellers. In extreme circumstances, lease-holders will rent out the use of a couch or bathroom. Shared housing presents various health and safety concerns including established primary caregivers for infants and toddlers, disruptive routines for children and families, exposure to transient individuals with unidentified health concerns and basic building safety concerns. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start families have either shared housing because of economic hardship or considered themselves homeless.

Although the counties served by Norwescap Head Start are considered to be among the wealthiest in the nation, housing for the populations served is a major issue. Unstable housing contributes to family stress impacting family engagement, school readiness, and the health and safety of the occupants.



Exceeding housing costs.



AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE

The cost and availability of childcare in general, and infant-toddler care specifically, is a major challenge for low-income families. Many counties experienced a decrease in the capacity of their licensed childcare centers, indicating that the remaining centers serve even fewer children than before. Within Hunterdon County, Morris County, Sussex County and Warren County, the number of licensed childcare centers and the capacity of those centers have experienced a steady decline for the past five years. The number of slots available for infants and toddlers likely to need childcare does not meet the demand. In August of 2025, New Jersey halted new applications for its Child Care Assistance program. This impacted low-income families by stopping subsidies, though existing enrollees kept coverage but faced higher co-pays.



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Community mental health services have been reduced in all four counties. In addition, families have reported a reluctance to seek out mental health services because of a perceived stigma. Thirteen percent (13%) of Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start parents/caregivers report having mental health concerns. In addition to parental health concerns, there is a rise in the number of preschool children presenting with severe challenging behaviors.

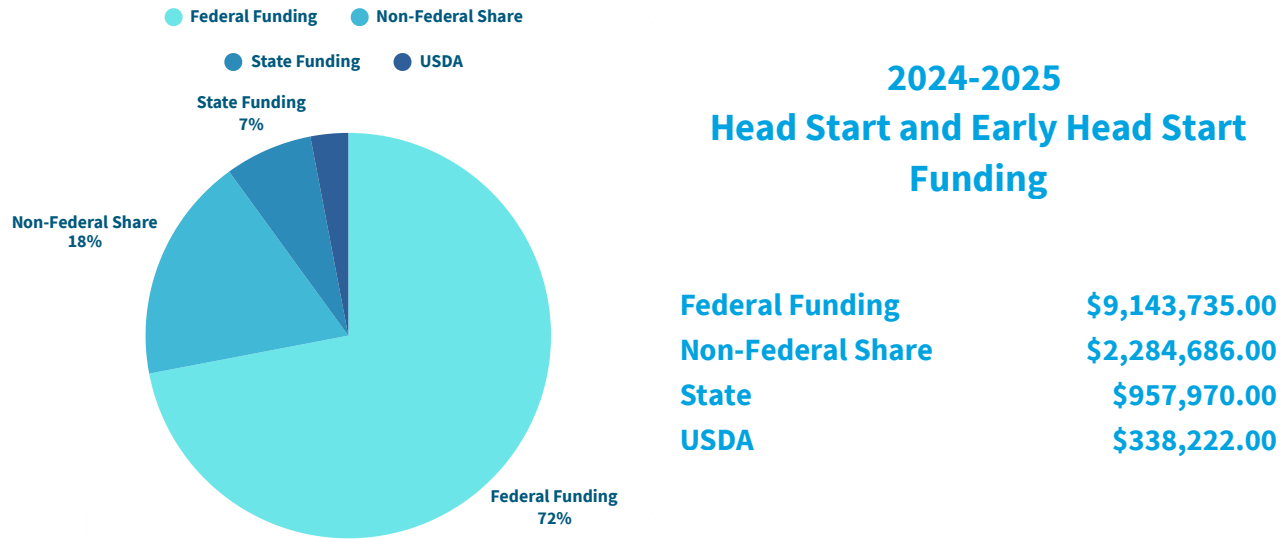
TRANSPORTATION

The rural nature of the four counties makes transportation a challenge. The cost of gas, insurance and related automobile expenses put a heavy burden on families. The lack of public transportation and the remote location of each county hinder families from obtaining the necessary, critical services, including childcare.

