

HEAD START & EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Families and Friends of Head Start,

In May of 2025, we marked 60 years of Head Start, and we celebrated our history alongside the graduation of another year of children. Over these 6 decades, millions of families across the country and tens of thousands here in our region have strengthened their children's futures and advocated for the future of Head Start. Their partnership is fundamental to the work we do. We want to share here just a few stories of families who brought so much to our program as leaders on our Policy Council, and where they are today.

Please enjoy,



Anat Weisenfreund,
Director Head Start & Early Learning Programs



Deana Currie

Current Policy Council Chair

Deana's Head Start graduates Adeline and Avery are now 6 and 10, in 1st and 5th grade! Avery first enrolled in Head Start when they moved to the area with, as Deana says, "no village." Asked what she remembers most of their time with Head Start, Deana describes how during the COVID pandemic, "Our family got sick and our Family Advocates went out of their way to bring us Covid tests and check in on us. They also helped us secure after school care as our children transitioned to kindergarten." The impact of Head Start continues: "Both of my children have thrived in elementary school—academically, socially, and emotionally. They were given the skills to seamlessly adjust and continue a love for learning that was instilled in them from both of us, their parents, and Head Start." Along with the friends and connections she's made through Policy Council, Deana celebrates that, "I have been able to be a part of something that means so much to so many families like my own. It has also given me opportunities to make an impact on a program which I believe in and gives so much back to children and families."



he was part of both part-day Head Start and Head Start at Home. What stands out from their experience in the programs are their fabulous home visitors: Daniel, Leslie, and Deirdre! Alena reports that Gabriel, now five, "loves kindergarten, especially learning math and reading!" And her time leading the Policy Council and deepening family engagement in program leadership, has left Alena with "an appreciation for the intensive nature of compliance with federal regulations."



Maria Moreno

Policy Council Chair 2015-2017, 2021-2022

Maria first heard about Head Start when a neighbor recommended it for her oldest child, Isabel. "We decided to visit and immediately felt it was the right place for our family." Over time, the family enrolled Olivia and William as well. Maria remembers that, "The teachers made all the difference for us. Ms. Kristi, Ms. Debbie, and Ms. Heather were such an important part of our children's development and happiness during their preschool years. We were very lucky that the same wonderful team worked with all three of our kids."



Alena Bartoli

Policy Council Chair 2022-2025

Alena first enrolled her son Gabriel in Head Start in search of affordable child care, and over time



2024-2025 POLICY COUNCIL

Head Start Parent Members

Deacon Almedina

Yashira Baez

Alena Bartoli (Chair)

Lisa Blair

Daniana Bisono

Caitlin Martin

Jill Wessel

Andrea Willet

Melissa Winot

Community Members

Deana Currie, Past Head Start
Parent (Vice Chair, Chair)

Cathi Erland-Flynn, MA
Department of Children and
Families (Secretary/Treasurer)

Nicole Lyman,
Valuing Our Children

Sarah Patton, Infant and Early
Childhood Mental Health
Consultant

Natalie Spatcher,
CAPV Board Liaison

Robin Sudlow,
REACH Early Intervention

The Head Start Policy
Council partners in shared
governance with the CAPV
Board of Directors.

Maria Moreno, continued

They made us feel comfortable and safe, and the children were always happy and excited to go to school." Today the children are 14, 12, and 8, and Maria describes their passions and pursuits of art, theater, science, and sports. And she says, "All three of them have a strong love of reading, which I credit Head Start for helping to nurture." Maria, who remains a member of the CAPV Board of Directors, describes her time on Policy Council by saying, "At first, I didn't know exactly what the Policy Council did or what my role would be, but it turned out to be such a meaningful experience. I learned so much about how the organization works, and I truly felt part of building the program alongside the administration and staff. It was my way to contribute and give back in exchange for my children's education, and to help strengthen the program for future families. Being part of the Policy Council gave me confidence in making decisions and inspired me to get more involved in organizations that work toward a better future."

Josh Bain

Policy Council Chair 2017-2020

Josh's family was first connected to Head Start by a social worker, to support foster children placed in their care. Over time Kayden, Felix, Cora, and Etta – now ranging from 7 to 16 – all enrolled. As Josh remembers it, "The teachers and staff made lifetime memories for me and my family. We often talk about sayings, songs, or activities that we learned while attending Head Start. It was an extension of our family." Today the children, all adopted, are doing great: "Having already experienced learning in a Head Start classroom, our transition to public schools was seamless." And Josh has powerful memories of what he experienced as a part of Policy Council. "Whatever challenge I felt my family was facing, there was someone stronger who was taking on more than I was. Seeing the strength and courage of other council members reinforced why we were all there."



