

MERCER COUNTY HEAD START

NEVER STOP EXPLORING



2019 - 2020
ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Head Start has an unwavering commitment to those we serve. That commitment was challenged in 2020 through the COVID-19 Pandemic. Never, in our 46 years of existence, has Mercer County Head Start been faced with such a crisis. Through the leadership and expertise of our administrative staff partnered with the dedication of direct service staff, MCHS created programming to ensure children and families were “school-ready” for the fall of 2020.

Creativity and a will to always exceed expectations was the driving force behind the spring of 2020. Once Governor DeWine announced that all school / congregate settings were closed, MCHS developed programming options to ensure that the remainder of the school year would be filled with school readiness activities and ensuring our families’ basic needs were met.

Ensuring the health & safety of our staff and those we serve became paramount in the delivery of services. Out of the box innovative thinking became the norm. Utilizing transportation and nutrition staff MCHS was able to ensure families received much needed food. Delivering school activity packets and resource materials to families so that their children could participate in daily lesson plans with their peers online became a critical component of our success. I often say, “We do not do this alone, it takes all of us”. That statement was never more true than in 2020.

Beginning in the summer of 2020, restrictions began to lift that allowed MCHS to create a summer “bridge” program. This “bridge” program targeted our students who would be attending kindergarten in fall 2020. With careful and concise planning, MCHS was able to open our classrooms and begin teaching again.



When faced with a crisis, those engaged to serve in a mission for others make the impossible possible. As the Director of Mercer County Head Start, I am proud to say our school family met our mission and served those who needed us most. We face the future under the umbrella of a Pandemic. After 2020, I know we can overcome all obstacles.

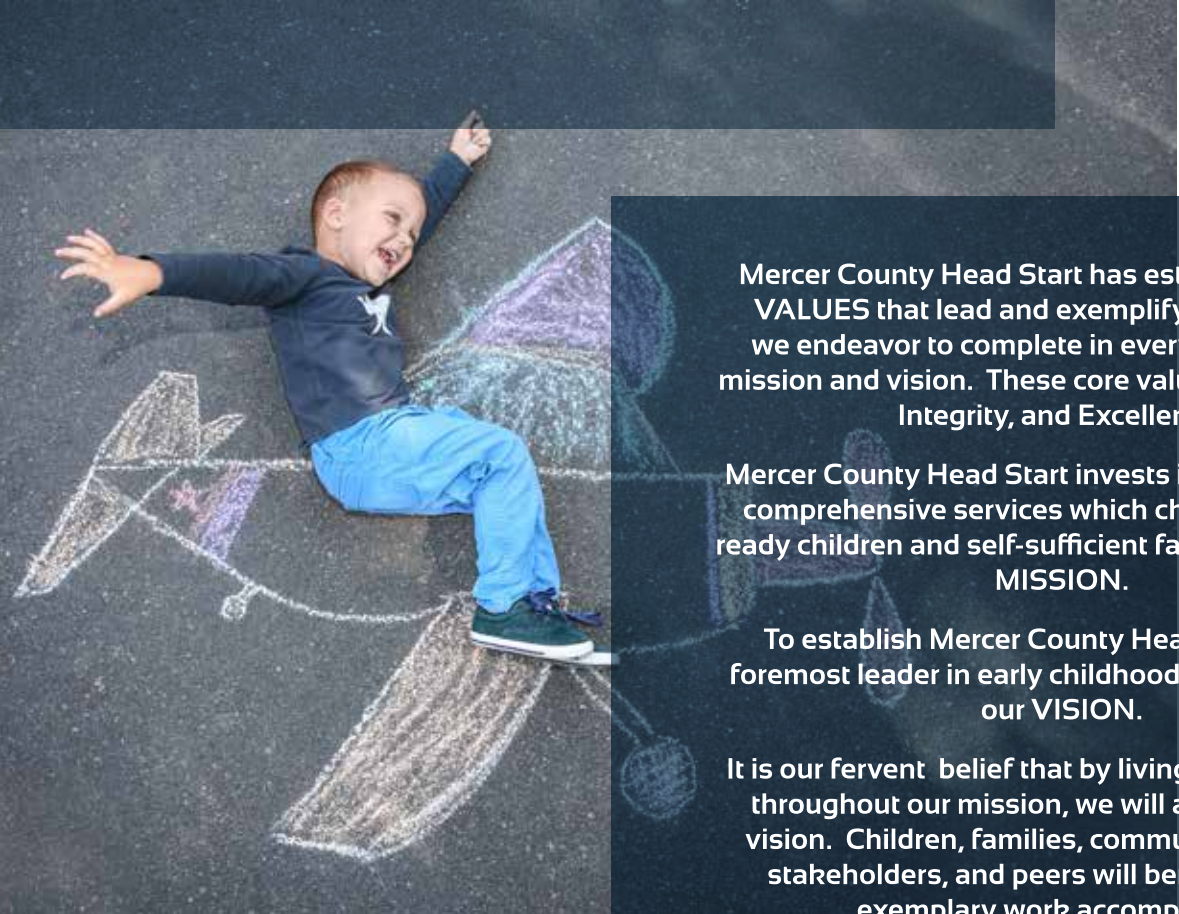
Thank you to my staff, our families, and our community.