Employees work diligently to connect families to services. However, services can be delayed while appropriate transportation arrangements are coordinated. As an organization, Norwescap has faced significant challenges in hiring and retaining qualified bus drivers. Further research has revealed a national driver shortage. The National School Transportation Association reported “...the pool for traditional driver applicants is shrinking.” This means contractors and school districts are forced to be more resourceful in attracting new driver candidates with additional programs, such as recruitment and sign-on bonuses, which in turn increase costs. Added challenges include the rise in healthcare premiums, workman’s compensation and vehicle insurance. In addition, the cost to replace school buses that cost upwards of \$100,000 is straining budgets.



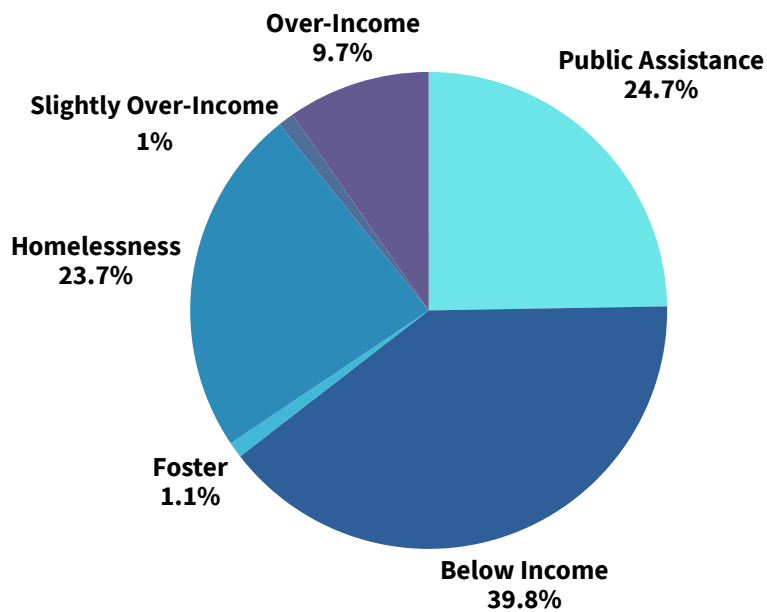
HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START BUDGET, REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES



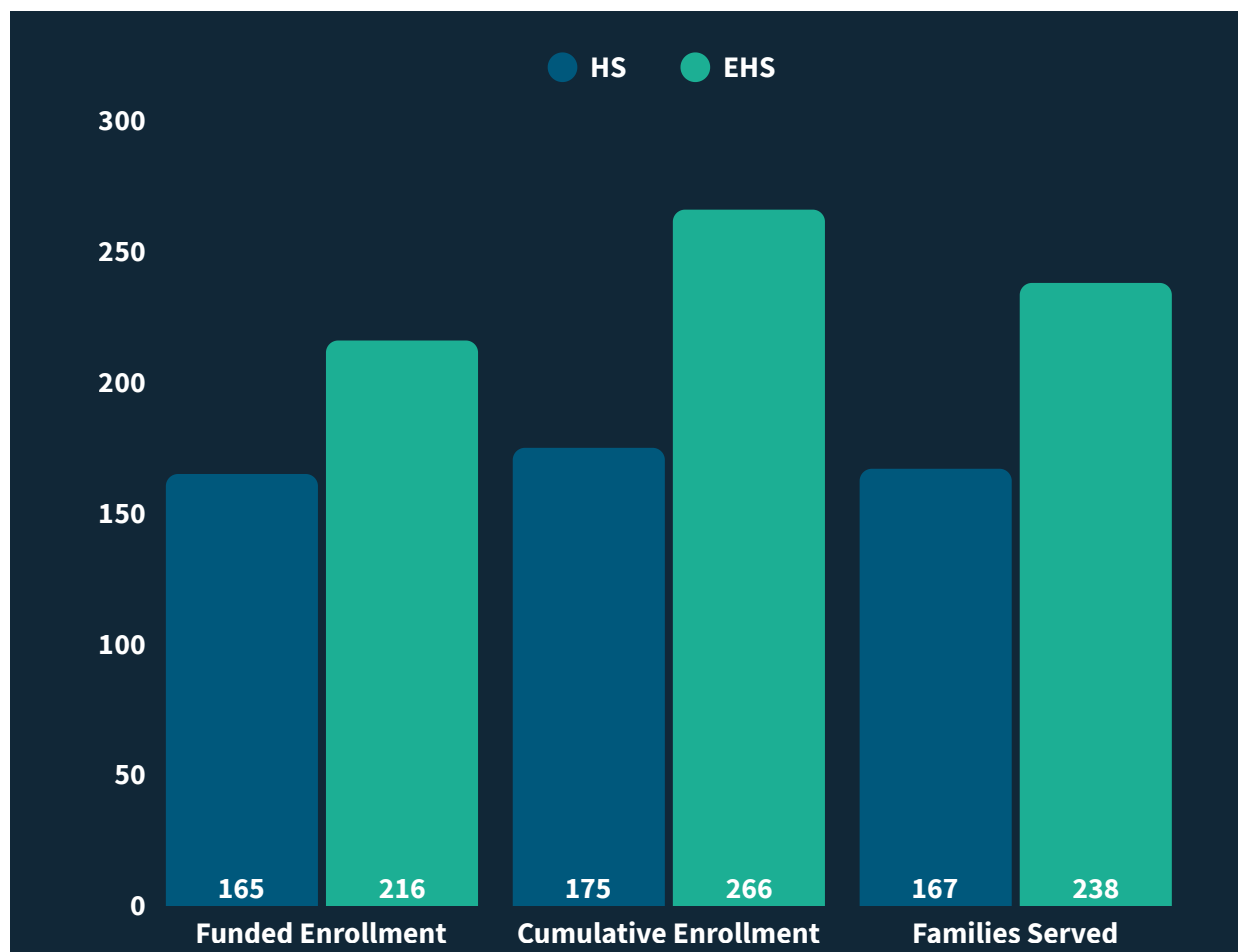
2024-2025 HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