Jennifer Allen

Policy Council Chair 2012-2013

Jennifer's family first got involved with Head Start because she was looking for an early childhood setting that offered, "both quality education and strong family support." She remembers her children RJ, Asa, Lydia, and Isaiah loving the food, the graduations, and "the friendships we built with other families." Today her Head Start graduates are 17, 18, 20, and 27 and doing well in high school, college, and beyond. Jennifer remembers her time working with Policy Council fondly, saying, "I learned so much about how boards operate and the important work that happens behind the scenes to support families and children."





OUR HISTORY

Head Start has a long history in our region providing early education and care alongside a wide range of services for very low-income pregnant parents, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families. Our service area spans nearly 1,600 square miles in the Pioneer Valley and includes three mostly rural and semi-rural counties from the border of Vermont to the border of Connecticut. In 2024-25 we operated eight center-based sites with locations and hours based on community needs, as well as our Head Start at Home home visiting program which spans our whole service area. Our work is rooted in the Brazelton Touchpoints Approach (TM) and deep relationships formed among staff and families.

OUR MISSION

We partner with families in all that we do and believe that parents are the experts on their children. Together, we build a solid foundation for resilient and resourceful caregivers; caring, confident, and curious children; and responsive, invested communities.

OUR PROGRAM GOALS

In 2023-2024 we launched a new five-year grant cycle with a set of goals that are rooted in our work so far. Our goals highlight our values and priorities as we aim, always, to enhance and strengthen our work. These goals are deeply related to our School Readiness Goals and all support children and families being ready for school and for life.



Access & Program Design: Based on community needs and workforce realities, we will design and implement a program structure that will ensure full enrollment and maximize quality.



Workforce: Because stable relationships with highly competent caregivers are essential to child development and to partnership with families, we will invest in strategies to increase wages, decrease turnover, and enhance the experience of working at HS & ELP.



Relationships: Because development occurs at the intersection of relationships between children, families, and program staff, we will deepen partnerships with parents and caregivers and enhance resources to help their children thrive.



Health & Safety: Because health is a foundation for school readiness, we will improve children's up to date health and dental status and support nutrition and physical well-being in our settings.

ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Community Action Pioneer Valley learns about our region using data from the Census and other sources, surveys of participants and service providers, and the first-hand knowledge of community members including leaders on our Policy Council and Board of Directors. We use this information to make decisions about our program's locations, hours, and services as well as which children and families are most in need of Head Start and Early Head Start. Our most recent Community Needs Assessment was completed in summer 2023 and updated in winter 2024. It found:

- There is only enough licensed child care and pre-K capacity in our region to serve about two-thirds of all young children, with particular challenges in rural areas
- Child poverty in our region rose slightly from 2022 to 2023 and reached 21% of children under 5 in Franklin County
- Rising costs of housing, utilities, and food have put additional burdens on families
- Homelessness among pre-K to 12 students rose 16% from 2022-23 to 2023-24, with the highest rates in Greenfield, West Springfield, and Orange
- Transportation remains a major barrier to accessing services and can reinforce families' isolation
- Children's experiences during the past several years have had lasting impacts on their development

Even in this context, we have witnessed incredible resilience among children and families, and we have seen the kinds of growth and progress they can make in partnership with our program.

In 2024-2025, Community Action Pioneer Valley's Head Start and Early Learning Programs (HS & ELP) provided services to 161 infants and toddlers and 9 pregnant women in Early Head Start from 144 families and 268 preschoolers in Head Start from 247 families.



SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Children and expectant parents are eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start services based on their age (birth to age 3 for EHS and 2 years 9 months to age 5 for HS) and their income (at or below the Federal Poverty Level, which was \$32,150 for a family of four in 2025). Children are also eligible if they are in foster care, they are homeless, or their families receive public assistance. We are able to enroll about one in thirteen low-income children who are potentially eligible for Head Start, so we prioritize among applicants to serve the children and families most in need of support.

During the months when all program options were open (September through May), average enrollment was 98% for both Head Start and Early Head Start.



