Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana
Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2017

(December 1, 2016 – November 30, 2017)

Introduction

Head Start is a federally funded child development program serving income-eligible children and families. Nationwide, nearly one million children are currently enrolled in Head Start programs. Eligibility is limited primarily to children living below the poverty level, which in 2017 equated to $24,600 of gross income for a family of four.

The overriding goal of the Head Start program is to prepare children for their successful entry into Kindergarten. National research shows a significant "readiness gap" exists among children entering kindergarten which is most often related to family income. Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana utilizes a research-based curriculum focused on multiple child development domains in order to eliminate this readiness gap and provide children a 'head start' to a successful school experience.

The Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) partners with area school districts throughout Muskegon and Oceana counties in order to integrate pre-school Head Start services into the school learning environment. Early Head Start focuses on developing parenting skills and healthy child development among the program's birth-to-three children and families. Significant efforts are dedicated to parent engagement. This includes home visits and addressing the needs of each individual child relating to nutrition, physical health, mental health, and disabilities.

Program by the Numbers

- 439,040 – Preschool instructional hours provided
- 3,518 – Home visits conducted with Early Head Start families (pregnant woman and families with birth-to-three children
- 2,552 – Home visits conducted with Head Start families (families with pre-school aged children)
- 26,131 – Recorded family reading hours with children
- 186% - Letter recognition increased for four year old children
- 45% - Number recognition increased for four year old children
- 100% - Children have a primary care doctor
- 173 – Families that received mental health services/interventions
- 34 – Foster children served
- 12% - Families experiencing homelessness
- 46% - Families received emergency/crisis intervention services

Enrollment & Attendance

During the 2016-17 program year, the MAISD was funded to provide services to 624 Head Start children and 143 Early Head Start participants. Head Start offered services in thirty-two classrooms throughout the two counties. Fifteen family service workers provided weekly home-visiting services to Early Head Start participants. In each month the program was fully enrolled with such data reported to federal officials.

A major program-wide emphasis was placed on increasing daily preschool attendance during 2016-17. As a result, daily attendance increased from 86.8% during 2015-16 to 89.5% in the 2016-17 school year. This higher attendance percentages carried forward into the results during the fall of 2017 as well.

A summary of various enrollment statistics for the 2016-17 periods follows:

- Head Start children served: 698
- Early Head Start participants: 247
- Enrollment: 100%
- Year-end attendance rate: 89.5%
- Percent of four-year olds in Head Start classrooms: 65%
- Percent of children served being minorities: 57%
- Children served with an IEP/IFSP: 17.7%
- Second-year or returning Head Start children: 35%

Program waiting lists remained high. The month-end waiting list for Head Start reached 163 eligible children in January 2017 while the Early Head Start waiting list stood at 82 individuals. Using county birth numbers and federal census data regarding childhood poverty, it is estimated that Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana served approximately thirty-five percent of the income-eligible children living in the service area; the local state preschool program known as Great Start Readiness serves an additional 47% of the income-eligible population.

Children Enrolled in the Program Receiving Medical & Dental Services

Linking families with permanent medical and dental "homes" is a critical piece to establishing stability and long-term health care for Head Start and Early Head Start families and children. Starting young children out in life on a healthy track is critical to support their early learning.

By the conclusion of the 2016-17 school year, 97% of Head Start children had established a primary care physician. Furthermore, 93% of all children were up-to-date with age-appropriate primary health care examinations. In respect to dental care, 98% of Head Start children had been established as a client with a local dentist with 99% of those children received a dental exam in the past year.

In Early Head Start, 100% of all children had current medical and dental homes. Ninety percent of children served in Early Head Start were current with their medical exams.

Parent & Family Involvement Activities

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana believes that parents are a child's first and most important life-long teacher. Engaged parents and family members are keys to a child's success. The Head Start and Early Head Start program assists family members to take an active role in their child's education, both now and in their future K-12 school years. Home visits by staff occur regularly throughout the year. A "Family Engagement Contract" focuses on items such as children's attendance, sleep, parent-child at-home activities, reading and positive adult-child activities.

