

ORANGE COUNTY HEAD START

ANNUAL REPORT



Providing high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive services since 1965



ORANGE
COUNTY
FLORIDA

2024-2025

**“Education is the
foundation upon which
every dream is built.”**



Orange County Head Start shares its annual reports with the public by publishing them each spring on the Orange County Government Early Childhood webpage. These reports highlight the organization's various programs, activities and accomplishments. Additionally, the organization disseminates information through its Policy Council and Parent Committees, as well as during public meetings.



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ORANGE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OUR GOVERNING BOARD



Jerry L. Demings
Orange County Mayor



Nicole Wilson
Commissioner District 1



Christine Moore
Commissioner District 2



Mayra Uribe
Commissioner District 3



Maribel Gomez Cordero
Commissioner District 4



Kelly Martinez Semrad
Commissioner District 5



Mike Scott
Commissioner District 6

MAYOR'S LETTER

Greetings!

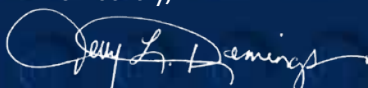
It is my pleasure to present the 2025 Orange County Head Start Annual Report in collaboration with the Head Start Policy Council.

The Head Start program was founded by President Lyndon Johnson and is one of the oldest operating federal programs in the United States, offering high-quality early childhood education and development services to low-income families at no cost. Orange County Head Start proudly serves 1,536 children aged three to five years at 23 locations throughout the county in 85 classrooms, and it operates on 12 campuses in partnership with Orange County Public Schools. Orange County's early childhood education program is governed jointly by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners and the Head Start Policy Council.

The annual report highlights a year of achievements, driven by strong community partnerships, educational collaboration, business engagement, and philanthropic contributions. We take great pride in the continued success of Orange County's award-winning Head Start program. Over my nearly eight years as Mayor, ensuring the continuity of services to children and families, particularly during COVID-19, was essential. During this unprecedented period, families successfully transitioned to virtual learning while our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to maintain operations and provide critical support. Orange County has continued to invest in its workforce, committing over \$5 million toward employee salaries, along with cost-of-living adjustments, which have contributed to high staff retention rates and organizational stability. We have also expanded staffing to include critical positions such as Mentor Coaches and Behavior Inclusion Specialists, which strengthen classroom support and enhancing the learning environment for our students. In addition, I commend both Orange County and our community partners for their support of Head Start's reading initiatives, which play a vital role in fostering early literacy and laying a foundation for lifelong learning.

Thank you to the dedicated Head Start staff, volunteers, and community partners for supporting our youngest learners and their families. Your unwavering commitment and passion have played a crucial role in establishing Orange County Head Start as the premier institution for early childhood education in Central Florida. Together, we are nurturing a foundation of knowledge and growth that will positively impact the lives of countless children in our community.

Sincerely,



Jerry L. Demings

Orange County Mayor



Jerry L. Demings
Orange County Mayor



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

As the Director of Orange County Head Start, it is my honor to present the 2025 Annual Report for Orange County Head Start, a program grounded in the belief that every child deserves access to high-quality early childhood education, comprehensive services, and opportunities that create a strong foundation for lifelong success. Our mission remains focused on preparing school-ready children and supporting self-reliant families through collaborative partnerships and high-quality services that strengthen our community. This past year has been one of continued growth, resilience, and innovation. Orange County Head Start continues to serve more than 1,700 children and families annually across 85 classrooms located throughout Orange County within county facilities, Orange County Public Schools sites, and community-based locations.

Despite the many challenges impacting Head Start programs nationally, our program continues to remain strong, stable, and committed to delivering comprehensive services that support the academic, social, emotional, physical, and developmental needs of children and families. One of the greatest challenges facing Head Start programs nationwide continues to be flat federal funding. For the second consecutive year, federal Head Start funding remained unchanged with no Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) or Program Improvement funding allocations. While operational costs and service expectations continue to increase, federal funding has not kept pace with the true cost of delivering high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive family services. Additional support through the Citizens' Commission for Children has strengthened children's mental health, speech, language, and occupational therapy services while also supporting initiatives such as the Gift of Swimming partnership.

Our partnership with Orange County Public Schools continues to be one of the strongest collaborations within our program and remains critical to supporting school readiness and inclusive educational opportunities for children. Through the partnership with Preschool Diagnostic Intervention Services (PDIS), children receive timely developmental evaluations, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and specialized educational services. Children eligible for services are dual enrolled in Orange County Head Start and Orange County Public Schools, ensuring continuity of care, inclusive educational experiences, and coordinated support services. Transportation between the child's zoned school and Head Start site is also provided, helping to eliminate barriers for families and ensuring children receive the services they need.

