



HEAD START ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Introduction

MOC Child Care and Head Start are both federal and state funded programs that promote school readiness and provide quality comprehensive services to enrolled children and families. Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services are provided in Northern Worcester County.

During the 2024-25 school year MOC operated 6 facilities for Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start. There were 19 preschool classrooms, and 3 Early Head Start classrooms. In addition to Head Start and Early Head Start programming, MOC operates child care programming in center-based classrooms, family child care homes and a large school age center.

Early Head Start classrooms serve children 15 months to 3 years of age in groups of 8 children. Our Head Start classroom serves children ages 3 to 5 years of age in group sizes of 17 to 18 children. Our full day preschool and Early Head Start classrooms have 3 teachers and part day rooms have 2. Floater Aides are assigned to the larger sites for additional support.

Community Needs Assessment

The program recently conducted a community needs assessment (CNA). This information is a foundational document used to plan for Head Start program options, locations of centers, and program goals and objectives. The community needs assessment gathers data to identify the populations most in need of services and help guide the selection process of children. The CNA identifies both strengths and needs of the community and assists with identifying communication methods to best engage with families.

In the M.O.C. Head Start Service Area there are 14,974 infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children (i.e., children ages 0 to 5 years) who, depending on their family circumstances, may require child care and/or early childhood education outside of the home. To accommodate these 14,974 young children, there are approximately 411 different public-school pre-schools and Massachusetts Early Education & Care (EEC) licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes across North Central Massachusetts. Fourteen of these programs are operated by public schools while six Head Start sites and one School Age sites are operated by M.O.C.'s Child Care & Head Start Services. The remaining are private center-based and family child care homes.

The community assessment includes information about a variety of community needs as summarized below that inform our approach.

- Per the most recent McKinney-Vento data (2023-2024) there were 23 homeless pre-Kindergarten aged children in the 14 public-school districts in the service area.
- A quarter of persons living in poverty in the service area speak a language other than English; the most common being Spanish.
- Approximately 1/3 of the public PreK students enrolled in the service area have disabilities.
- There are two early intervention programs in the service area and six home visiting programs including several operated by MOC.
- Data collected and analyzed through the agency-wide needs assessment demonstrated access to good nutrition and nutrition education as a need in the region.
- The service area is dominated by low-skilled, low wage jobs which is problematic when compared to Massachusetts and area-level cost of living.
- Waitlists for behavioral health services are long and there is a general lack of information about behavioral health and targeted serves.

Program Goals

This program year is the final year of the 5-year grant award. During the 5 years the program made great progress with meeting the following goals:

#1 MOC Child Care and Head Start will work in partnership with key stakeholders to promote equitable, holistic health outcomes for children, families, and staff.

#2 All children, birth to 5 years, will possess the skills and knowledge necessary for success in school and later learning.

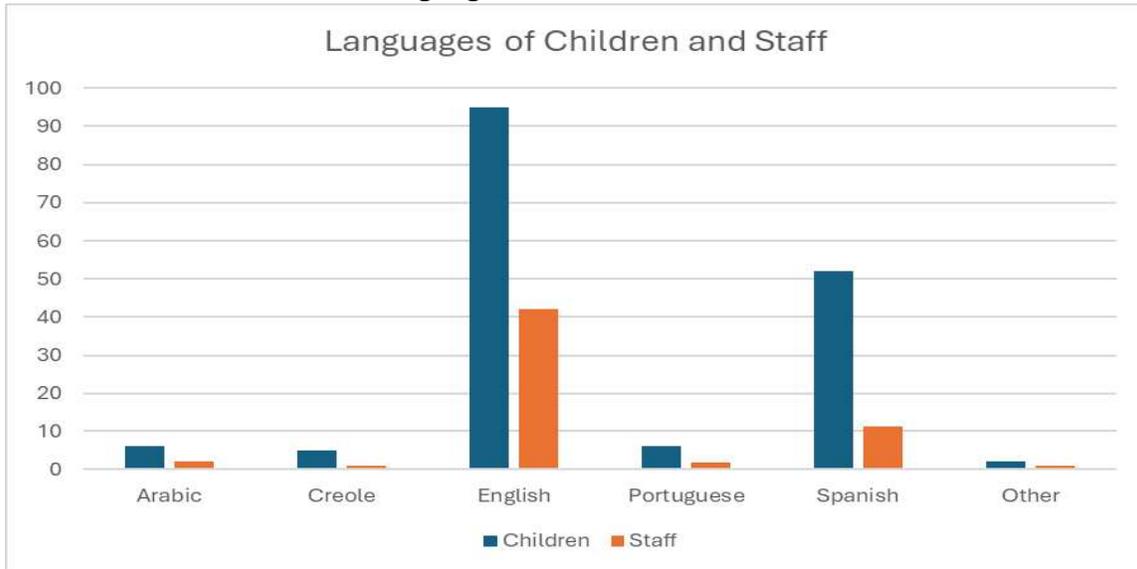
#3 MOC Child Care and Head Start Services will effectively use and communicate about technology and data across all program levels to inform decision-making, align staff to the Program's mission and to continuously improve services provided to enrolled children and families and to the larger community.