<u>Budget Category</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
Salary	\$5,191,601.00	\$5,085,308.09
Fringe	\$1,585,918.00	\$1,673,420.32
Total Personnel	\$6,777,519.00	\$6,758,728.41
Equipment	\$32,980.00	\$32,980.00
Travel	\$10,002.00	\$10,359.07
Supplies	\$157,173.00	\$135,567.41
Contractual	\$87,165.00	\$80,922.55
Other	\$1,274,851.00	\$1,321,132.56
IDC	\$803,045.00	\$803,045.00
TOTAL	\$9,142,735.00	\$9,142,735.00

PROGRAM SERVICES



FAMILIES SERVED



MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

	SEPTEMBER 152 Enrolled 92% of funded enrollment 197 Enrolled 91% of funded enrollment	OCTOBER 169 Enrolled 99% of funded enrollment 209 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment	NOVEMBER 161 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment 212 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment
<div>HS</div> <div>EHS</div>			
	DECEMBER 160 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment 212 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment	JANUARY 163 Enrolled 99% of funded enrollment 213 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment	FEBRUARY 163 Enrolled 99% of funded enrollment 213 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment
<div>HS</div> <div>EHS</div>			
	MARCH 165 Enrolled 100% of funded enrollment 213 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment	APRIL 163 Enrolled 99% of funded enrollment 216 Enrolled 100% of funded enrollment	MAY 160 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment 213 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment
<div>HS</div> <div>EHS</div>			
	JUNE 160 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment 213 Enrolled 98% of funded enrollment	JULY CLOSED 210 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment	AUGUST CLOSED 210 Enrolled 97% of funded enrollment
<div>HS</div> <div>EHS</div>			

PROGRAM MONITORING

Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start monitor and manage multiple sites encompassing a combined total of 1,764 miles within Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties. Systems have been designed to consistently reach Head Start goals, milestones, and deadlines.

Continuous, ongoing monitoring and quality program improvement is embedded through the delivery of services. Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start have the organizational capacity and ability to successfully oversee program operations that comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations. During the 2020-2021 program year, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted the Focus Area 2 Review. It was noted that Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start was in compliance with all aspects of the review including Program Management and Quality Improvement, Education and Child Development Services, Health Services, Family and Community Engagement Services, Monitoring and Implementing a Fiscal Infrastructure, and Monitoring ERSEA- Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance. *Based on the information gathered during this review, we have found your program meets the requirements of all applicable HSPPS, laws, regulations, and policy requirements."*



CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

<u>PROGRAM INFORMATION</u> <u>REPORT INDICATORS</u>	HEAD START		EARLY HEAD START	
	Enrolled		Enrolled	
Children are up to date on schedule of EPDST at end of year	172	98%	189	88%
Of the above, children with chronic health condition needing treatment	13	7%	19	10%
Of the above children, number who received treatment	12	92%	18	95%
Preschool children who completed a professional dental exam	136	78%	N/A	N/A
Of the above children, number who needed treatment	27	20%	N/A	N/A
Of the children needing treatment, number who received it	5	19%	N/A	N/A
Children with health insurance (end of program year)	171	98%	242	91%
Children with a medical home (end of program year)	175	100%	251	94%
Children up to date on immunizations (end of program year)	172	98%	201	75%



CHILD DISABILITY SERVICES

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Head Start</u>	<u>Early Head Start</u>
Funded Child Enrollment	165	216
Number of Children with IEP/IFSP	7	40
Of these, the number who were determined to receive special education and related services (HS) or early intervention (EHS).		
Prior to Enrollment	5	26
During the Program Year	5	14
Percentage of Enrollment	6%	18%



PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Families play a critical role in Head Start and Early Head Start. Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start have an established Policy Council through which parents participate in making decisions about their Head Start program. The Policy Council assists in developing program policies, making decisions with regard to the hiring and terminating of staff, developing the budget and determining program priorities. A Parent Association Committee (PAC) is established at each center and is comprised of the parents of currently enrolled children. Parents are surveyed for the types of activities or workshops in which they would like to participate in during PAC meetings. Parents develop leadership skills and experiences as they take on the planning and development of these activities and services. Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start is a community based, parent program, which requires parent participation. Donations of goods or services reflect 20% of the Head Start and Early Head Start budget. Family workers and education staff encourage and invite parents to volunteer in the classroom, kitchen, and office. Parents are encouraged to work on special activities engaging parents with the program and each other.

- Families volunteered **56,178** hours during the 2024-2025 program year.
- Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start reported **\$2,284,686.00** in non-federal/in-kind match. **The program secured \$957,917.00 in preschool funding.**



FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM

FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Number of fathers/father figures who were engaged in the following activities this program year:

HEAD START EARLY HEAD START

• Family assessment	42	35
• Goal setting	43	35
• Involvement in child's developmental experiences	98	50
• Program governance- Policy Council, PAC	6	0
• Parenting education workshops	13	15

VOLUNTEERISM PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

HEAD START EARLY HEAD START

Number of persons providing any volunteer services to the program since last year

399 342

Of these, the number who are current or former Head Start or Early Head Start parents

244 261



EDUCATION AND SCHOOL READINESS

The education curriculum is reviewed with families on a regular basis to ensure that parents are involved in assessing the curriculum's effectiveness in meeting the needs and development of each child enrolled in the program. It is the philosophy of Norwescap Head Start and Early Head Start that parents are the primary educators of their children. Administrative and center staff recruit parents to become active members of the program and the community.

The curriculum process prepares children for kindergarten. After an initial screening using the Early Screening Inventory, preschool teachers and home visitors individualize their lesson plans by setting goals to meet the needs of each child. For children transitioning to kindergarten, this includes skills in the areas of physical health and development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, logic and reasoning, language development, literacy mathematics, science, creative arts expression, social studies and English language development for dual language learners.



Throughout the year, the goals and accomplishments are updated and reviewed with each child's parents. Additional assessments through the year, using Teaching Strategies GOLD, provide the necessary data to determine outcomes and to develop continuous improvement plans. Individual development plans for infants and toddlers are based on the results of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening and the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment. Infants and toddlers are being prepared for success in school by thoughtfully planned activities that develop social-emotional, physical, cognitive and language skills while promoting confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness.

EDUCATION AND SCHOOL READINESS

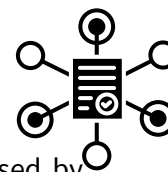
ASSESSMENTS

Early Head Start and Head Start Teachers are to assess children three times a year and review data to support children's learning and program improvement efforts.

3x

PLATFORM

Teaching Strategies GOLD is the observation-based early learning platform used by Norwescap Early Head Start and Head Start to assess children's school readiness. TS GOLD aligns with the HS Early Learning Outcomes Framework.



OBSERVATIONS

EHS and HS teachers document on-going observations of children and use this information to complete checkpoints three times a year - fall by 12/1, winter by 3/1, and spring by 6/1.



MILESTONES

Checkpoints are developmentally appropriate milestones used to assess children's development in 6 learning domains and 38 objectives.