This year also reflected significant accomplishments in school readiness and program quality. Ninety percent of four-year-old children transitioning to kindergarten met Florida's Early Learning Standards for school readiness, and program-wide attendance exceeded 90%, surpassing the federal requirement of

85%. Children demonstrated measurable gains across literacy, mathematics, physical health, social-emotional development, and approaches to learning. The program also continues to strengthen sustainability and educational quality through innovative operational strategies. More than 500 Head Start children received Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services, generating more than \$1.5 million in revenue to support program operations and staff support. Orange County Head Start also successfully met the federal \$3 million non-federal match requirement, ensuring continued program sustainability and compliance. Orange County Head Start remains deeply committed to workforce development and staff support.

More than 44 professional development training courses were provided this year with increased focus on health, wellness, trauma-informed care, classroom quality, and educational excellence. Our investments in professional growth and workforce stability continue to position Orange County Head Start as a leader in early childhood education. This year, the program also continued to receive recognition at the state and regional levels for excellence in early childhood education and community partnerships. Orange County Head Start was honored with the Florida Head Start Association 2025-2026 Corporate Award for the Gift of Swimming partnership.

Orange County Head Start's continued success is only possible because of the dedication and support of our families, staff, community partners, Orange County Public Schools, Mayor Jerry L. Demings, and the Orange County Board of County Commissioners. Their commitment to early childhood education continues to create opportunities that positively impact children and families throughout our community. Every investment made in Head Start is an investment in the future of Orange County. Together, we are building stronger families, healthier communities, and brighter futures for generations to come.

Sonya Hill
Head Start Director



**“Every lesson taught
today shapes the leaders
of tomorrow.”**



"READY MINDS, HEALTHY BOODIES"



Vision Statement

Orange County Head Start: School Ready Children and Self-Reliant Families

Mission Statement

Orange County Head Start provides high-quality comprehensive services to low-income children and their diverse families through collaborative partnerships.

Philosophy

Orange County Head Start believes in providing high-quality, comprehensive services for children and families by providing developmentally appropriate, supportive learning environments for children. We embrace diversity and support families as they become self-reliant. We believe in providing opportunities for staff professional development and supporting employee wellness. We believe in collaborative partnerships and teamwork.

Values

- High quality and excellent comprehensive services
- School ready children and self-reliant families
- Employees Personal and Professional Development
- Diversity and Teamwork
- Family Involvement and Participation
- Collaborative Partnerships



PROGRAM GOALS

GOAL 1

Orange County Head Start will be a learning organization in which staff engages in continuous improvement to reach their potential and improve children and family outcomes (Professional Development)

GOAL 2

Orange County Head Start will create an environment that supports staff retention and reduces turnover. (Staff Retention)

GOAL 3

Orange County Head Start will enhance the physical health and mental wellness of staff, children and families by developing a comprehensive wellness approach. (Physical Health and Mental Wellness)

GOAL 4

Orange County Head Start will design and build a technology infrastructure that will provide students, families and staff with access to resources and education to increase children's achievement of the skills needed to thrive in a globally connected world. (Technology)

GOAL 5

Orange County Head Start will identify and partner with community agencies to provide services and resources to increase family wellbeing and to assist families to become self-reliant (Wellbeing of Families)



BUDGET INFORMATION

Federal Grant Period: October 1, 2024 September 30, 2025

EXPLANATION OF BUDGETARY EXPENDITURES AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FY 2024-2025

The proposed budget for FY 2024-2025 was \$23,490,417. Funds received were used to provide comprehensive early childhood development services for 1,536 children and support to their families. Total expenditures of federal and non-federal funds for FY 2024-2025 were \$24,668,827. All federal funds were used to cover salaries, cost of living increases, operation of services and training. The non-federal match (in-kind) was used to assist with salaries and operational expenses.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS BUDGETED AND THE AMOUNT FROM EACH SOURCE

\$16,325,053

Office of Head Start

\$ 4,100,000

County GIFT Funds

\$ \$ 1,580,364

USDA

\$ 1,485,000

VPK

EXPENDITURES BY UNIT

\$14,073,286

Services

\$3,060,947

Administration

\$366,085

Disability

\$156,870

Training

\$1,589,780

USDA

\$1,879,220

VPK

\$1,602,871

Health and Dental

\$639,293

Facilities and Operations

\$2,470,577

Family, Parent and Community Engagement

Quality Assurance and Accountability

FINANCIAL AUDIT RESULTS

There were no findings for the FY 2024-2025 Fiscal Audit.

FEDERAL REVIEW RESULTS

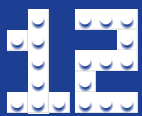
There was no scheduled federal review for 2024-2025.