SCHOOL READINESS MISSION

Head Start & Early Learning Programs seek to build a foundation for lifelong learning. We work with families and the community so that children can develop caring relationships, confidence, and curiosity. Caring, confident, and curious children are ready for school.

School Readiness Goals

HS & ELP has School Readiness Goals about children's learning and development in these areas:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language/Communication
- Cognition (separated into Math and Science for preschoolers)
- Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
- Attendance

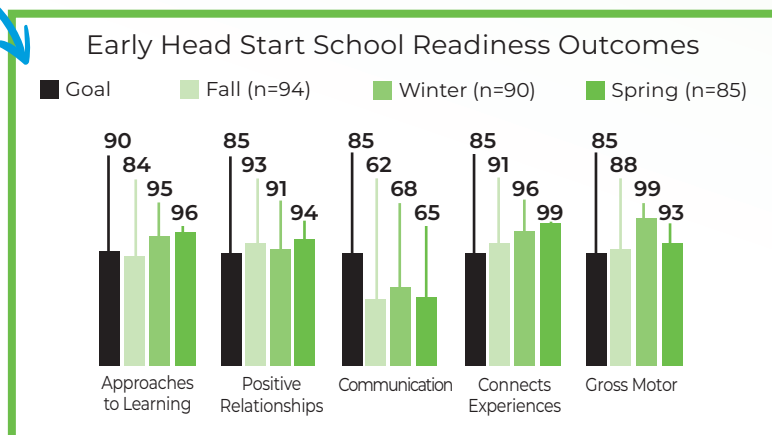


We integrate data on learning and development in these areas with our holistic knowledge of the children in our program. We study how children's attendance, primary languages, classroom features, disability status, and more relate to their progress over time. This year we

found that nearly 2/3 of children had a disability or developmental delay, needed mental health supports, were involved with the Department of Children and Family Services, were homeless, or experienced more than one of these factors. In areas where children made progress over the year but a smaller proportion met our School Readiness Goals than we aimed for, we used this context to understand patterns of needs and to strategize how to respond. Classroom quality is measured with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and children's progress is tracked using SmartTeach.

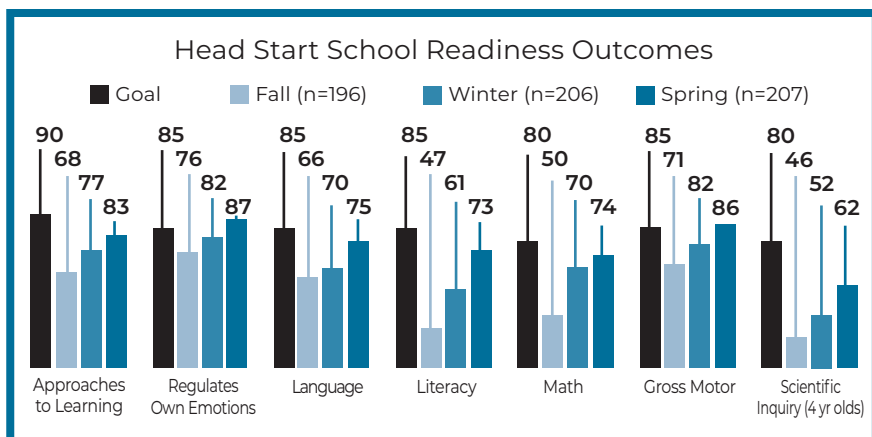
Early Head Start Outcomes

Infants and toddlers develop and change rapidly, so each child is measured against different expectations at different times through the year. The chart below compares the proportion of children who were meeting or exceeding their age-appropriate expectations at each point in time in each domain of our School Readiness Goals. Children met or exceeded four of our five goals by the end of the year!



Head Start Outcomes

In Head Start, each child is held to the same expectations throughout the year. While some children may leave during the year or new children enroll, numbers are more easily compared over time. Again, the graph shows our School Readiness Goals in comparison to children's progress at meeting and exceeding age-level expectations. Children made noteworthy progress in the areas of Literacy, Math, and Scientific Inquiry. By the end of the year, they met our goals in Gross Motor and Emotional Regulation.



OUR SERVICES

At Head Start & Early Learning Programs, our staff partner with each family to learn about their resources, needs, and goals. Specialists in family services, health, nutrition, mental health, and disabilities provide direct support and connections to community resources to help each family with what they want to achieve.