The program sponsors a variety of parent and family involvement activities, including the following examples:

- Establishing Family Self-Sufficiency & Partnership Goals with a strong focus on regular class attendance and reading with one's child
- Research-based parenting classes
- Family Literacy Nights
- Family Fun Nights
- Dads on Deck Fatherhood Initiative
- Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports
- Many referrals and partnerships with community agencies serving local families

Transitioning Children to Kindergarten

Four hundred and six children were transitioned into Kindergarten classrooms from Head Start for the 2017-18 school year. In partnership with local school districts, several collaborative efforts take place to transition children from Head Start into Kindergarten in a seamless and child-friendly manner. Kindergarten enrollment packets are provided to Head Start families, and Kindergarten registration information is reviewed with them personally. In addition parents and children visit Kindergarten classrooms via Head Start field trips, attend Kindergarten orientation, and attend round-ups and conferences. Using a newly developed local "Kindergarten Readiness Report," children's Head Start assessment data and readiness evaluations are passed from Head Start teachers to incoming Kindergarten principals.

Funding

The United States Department of Health and Human Services provides funding to Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana to operate the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The Muskegon Area ISD received $7,575,712 from the federal government for the grant year ended 11/30/17. Additionally, USDA funds of approximately $446,000 paid for most breakfasts, lunches, and snacks served to Head Start children during the grant year.

The majority of the expenditures of Head Start and Early Head Start are for wages and benefits and contractual costs. Four local school districts in the two-county area received a total of $2,223,221 in funding to serve the children and families. The districts spend a majority of the funds they receive on personnel wages and benefits. Additionally, the cost of contracted transportation, busing services for the children to and from school, was $368,291.

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana is required to provide a non-federal match to support the program. For the grant year ending 11/30/17, actual non-federal share totaled $1,925,208. The majority of non-federal share was from State of Michigan early childhood grants, parents and community members who worked as volunteers for the program, and local school districts that donated classroom and office space in district buildings.

The proposed budget for the next grant year ending 11/30/2018, for both Head Start and Early Head Start combined, includes the following categories and amounts:

- Personnel wages and benefits $3,564,619
- Out-of-Town Travel $32,804
- Equipment (one bus, two passenger vehicles, and a playground structure) $147,000
- Supplies $183,226
- Contractual includes $2,400,723 for four partner districts and $418,181 for the bus transportation contract, and totals $3,472,068
- Other $497,289
- **TOTAL Proposed Budget $7,897,006**

The actual amount may be more or less than projected above due to the grant being on a Congressional budget continuing resolution. The full grant has not been officially approved in the fiscal year 2018 appropriations as of the date of this writing.

Results of the Most Recent Peer Review & Financial Audit

As a recipient of federal funds, Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana and the Muskegon Area ISD are required to adhere to strict federal performance standards of the Head Start Act. In addition to the annual self-assessment and ongoing internal monitoring procedures, federal peer reviews are conducted.

During the week of October 28, 2013, the Department of Health & Human Services sent a team to inspect the operations of Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana. The site review was unannounced; such visits are conducted by the federal government every three years of all Head Start programs. The team's final report noted no areas of non-compliance or deficiencies. CLASS scores did not meet the federal thresholds and resulted in the grant being re-competed. The new, five-year grant was awarded to the MAISD effective July 1, 2016.

On October 26, 2017, the independent auditing firm of Brickley DeLong issued its annual audit of the financial statements of the MAISD, including Head Start operations. The auditors presented an unmodified audit report. The audit of federal sources of income, also conducted by Brickley DeLong, resulted in a report with no material weaknesses and no significant deficiencies. The audit has been filed with the federal clearinghouse.

School Readiness of Head Start Children

School readiness, often called 'Kindergarten readiness,' is the concept relating to a child's level of preparation and skill set as he/she enters Kindergarten. Research shows that a child's level of 'readiness' at the time of Kindergarten entry is an important factor in a child's level of success in school during the K-12 years. Preparing Head Start children for success in Kindergarten and beyond is the local Head Start program's top priority.

Defining 'readiness' is not easy. Some people focus on a single indicator, such as whether a child knows the ABC's or counts to ten or more. Prominent research encourages an approach which assesses multiple child development domains. In Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana, school readiness goals and child outcome measures are established across six core child development domains: Approaches to learning, social-emotional development, cognition & general knowledge, perceptual, motor and physical development, language & early literacy, and English language development.

The following are critical early childhood development domains which are the focus of teaching and learning in Head Start ad Early Head Start programs locally.