DATA ANALYSIS

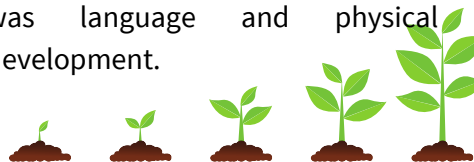
After each checkpoint period, reports are reviewed by the Program Director, Education Manager, and Coordinators during school readiness meetings to gain an understanding of children's development and growth.



HEAD START WORKS

By the end of the program year, children showed growth in all areas.

The highest area of growth in EHS was language and physical development.



LITERACY

The highest area of growth for Head Start was Literacy.

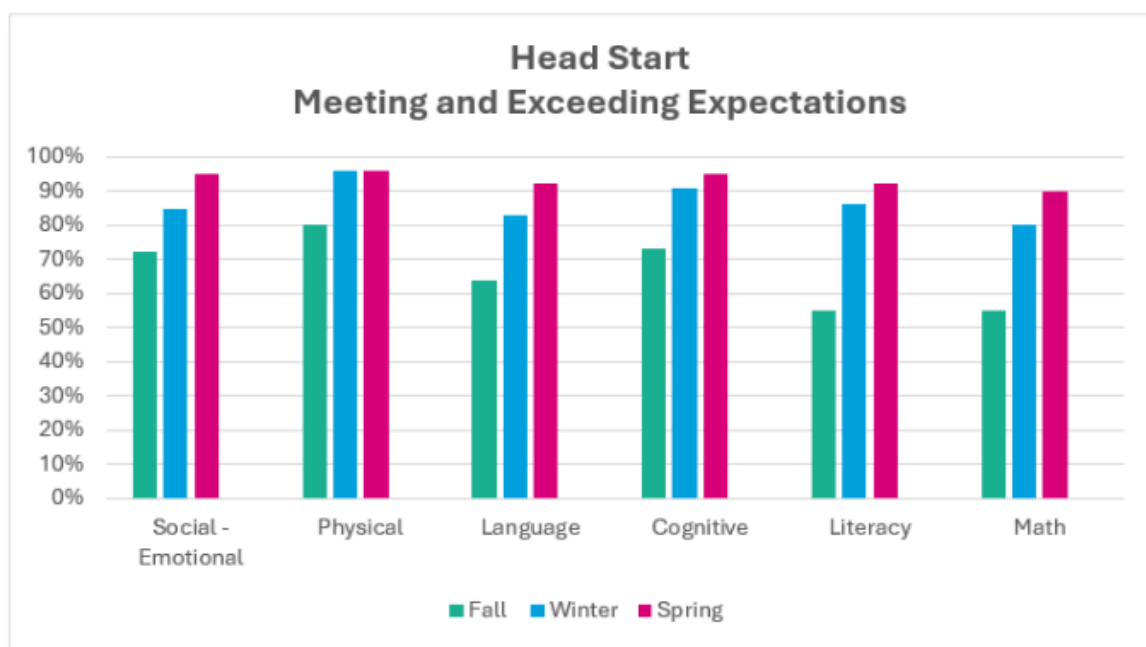
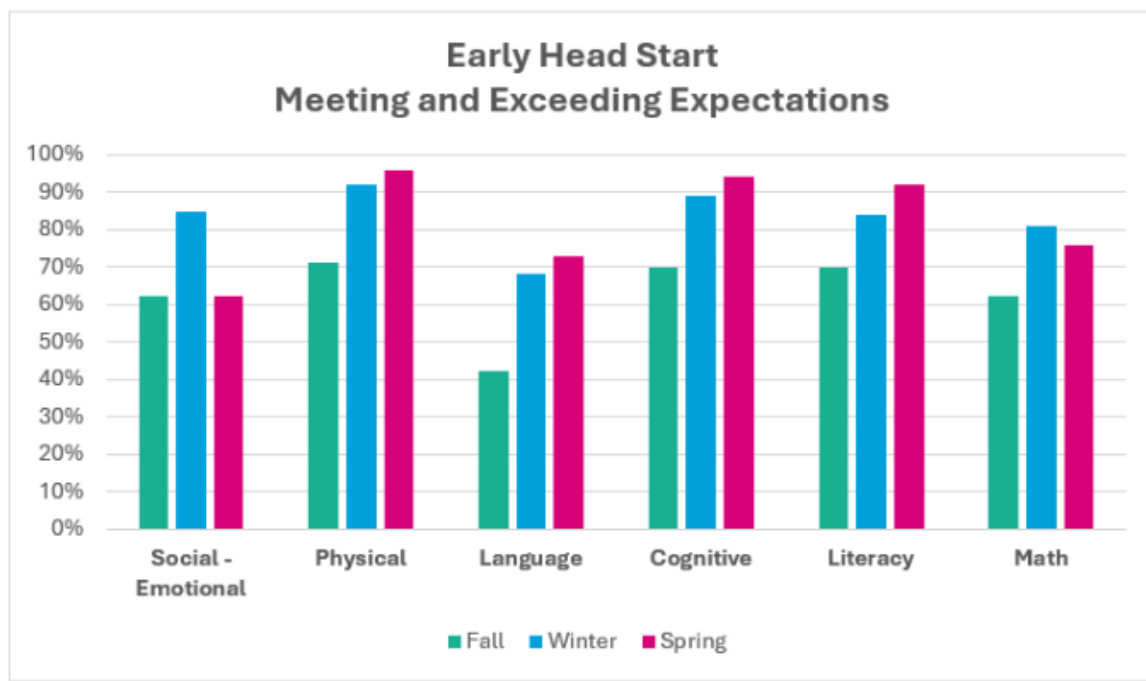
Mathematics and social-emotional development showed the second highest area of growth.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