MENTAL HEALTH

Our team of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (IECMHCs) partners with families, educators, home visitors, and other program staff to reflect on children's behavior or needs and respond effectively. They supported 159 children during the 2024-25 school year and were also involved in enhancing and implementing our system for addressing the needs of children, families, and classrooms. This year we spent time during our Self-Assessment process and our Health and Mental Health Advisory Committee meetings reflecting on our IECMHC practices and the well-being of children, families, and staff in our program. We are proud of the system we've built over time and also work toward continuous improvement.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Our Disabilities Team, along with IECMHCs, works closely with staff to increase the meaningful inclusion of children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities and developmental delays across all settings. During the 2024-25 school year, 86 infants and toddlers (53%) and 73 preschoolers (27%) received support for a disability or developmental delay through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP). Over the past several years, we've experienced a higher rate of children in need of these supports.

FAMILY SERVICES

Each family's experience at HS & ELP is built on a foundation of relationships, and one essential relationship is with their Home Visitor or Family Advocate! Through a dialogue about strengths, needs, and resources, the family gets support to set personal goals and access community resources. In 2024-2025, some of the most common goals families set included finding employment or affordable housing, supporting a child's transition to preschool or kindergarten, and better understanding their child's development. This year, 98% of Head Start and 99% of Early Head Start families received family services customized to their circumstances.

HEALTH

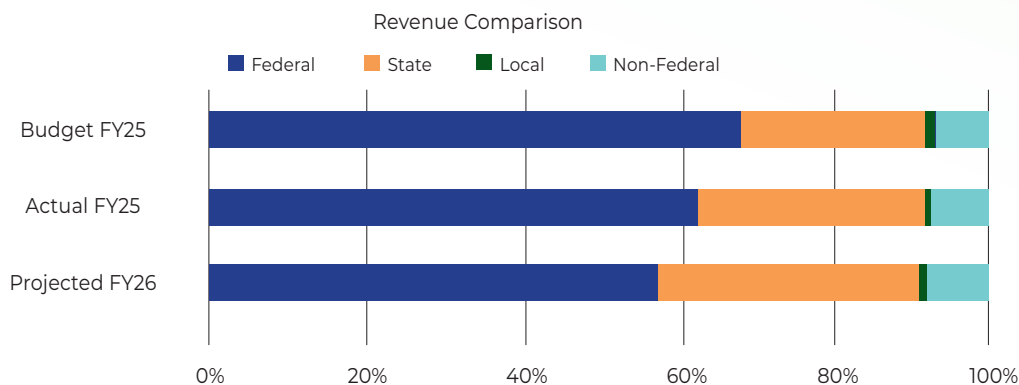
Our health team works to support children's holistic health and well-being. In 2024-25, 100% of children had medical homes and 99% of Head Start children and 82% of Early Head Start children had dental homes by the end of the year. Yet since the COVID-19 pandemic, families have faced barriers to staying fully up to date on the state's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule. EPSDT requires a lengthy series of physicals, dental exams, vaccines, and screenings, with new events constantly coming due. This year we dedicated part of our Self-Assessment process to understanding the barriers family face and intervening to address those we could. By the end of the year, 42% of Early Head Start children and 47% of Head Start children were fully up to date, a substantial improvement from where we started. We continue to work as a program to understand barriers that families face and support collaborative relationships with medical and dental providers in our area. In addition, nutrition and sourcing local fresh foods remain a priority for our program.



HEAD START AND EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER VALLEY, INC.

STATEMENT OF REVENUE WITH BUDGET COMPARISON FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

Revenue and support	Total HS & ELP Actual	Other HS&ELP Actual	Head Start & Early Head Start Actual	Total HS & ELP Budget
Head Start	\$6,607,230	\$-	\$6,607,230	\$6,607,230
Early Head Start	\$2,457,321	\$-	\$2,457,321	\$2,457,321
USDA Food and Nutrition Service thru DESE	\$320,620	\$320,620	\$-	\$217,350
Early Education and Care (EEC) Subsidies	\$2,351,330	\$2,351,330	\$-	\$2,295,057
EEC Head Start State Supplemental	\$787,345	\$787,345	\$-	\$714,540
CPPI, Northampton Public Schools	\$61,532	\$61,532	\$-	\$61,218
Town of West Springfield Office of Community Development	\$30,748	\$30,748	\$-	\$15,000
Parent fees	\$65,989	\$65,989	\$-	\$67,000
Shurtleff Children's Services	\$3,520	\$3,520	\$-	\$3,520
In-kind rents, goods and services	\$848,007	\$-	\$848,007	\$873,567
Other Revenue	\$5,171	\$5,171	\$-	\$-
C3 Funding/ARPA	\$887,380	\$887,380	\$-	\$279,659
Total revenue and support	\$14,426,194	\$4,513,635	\$9,912,558	\$13,591,462