Wishing you all well,

Amy Esser

Amy Esser
Executive Director
Mercer County Head Start

CORE VALUES - MISSION - VISION



Mercer County Head Start has established CORE VALUES that lead and exemplify the work that we endeavor to complete in every aspect of our mission and vision. These core values include Trust, Integrity, and Excellence.

Mercer County Head Start invests in individualized, comprehensive services which champion school ready children and self-sufficient families. This is our MISSION.

To establish Mercer County Head Start as the foremost leader in early childhood services. This is our VISION.

It is our fervent belief that by living our core values throughout our mission, we will accomplish our vision. Children, families, community members, stakeholders, and peers will benefit from the exemplary work accomplished.

Mercer County Head Start staff will hold true to our core values, mission, and vision displaying the compassion needed to combat poverty, inequity, and social injustice; forever impacting our local, state, and national communities.

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LEADERSHIP



The leader demonstrates confidence that the challenge can be met, the need resolved, the crisis overcome. ~ John Haggan

administrative team

- Amy Esser - Executive Director
- Sandy Stammen - Education Manager
- Angie Stephenson - Health & Community Services Manager
- Whitney Langston - Family Engagement Services Manager
- Dr. Ken Schmiesing - Superintendent
- Tom Sommer - Treasurer

Celina City Schools Board of Education along with Policy Council provide shared governance for the Mercer County Head Start program. While the Celina City Schools Board of Education is comprised of elected members of the community, the Policy Council consists of Head Start parents elected by their peers as well as other volunteer community service providers. Together, these two entities provide guidance and oversight to the program's Executive Director.

Along with the Celina City Schools Board of Education and Policy Council, parents have additional leadership opportunities by engaging in the parent committee also known as POPs (Parent Of Preschoolers). Parent committee members discuss programming, curriculum, and school readiness. All parents of enrolled children are members of the POPs committee.

The Executive Director of Mercer County Head Start provides information to the Policy Council and Board of Education to ensure accurate and responsible decision making.

policy council

Parent Representatives

- Hillary Goettemoeller - President
- Sara Dues - Vice President
- Leigh Milligan - Secretary
- Ashley Sutter
- Guadalupe Sanchez

Community Representatives

- Emily Plummer - YMCA CCR
- Jodi Grieshop - WIC
- Diane Gable - Foundations
- Jamie Miller - Mercer Co. Dept. of Jobs & Family Services
- Kim Kramer - Mercer Co. Family & Children First Council

Board of Education

- Deb Guingrich - Board Liaison
- Craig Flack
- Matt Gilmore
- Carl Huber
- Bill Sell
- Barb Vorhees

PROGRAM SNAPSHOTS



“Children are not things to be molded, but people to be unfolded.” Jess Lair.



Dr. Debra Bergeron, the Director of the Office of Head Start, visited Ohio Head Start Leadership to discuss the importance of transitioning the whole family from preschool to kindergarten. Our Director, Amy Esser, attended the meeting to speak on behalf of small rural communities and programs already partnered with school districts.