This year we placed stronger emphasis on supporting children's social-emotional development and well-being. Classrooms were monitoring in the winter and spring using an observation tool specific to teacher's social and emotional intentionality with children





CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS)

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™)

is an observational instrument developed to

assess classroom quality

in PK-12 classrooms. It

describes multiple

dimensions of teaching

that are linked to student

achievement and

development and has

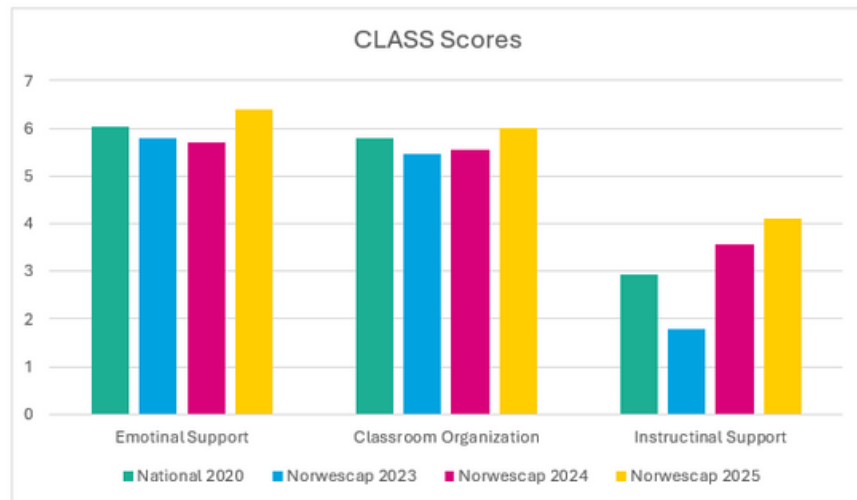
been validated in over

2,000 classrooms.

The CLASS™ can be used

to reliably assess classroom quality for

research and program evaluation and also provide a tool to help new and experienced teachers become more effective.



The CLASS review scheduled for PY 2021-2022 was cancelled by the Office of Head Start. The data below reflects CLASS scores from previous years.



EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:

Assesses the degree to which teachers establish and promote positive climate in their classroom through their everyday interactions. (National Average 6.03, Norwescap 2023 Average 5.78, Norwescap 2024 5.71, Norwescap 2025 6.41)



CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION:

Assesses classroom routines and procedures related to the organization and management of children's behavior, time, and attention in the classroom. (National Average 5.78, Norwescap 2023 5.47, Norwescap 2024 5.56, Norwescap 2025 6)

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT:

Instructional Support Assesses the way in which teachers implement the curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development. (National Average 2.94, Norwescap 2023 3.71, Norwescap 2024 3.55, Norwescap 2025 4.1)





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**For more information on Norwescap Head Start
or other Norwescap programs, visit:**

www.norwescap.org