The program will be reviewing a variety of data to plan for the next 5-year period.

Teacher Credentials

There are currently 52 educators (44 Head Start, 8 Early Head Start) in our program. Qualifications include: 7% master's degree, 43% bachelor's degree, 32% have an associate's degree, and 7% have a Child Development Associate. An additional 11% are enrolled in either a CDA program or are pursuing a degree. We are utilizing our Early Learning Coaches to complete program orientation with each newly hired staff and to follow them throughout their first year of employment to train them in curriculum, assessment, classroom routines and management and our child data system. This is above the on-going regular observations and feedback provided by the on-site education managers.

Languages of children and staff



Locations

Centers are in Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner, Winchendon, and Clinton. Family Child Care Homes are in Fitchburg, Leominster, Ashby and Gardner. Early Head Start in Leominster and Gardner.

Actual Enrollment (% of Funded Enrollment)

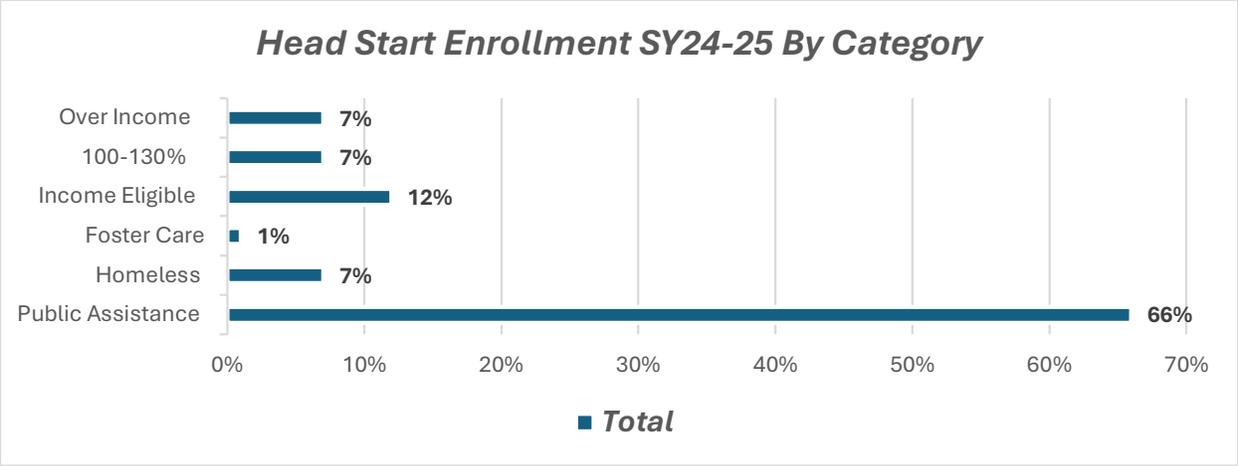
The program began with 94% enrollment in September 2024 for Head Start Preschool, with a total of 291 children out of the 308 contracted slots. The school year ended with 97% enrolled; however, the average monthly enrollment percentage was 98% for the 2024-2025 school year.

For Early Head Start (EHS), the program began and ended with 100% enrollment with 24 slots filled out of the 24 contracted slots. There was only one month in which our Early Head Start Preschool enrollment dipped to 23 slots filled, however the average monthly enrollment percentage was 100% for this 2024-2025 school year.