To prepare for the full adoption of Conscious Discipline as the program’s social emotional curriculum, members of the leadership team attended a week long conference in Texas. There leadership learned the neuroscience behind the brain states, 7 Powers, 7 Strategies, and 7 Structures. This information was brought back to staff and embedded in curricular expectations.



Like many other Head Start programs across the nation, Mercer County Head Start utilized financial and staff resources to continue to provide healthy meals to our students during the state-wide quarantine.



Attendance awards were given out monthly to the classrooms with the highest attendance. Student attendance in school leads to long-term student success. Pictured here is Mrs. Mariah and Mrs. Jane’s classroom celebrating their victory!

SCHOOL READINESS



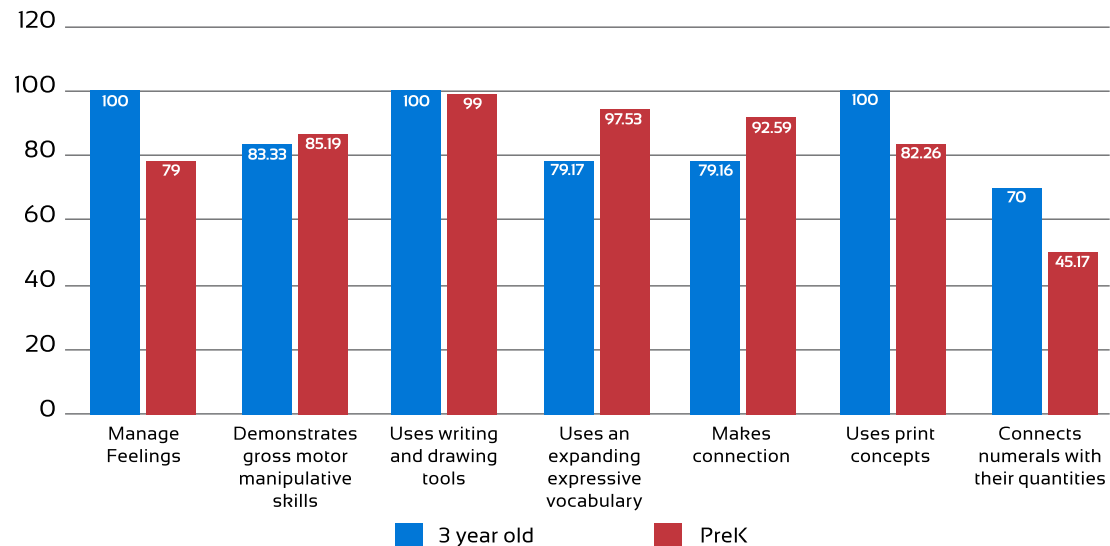
School readiness is measured by skills in the five central domains of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (ELOF): Social-Emotional, Physical (Gross Motor/Fine Motor), Language / Literacy, Cognitive, and Mathematics.

Mercer County Head Start program uses Creative Curriculum® in order to teach the early learning and development standards established by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). Teaching Strategies-Gold is used to assess the progress of the children in the program. This criterion-referenced tool uses *Widely Held Expectations* to assess children's skills, knowledge, and behaviors as compared to children of the same age or class/grade. *Widely Held Expectations* determine if a child's skills, knowledge, and behavior are below, meeting, or exceeding the research-based developmental milestones. Mercer County Head Start's school readiness goals are found within the six following domains: Cognitive and General Knowledge, Literacy Development, Approaches to Learning, Language Development, Physical Health Development, and Social Emotional Development. Within each domain a specific objective was targeted to support measurement of school readiness. The chart below reflects the objective used to measure the domain.

DOMAIN	OBJECTIVE
Social Emotional	Children will form and participate in meaningful relationships.
Language	Children will develop expressive language skills and expand their vocabulary.
Literacy	Children will understand that print conveys meaning.
Physical / Health	Children will develop gross and fine motor skills.
Approaches to Learning	Children will develop the skills to remember and connect experiences.
Cognitive and General Knowledge	Children will understand numbers and quantities.

The following chart demonstrates the percentage of children achieving school readiness benchmarks in each of the domains listed on the previous page.

School Readiness Goals PY 19/20
% of achievement



School Readiness achievement is set at 75% benchmark.