“Small steps in early learning lead to giant leaps in achievement.”



**“Education
thrives where
curiosity is
nurtured and
potential is
believed in.”**



PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

1,536

FUNDED ENROLLMENT

780

Full Working Day Enrollment

5

Days Per Week

23

Number of Centers

85

Classrooms

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FUND

1,710

Total Number of Children Served

6

2 Year Old

*PIR age reflects the child's age as of September 1. The child enrolled in the program after turning 3 years old

788

3 Year Old

924

4 Year Old

ENROLLMENT BY TYPE OF ELIGIBILITY FUND

325

Income below 100%

1,271

Public Assistance

14

Foster Child

100

Homeless

7

Over Income



12%

of children (199) had a Diagnosed Disability

FAMILIES BY TYPE

735

Two-Parent Family

899

Single-Parent Family



HEALTH SERVICES

82

Medical exams

1,504

Dental exams

43

Dental treatments

1,655

up to date on Immunizations

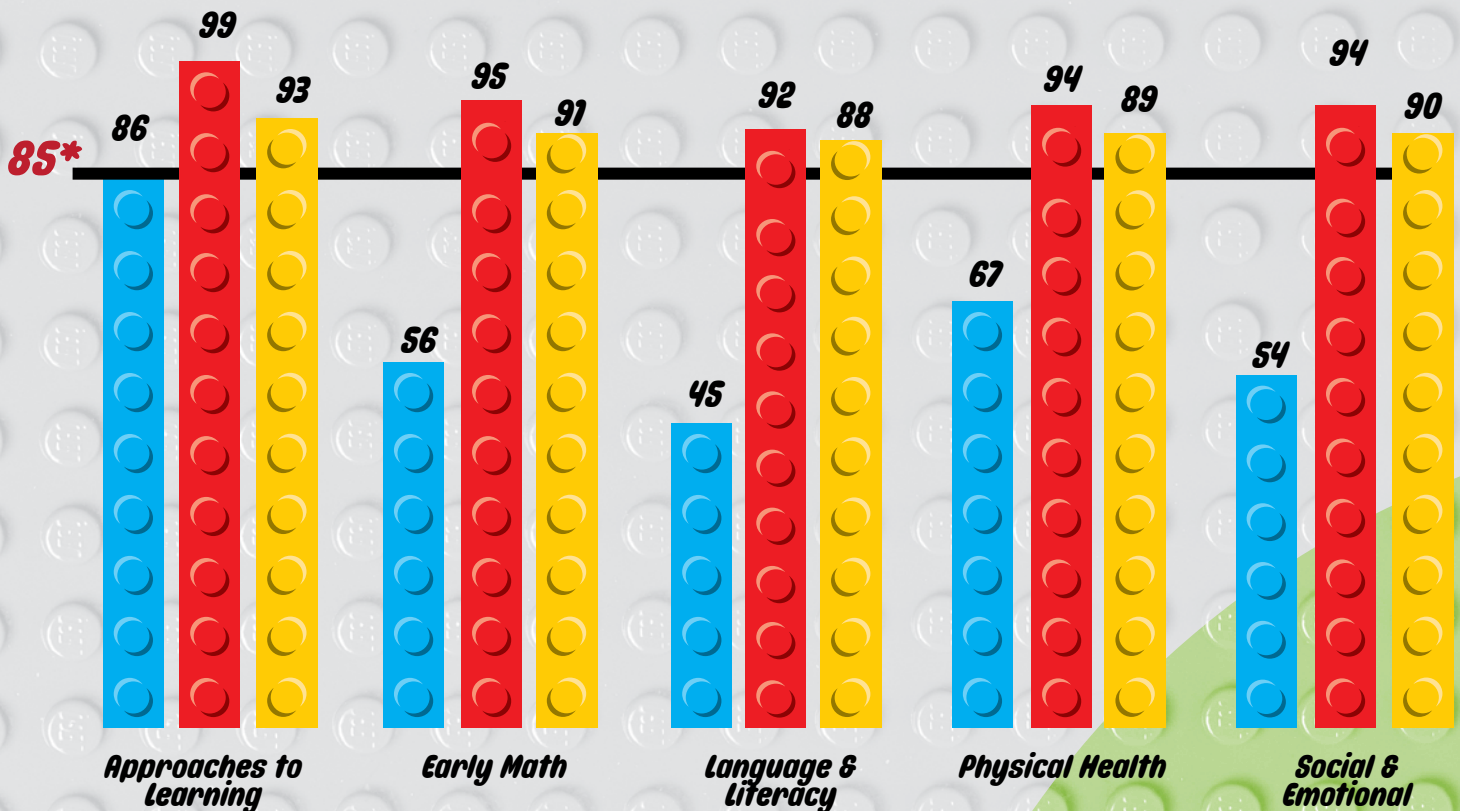
EFFORTS TO PREPARE CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