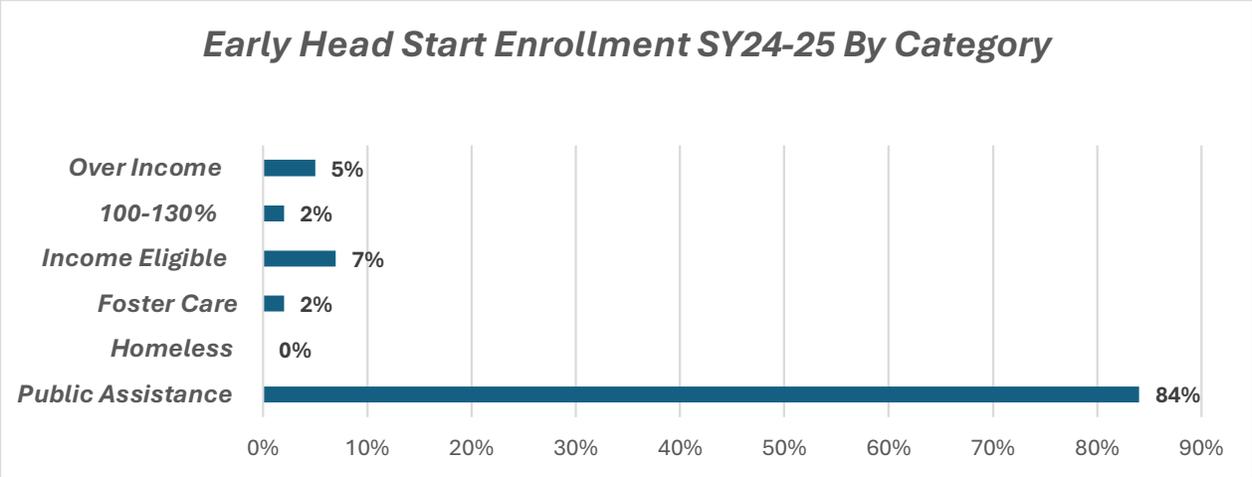
The yearly attendance average was 83% for Head Start Preschool and 86% for Early Head Start.

Children Eligible and Children Served

Head Start accepted and serviced 343 children of which a total of 226 children were considered as being Automatically Qualified for OHS because they receive Public Assistance such as SSI, TANF and/or SNAP benefits. Other children who were automatically qualified for OHS were 25 as Homeless and 3 as Foster Care. The remaining 42 were considered income eligible, 25 were in the 100-130% income range, and 22 were over income.

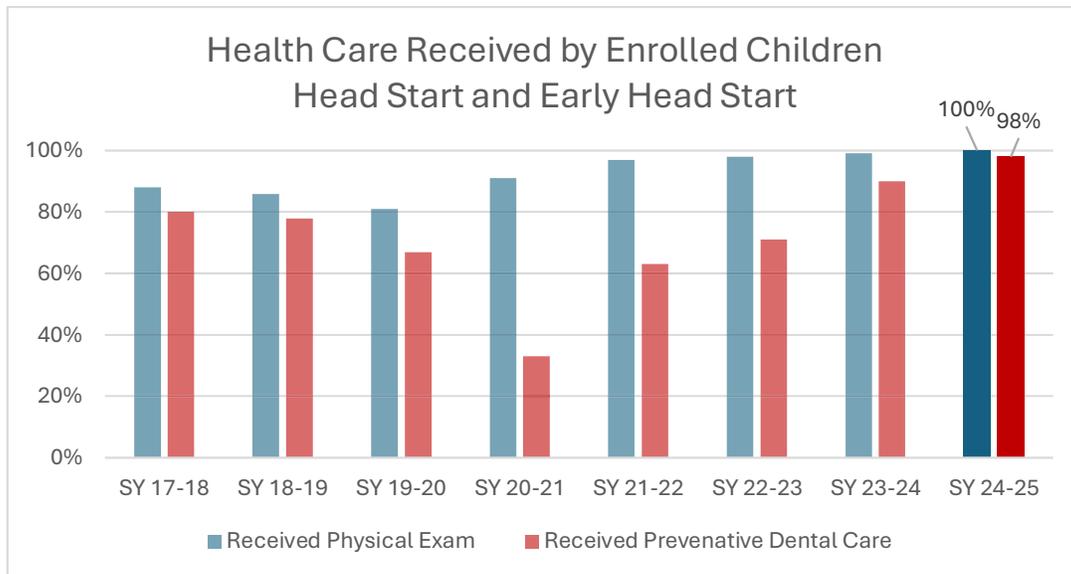


In the EHS program a total of 42 children were accepted, of which a total of 35 children were considered as being Automatically Qualified for OHS because they receive SSI, TANF and/or SNAP benefits. One other child was automatically qualified for OHS because they were in Foster Care and zero children were qualified as Homeless. Two children were over income, three were income eligible, and one was in the 100-130% income range.