85

Eighty-five children transitioned from Mercer County Head Start to local kindergarten classrooms. These include Celina City Schools, Coldwater Exempted Village Schools, and Parkway Local Schools.

Transitions are a critical part of everyday life, especially in the life of a child. Because transitions have such an impact on day to day life it is imperative that transitions are planned in advance, consider individual needs, and incorporate all parties involved. Transitions require partnership and input between parents and staff. While each transition is very important, the transition from preschool to kindergarten is a significant milestone in a child's life. To support this transition several activities take place in the classroom such as learning to carry lunch trays and opening milk cartons. Field trips to local kindergarten classrooms allow children to see their new environment in advance of their attendance. Parents attend kindergarten transition meetings with Head Start staff, kindergarten principals, and teachers.



TEACHER CREDENTIALS

The Head Start Reauthorization of 2007 requires that at least 50% of all Head Start teachers have a baccalaureate or advanced degree relating to early childhood education with experience teaching preschool-age children. Mercer County Head Start exceeds that benchmark with 100% of teachers having a baccalaureate in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or closely related field. Two of our teachers have an advanced degree in ECE. In addition, 60% of our teacher assistants hold a baccalaureate in Early Childhood Education, 0% hold a CDA, and 20% hold an associate degree. One teacher assistant has an advanced degree in ECE.

5-STAR RATING



Ohio's Tiered Quality Rating & Improvement System

Mercer County Head Start is a 5-Star rated child care program. Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) is Ohio's quality rating system for child care programs. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) use a comprehensive, one-to-five star rating system to assess ODJFS and ODE-licensed early childhood programs that choose to exceed minimum health and safety standards. Starting in 2020, all child care programs that receive state funding will be required to participate in Step Up To Quality. Ratings are posted online, and parents can use them to choose the program that is best for their child.

For more information, visit <http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/sutq/index.stm>.

FALL FEST 2019 (PRE-COVID)

The poster for the Fall Festival features a light-colored background with vertical stripes. At the top left is a spiderweb, and at the top right is a string of colorful bunting. The text 'Mercer County Head Start' is written in a cursive font. Below it, the word 'fall' is in large, bold, red letters, and 'festival' is in a black, cursive font. The date and time are listed as 'THURSDAY, October 24th 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM at the Ed Complex'. The activities listed are 'BOUNCE HOUSE, PHOTO BOOTH, CARNIVAL GAMES, FACE PAINTING, CRAFT PROJECTS and MORE!'. At the bottom, it says 'FUN For the WHOLE FAMILY!' with a black cat, a pumpkin, and a girl in a pink dress.

Although the pandemic limited early 2020 family events, our staff and families did get to enjoy a wonderful day of fun and games at our annual Fall Festival in October of 2019.



HEALTH STATS

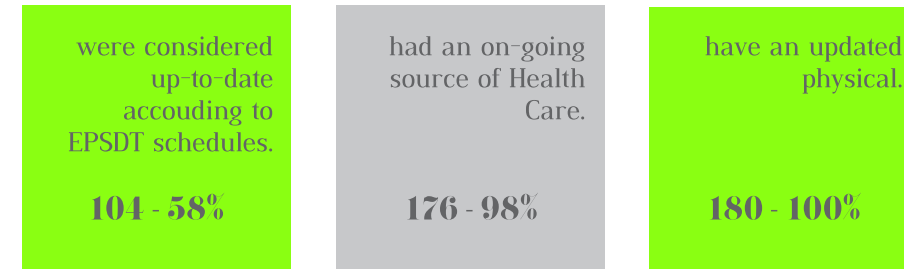


“Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.” — Lady Bird Johnson

A healthy child is a child ready to learn. Through supportive services and collaborative partnerships with local medical and dental providers, Mercer County Head Start works diligently to ensure that children’s medical and dental needs are met.

Head Start not only works to ensure that enrolled children’s medical and dental needs are met, but the entire family. Through home visits and education provided by our Family Advocates and Registered Nurse, the program supports the overall health and well-being of the family.

HEALTH SERVICES - Children who...



DENTAL SERVICES - Children who...