Volunteers by the Numbers

Volunteers are hugely important to our program and bring skills, talents, and care! Plus, their donated time counts toward the "in kind" match for our federal Head Start grant. This year Head Start parents, family members, and community members spent time in classrooms; joined our Policy Council, Education Advisory Committee, and Health and Mental Health Advisory Committee; attended family meetings and extended their children's learning at home; interned in our program; and donated goods and time to help our community. About 289 volunteers, 250 of them parents, contributed over 1,973 hours of their time!



HEAD START AND EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER VALLEY, INC.

STATEMENT OF EXPENSE WITH BUDGET COMPARISON FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

Expense	Total HS & ELP Actual	Other HS&ELP Actual	Head Start & Early Head Start Actual	Total HS & ELP Budget
Salaries & wages	\$6,983,208	\$2,561,373	\$4,421,835	\$6,928,036
Payroll taxes	\$760,870	\$281,873	\$478,997	\$784,949
Fringe benefits	\$1,295,271	\$403,718	\$891,552	\$1,104,100
Facility rent & mortgage interest	\$37,113	\$9,576	\$27,537	\$37,050
Facility operations/maintenance/furnishings	\$718,735	\$164,739	\$553,997	\$549,089
Property & general liability insurance	\$42,024	\$9,290	\$32,734	\$24,500
Direct care consultants	\$49,532	\$16,219	\$33,312	\$31,000
Subcontracted direct care	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
Staff training, conferences & meetings	\$80,931	\$16,485	\$64,447	\$60,701
Staff mileage/travel	\$69,185	\$19,646	\$49,539	\$46,250
Meals and food preparation supplies	\$345,366	\$281,103	\$64,263	\$240,429
Client transportation	\$39,389	\$-	\$39,389	\$89,205
Vehicle expenses	\$55,981	\$3,371	\$52,610	\$25,500
Program supplies/materials and equipment	\$80,799	\$20,652	\$60,146	\$72,290
Office, telephone, advertising and other misc expenses	\$137,607	\$23,179	\$114,428	\$83,430
Depreciation of property & equipment	\$10,412	\$894	\$9,519	\$1,900
Capital expenditures	\$1,421,839	\$113,381	\$1,308,458	\$1,300,457
In-kind expenses	\$848,007	\$-	\$848,007	\$873,567
Allocation of indirect costs	\$1,396,010	\$534,222	\$861,788	\$1,339,008
Reimbursable expense	\$14,372,281	\$4,459,723	\$9,912,558	\$13,591,462
Accrued vacation expense	\$41,595	\$41,595	\$-	\$-
Non-reimbursable depreciation expense	\$36,780	\$36,780	\$-	\$-
Non-reimbursable indirect costs	\$49,414	\$49,414	\$-	\$-
Prior year costs	\$571	\$571	\$-	\$-
Uncollected parent fees	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
Non-reimbursable expense	\$128,360	\$128,360	\$-	\$-
Total expense	\$14,500,641	\$4,588,083	\$9,912,558	\$13,591,462
Net Revenue Over Expenditures	\$74,448	\$74,448	\$-	\$-

Head Start Funding Notes

Massachusetts Department of Early Education & Care Head Start Supplemental grant and Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grant revenue is used to meet a portion of the 20% non-federal match requirement.

Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start was awarded by the Office of Head Start \$7,764,094 in one-time construction funds to build a new Head Start Facility in Westfield, Ma. In addition to this, the program was also awarded \$539,000 in state funds through Community Economic Development Assistance Program (CEDAC)/Children's Investment Funds (CIF) to build 2 playgrounds at the new Westfield site. \$1,300,458 of those funds is included in FY25 Revenues and Expenses, with the remainder to be spent during the following years of the project.

Administration for Children and Families Reviews

HS & ELP's most recent monitoring event was a Focus Area 2 review conducted in December 2025 by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). HS & ELP was in compliance on all measures and no corrective action was required.

Community Action's most recent independent audit submitted a consolidated financial statement for the period ending September 30, 2025 and had no material findings.