Medical and Dental Exams

100% of children enrolled in Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programs received a medical exam within the last year and 98% of enrolled children received preventative dental care within the last year. We are particularly proud of our dental exam rates, which have been the highest seen in recent years. Our dental partner Caring for Kids provided onsite preventative dental care to 119 enrolled children this year. All staff worked to promote participation in this dental program. Family service and health staff continue to assist families with obtaining health insurance, finding medical and dental homes, and staying up to date with immunizations, exams, and routine screenings.



Mental Health

MOC Child Care and Head Start uses a multidisciplinary approach to promote the mental health and social-emotional development of all children by building nurturing and responsive relationships and creating positive learning environments. Families and staff are provided with information to improve their understanding of mental health and to access mental health interventions or supports, if needed. The Second Step social-emotional curriculum is used to help children develop these important school readiness skills.

The Mental Health Specialist is a licensed mental health clinician that works to build the capacity of the adults in a young child’s life (educators and parents) to strengthen and support the child’s mental health and social and emotional development. The Mental Health Specialist conducts general classroom observations, child specific observations, and makes referrals for further evaluation or services. 34 referrals were placed for child specific observations, 26 of these observations have been completed and individual guidance provided to the educator and family on the child’s needs.

MOC CCHS has built community partnerships to facilitate access to additional mental health resources and services. Our program has memorandums of understanding with five mental and behavioral health providers in our service area including MOC’s Counseling Center. 10 children have been referred externally for therapeutic services, none of those children have yet received needed services. Children’s mental and behavioral health needs surpass the available community resources. These unmet mental health needs often correlate with child behavior that can pose a challenge to classroom management. The Mental Health Clinician and Early Learning Coach provides support to the classroom team and families, especially while waiting for services.

Program Governance

Program Governance is a formal structure established by Head Start and Early Head Start agencies for oversight and making operational decisions for quality services for children and families. MOC’s governing body, the Board of Directors (BOD), has a legal and fiscal responsibility to administer and oversee the Head Start and Early Head Start program. The Policy Council (PC) is responsible for the direction of the Head Start and Early Head Start program. These entities are working in conjunction with the Management Staff to ensure that we are following federal and state laws, policies and procedures are in place, and that day-to-day services are delivered with quality. The BOD is comprised of community members with the expertise and knowledge to make informed decisions in areas such as fiscal management and early childhood education and have a licensed attorney. The Policy Council is comprised of parents and community members who assume specific responsibilities designated by Head Start Performance Standards, such as recruitment and enrollment, budget planning, and parent engagement activities. 51% of the Policy Council membership must be current parents. Shared Governance practices include having 2 Policy Council representatives serve on the Board of Directors and assist in communication between Board, Policy Council, and staff. An impasse policy is in place to resolve internal disputes in a timely manner.

Budget

Year	Federal or State	Description
2024-20245	Federal	Department of Health and Human Services \$6,247,268.
2024-2025	State	Massachusetts Head Start State Supplemental Grant \$602,229.
2024-2025	United Way	\$28,000.
2024-2025	USDA	\$364,982.42
2024-2025	State	C3 funding \$727,343.
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2025-2026	Federal	Department of Health and Human Services \$6,247,268.
2025-2026	State	Massachusetts Head Start State Supplemental Grant \$602,229.
2025-2026	United Way	\$28,000.
2025-2026	USDA	\$375,000.
2025-2026	State	C3 funding \$727,343.

Results of Financial Audit

The most recent financial audit for the program contained neither findings nor non-compliances for the Head Start program.

Results of Federal Review

During the monitoring event that occurred in February of 2024, the OHS monitoring team observed several strong practice(s). There were 2 areas identified as non-compliant. The dental exams completed were below expectations and there was one non-compliance in the human service area. Both areas of non-compliance were resolved promptly.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The Office of Head Start's minimum expectations for all Head Start grantees regarding the quality of the classroom learning environment are: Emotional Support-5, Classroom Organization-5, and Instructional Support-2.3.