- ### Approaches to Learning:
  This dimension relates to the child's development of initiative, curiosity, and persistence in his/her work and play – all critical life skills and markers for success in school and in life.

- ### Social and Emotional Development:
  The program helps develop children's self-confidence, independence, ability to follow directions, manage feelings, cooperate with classmates, and self-control. Kindergarten teachers often report these are critical skills for school success.

- ### Language and Literacy:
  This is a key area of development for children and emphasis in the program. A child's ability to communicate with others is essential. The program's curriculum dedicates much effort to developing children's vocabulary, communication skills, emergent reading skills, alliteration, and other language and early literacy building blocks.

- ## Cognition:
  These are critical years for children to develop thinking skills and learn about their world. Through such activities as counting, making patterns, sorting, comparing and measuring, exploring science and nature, and many other such activities, children develop the ability to solve problems, think critically, be imaginative, and enhance their overall knowledge.

- ## Perceptual, Motor, & Physical Development:
  Children need to be growing in a healthy manner in order to be ready to learn. The program focuses on ensuring appropriate health and nutrition as well as helping build their gross and fine motor skill set.

Fifty-two child outcome indicators are tracked, monitored, and analyzed using an internet-based assessment tool. Program leaders, classroom staff, and parents believe this multi-dimensional approach most effectively builds a solid foundation for children's success in school. During the 2016-17 school years, assessment data indicates significant progress was made toward children achieving school readiness by the completion of their Head Start enrollment. Up to 98% of enrolled children met or exceeded expected developmental growth ranges in a variety of monitored child domain areas.

The following chart graphs growth in four-year old Head Start children's outcomes during the 2016-17 school years on common early literacy indicators. From a developmental standpoint, most Kindergarten readiness standards are for children to recognize between ten and twenty letters at the time of Kindergarten entry.

The following is a summary of some basic Kindergarten readiness indicators achieved by the program's children who transitioned into Kindergarten in the fall of 2017.

- Program wide average of lower-case letter recognition: 16.25 letters (increase from 13.7 letters in prior year). Kindergarten readiness standard in research ranges from 10-20 letters recognized upon Kindergarten entry.

- Program wide average of sounds recognized: 14.66 letters (increase from 11.86 sounds in prior year). Kindergarten readiness standard in research ranges from 10-20 sounds recognized upon Kindergarten entry.

- Program wide average of numbers zero-to-ten recognition: 7.76 numbers (decrease from 8.96 numbers in prior year).

- Significant positive differences in child outcome data exist between children who returned to a second year of Head Start versus children who entered Head Start as a four year old for their first year of pre-k experience.

Data indicators showing the highest level of readiness included the following:

- Children recognizing, expressing and managing emotions in a positive manner
- Children expressing creativity and imagination in their thinking, play, and interactions with others
- Children using an expanding and expressive vocabulary
- Children using and appreciating books and retelling stories
- Children showing flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
- Children's classification skills and understanding of patterns

Indicators presenting the largest challenges – or assessed at being the lowest in Kindergarten readiness for the program as a whole - included the following:

- Children exhibiting a sense of identity, confidence, and belonging in classroom learning and/or social situations.
- Children using scientific inquiry to deepen his/her knowledge and understanding of the natural and physical words.
- Children connecting numerals with their quantities

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana
Mission Statement

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana prepares young children for success socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually by partnering with families and serving as a gateway to seamless community-based and educational services.

Philosophy

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana promotes each child's readiness for success in school and in life by valuing these core principles:

- Research confirms that a child's ***lifelong foundation for learning*** is established during the first five years of life.

- A child's primary influence and ***most important teacher*** is the family unit living in the child's home.
    - Raising a child is an awesome responsibility which requires hard work, dedication, and nurturing.
    - Supporting families is a critical element to promoting healthy early childhood development.

- Children are unique individuals; each child's growth and development must be supported in a manner that his/her ***full potential*** can be achieved.

- High-quality, comprehensive early childhood development services are vital to preparing all children for ***school readiness and success in life.***

- A child's early education learning environment – both at home and within a classroom – should provide a ***rich array*** of group and individual activities that foster positive physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, and social development.

A ***nurturing environment*** is key to a young child's healthy development. The utilization of ***positive behavioral supports*** is a critical piece to this environment.