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



“Family means no one gets left behind or forgotten.”
- David Ogden Stiers

180...
children were served in Program Year 2019 - 2020.

165...
children were served - 59 of these families had a single mother as head of household.

68%...
the percentage of eligible children served in Program Year 2019 - 2020.

Head Start Benefits

Why is Head Start So Important?

Mercer County Head Start, a comprehensive early childhood education and holistic development program for children three to five years and their families, is essential because it works—for children, families, and communities.

We use evidence-based best practices and partner with community-based organizations to help remove child and family barriers to success. No other provider of early childhood services seeks

at-risk children and families and provides the depth, breadth, and scope of services that Head Start does. This is what makes Head Start so vital—its unrivaled and passionate commitment to helping children and families be successful.

Our commitment to our Nation’s children, families, and communities pays off. The Head Start investment is effective and means that children are more likely to graduate from high school and college, are less likely to need special education services, and are less likely to repeat grades. We are proud of the positive impact Head Start has on our society, one child at a time.

Head Start is an integral part of communities across the country. Local Head Start programs are adaptive and reflect the unique cultural and social fabrics of their communities. There is no “one size fits all” approach. Head Start programs work collaboratively with local schools, childcare providers, community service providers, and families to meet the needs of a new generation and ensure all children have a brighter future.

Every day, Head Start programs across the county commit to making our Nation’s young children ready to succeed in life.

Lower staff/child ratios

The administrator and teachers have higher education qualifications.

The administrator and teachers complete more than 20 hours of specialized training every two years.

Teachers develop lesson plans that support each child’s growth.

The program completes assessments to evaluate and improve the learning experience.

The program values its families and community.

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT



Mercer County Head Start receives funding to provide high-quality comprehensive early childhood services to 158 children annually. In program year 19/20, 165 children were served.

federal review

Results of Audit PY 2019-2020

The audit for Program Year 19/20 was completed in the winter of 2020/21.

The auditor's report stated that there were no findings within the 19/20 audit report.



- √ 100% average monthly enrollment
- √ 328 volunteers
- √ 15 children experienced homelessness at some time in the program
- √ 91 students received bussing
- √ 17 children identified with vision problems
- √ 36 children served on an IEP

- √ 36 families received mental health services
- √ 39% of children from single parent households
- √ 11% of parents with less than high school education
- √ 5 parents were either active military or veterans
- √ 8% caregivers were identified as someone other than the biological parent

BUDGET vs ACTUAL



Mercer County Head Start is primarily funded through the Administration of Children and Families which is located within the Department of Health & Human Services. The Head Start Act requires grantees to utilize the USDA's Children and Adult Care Food Program to provide financial means to cover the cost of healthy and nutritious meals for children while they are attending Head Start programming. Additional financial resources come from local entities such as community partners, families, and friends of the Head Start community.

Mercer County Head Start

PY 2019-2020 Budget vs Actual Expenditures

	Budget	Actual
Salaries & Wages	\$885,780	\$837,373
Fringe & Benefits	\$701,664	\$521,272
Training & Technical Assistance	\$19,232	\$19,232
Programming & Supply	\$318,789	\$245,780

CARES Act dollars were made available to the grantee for one-time funding.

	Budget	Actual
Salaries & Wages	\$47,236	\$21,544
Fringe & Benefits	\$7,110	\$4,102
Supply	\$84,506	\$73,382

For PY 19/20, Mercer County Head Start received \$1,925,465 from the Office of Head Start, \$58,001 from the USDA, and \$1,500 from selling a retired bus. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one-time funds were made available to grantees to support innovating programming and operations to ensure services to families and children. Mercer County Head Start received \$138,852.

Base grant funding covered normal operational costs such as personnel and fringe, supply and programming, while CARES Act funding covered specialized costs such as summer bridge programming for children transitioning to kindergarten, health supplies (i.e. sanitizing agents including a ZONO machine), and technological devices to ensure continued communication with families.

Typically, the program would have seen donations from local organizations or in-kind hours; however, the pandemic ceased those types of events as resources were needed elsewhere and restrictions prevented program volunteers. As such, the program was granted a waiver of its Non-Federal Match requirement.

MERCER COUNTY HEAD START