Orange County Head Start implements the High-Scope Curriculum, a research-based framework aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). Children's developmental progress is measured using the Galileo Pre-K Assessment Tool (G3 Assessment Scales). Teachers conduct baseline assessments at the start of the year and maintain ongoing observation and documentation to track growth across all domains. At the end of the 2024–2025 school year, 766 children transitioned to kindergarten. School readiness data was collected across the five essential domains: 1) Approaches to Learning 2) Social and Emotional Development 3) Language and Literacy 4) Math 5) Physical Development and Health. The benchmark expectation was 85% achievement for age-level developmental goals. Over 95% of children exceeded predicted developmental learning levels by the end of the year. Compared to national averages using the Galileo tool, Orange County Head Start children consistently performed above national benchmarks. The outcomes demonstrate that children are academically, socially, and emotionally well-prepared for kindergarten. Progress from baseline to end-of-year assessments shows significant growth in all domains, affirming the effectiveness of the High-Scope Curriculum and structured teacher-led assessments. This summary highlights the rigor of the program, the scale of impact (766 children), and the evidence-based success in preparing children for kindergarten.

4 YEAR OLD OUTCOME ANALYSIS - NORM-REFERENCE

Four Years Old (4 yrs) Aug 2024- May 2025

■ OCHS Baseline
 ■ OCHS Year to Date
 ■ Nation Year to Date



PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Parenting Curriculum for 2024-2025 included the following:

For Me, For You, For Later is a 4-week financial literacy program designed by PNC Bank and Sesame Street for 3 to 5-year old's, as well as their families. Our parents benefit from the program by becoming more aware of their finances and learning how to talk to their children about how to manage money and make good choices. This is the third year the program has been offered to families and there have been significant gains in the number of families that participated. During the 2024-2025 school year, we had 172 participants.

24/7 Dad is a unique program designed to equip fathers with the self-awareness, compassion and a sense of responsibility that every good parent need. It focuses on building the man first; father second, better skills in caring for children and building relationships with the mother of their children. OCHS philosophy behind the 24/7 Dads program is to support the growth and development of fathers and children as caring and compassionate people who treat themselves, others, and the environment with respect and dignity. During the 2024-2025 school year 10 dad's participated.

Understanding Dads 24/7 - We introduce a new program for the Moms. The objective of this program is to improve the well-being of families by increasing mother's understanding of the importance of fathers involvement in their

children's lives. It's an 8-week program. It aims to enhance their overall knowledge, positive attitudes/interactions and skill to improve their relationship with the father of their children. During the 2024-2025 school year 18 participants

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors it is the Nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0-5. The program supports parents as leaders of their families and as the child's first teacher. It is also 12 wk. / 1.5 hours, with a pre-post surveys and a graduation at the conclusion. During the 2024- 2025 school year, we had 84 participants.

Incredible Years comprehensive, developmental based curricula for parents, teachers, and children designed to promote emotional and social competence and to prevent, reduce and treat aggression and emotional problems in young children 0 to 12 years old. The goal, is to promote children's social and emotional development and school readiness. The curricula run for 15 weeks, one day a week and 1.5 hours sessions are confidential. Graduation after completion. During the 2024-2025 school year, we had 52 participants.

“Through learning, we gain the tools to build a better world, highlighting the true importance of education in every aspect of life.”



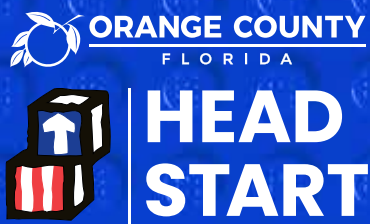
**“Education is the magical key
that opens the door to a world of
possibilities.”**



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Central FL Family Health Center
Children's Home Network
City of Orlando
Discount School Supply
Earlychildhood LLC dba Discount School Supply
Florida State University
Gift of Swimming
Health Care Center for the Homeless, Inc. dba Orange Blossom Family Health/Pediatrics
Kaplan Early Learning Company
Kinder Konsulting & Parents Too, Inc.
Lakeshore Learning
Orange County Public Schools
Pamela Rowe, M.A., CCC-SLP, LLC
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
Shepherd's Hope, Inc.
Sistema Universitario Ana G. Mendez, Inc.
State of Florida Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Contract
The Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
The University of Central Florida Board of Trustees (Project Jump Start)
Therapy Essentials
True Health
Volunteers for Community Impact
Vystar Credit Union





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