M.O.C. completed 2 Class Observations by an outside reliable rater during the school year. The scores exceed the Office of Head Start's minimum expectation as seen below:

Emotional Support: 6.67 Classroom Organization: 6.24 Instructional Support: 6.20

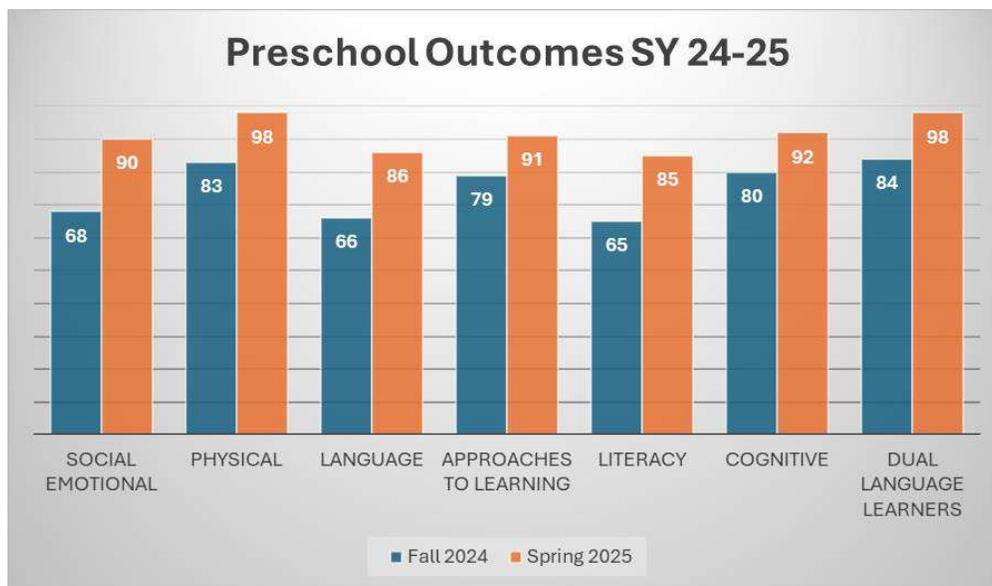
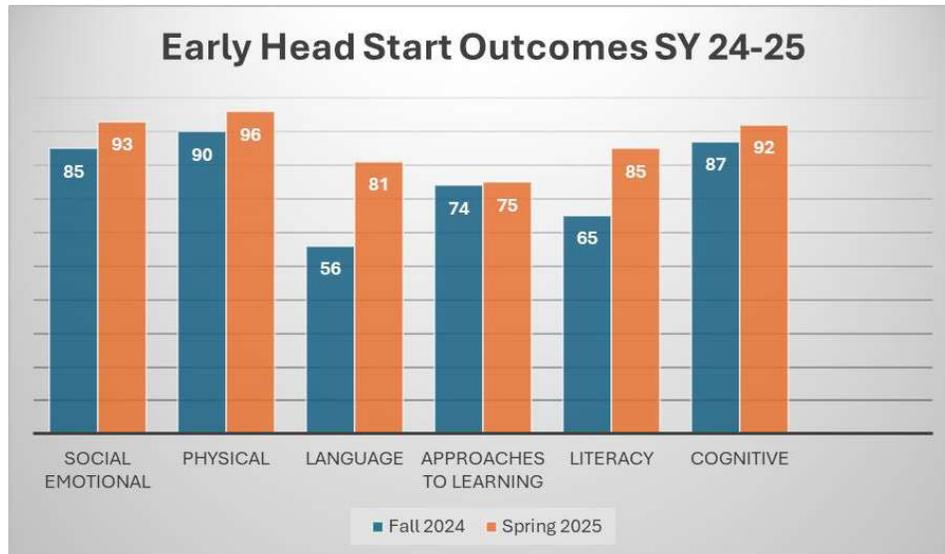
Curriculum

Classrooms use *The Creative Curriculum for toddlers and preschoolers* to support children's development and learning. Teachers have access to digital curriculum resources that provide study topics to explore over time with children. The program uses this curriculum to develop lesson plans and small group activities that are individualized according to each child's developmental progress. All children's progress is tracked using the Smart Teach Assessment system aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Frameworks* and *MA Early Learning Framework for toddlers and preschool-aged children*.

As a secondary curriculum to support social and emotional development, our program implements the *Second Step Early Learning Program*. This curriculum program teaches preschool-aged children core social-emotional and self-regulation skills, including executive function skills, skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, problem-solving skills, friendship skills, and transitioning to kindergarten. In addition to the Second Step Early Learning program to further address the increased social emotional needs of our enrolled students, our program participates in the *Pyramid Model*. The *Pyramid Model* is a comprehensive, multi-tiered framework of evidence-based practices that promotes the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children. The emphasis of this framework is to support all children at the universal level, thereby decreasing the need for more intensive intervention. The *Pyramid Model* represents a comprehensive effort to provide teachers, caregivers, and families with the tools and strategies needed to promote and support positive behavior, prevent challenging behavior, and address the social needs of all young children.

School Readiness Skills

Our school readiness plan includes how we assist with preparing children, parents, schools, and the community in improving outcomes for children. We developed this plan with input from local public schools, parents, and members of the MOC Board and Policy Council. Based on our outcomes data, our focus is literacy and social emotional skills. The charts below indicate the progress of children’s school readiness skills from fall, winter, and spring.



Transition to Kindergarten

Our centers sponsor on-site Kindergarten registration for children transitioning into the public school system. Two sites took a field trip to the Public Schools to visit the kindergarten classrooms and meet the teachers. Another site hosted public school students on-site who presented a skit to our students about entering kindergarten. Two sites hosted public school personnel to conduct on-site kindergarten screenings with all children entering kindergarten this fall. With parental permission, pertinent information such as progress reports and health records, including physical health, mental health and disabilities, are sent to the child's school before the fall. Both education and family service staff worked together with parents to ensure registrations were completed. With parental permission, Education Specialists engage with public school staff to share information and suggestions on transitioning children to ensure a smooth entrance into public school.

Transition plans for Early Head Start children begin 6 months before moving into Head Start or other early childhood programs. Program staff meet with parents to discuss the child's current progress and what the transition plan is; children complete a classroom visit, and pertinent information is shared (with parent's permission) between educators or other receiving programs to support a seamless transition.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

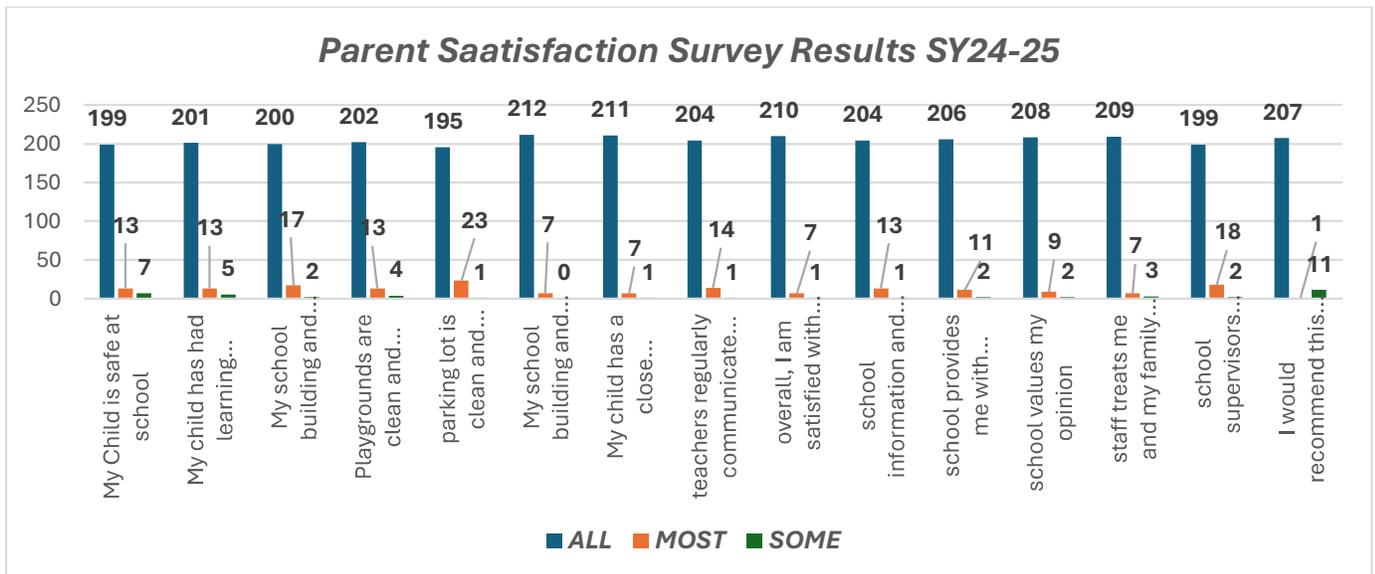
MOC Child care and Head Start staff understand the importance of how staff and family partnerships are built on mutual respect. Developing positive relationships is important in supporting family well-being, parent/child relationships, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Framework principles are promoted in Head Start Preschool (HSP) and EHS through Home Visits, Parenting classes, Financial Literacy, Leadership opportunities, Father Engagement, Family Literacy, School Readiness activities, and Community Connections. Our staff meet and greet families daily while parents drop off and pick up. They communicate with families in a format that meets the needs of each individual family and speak to them in the family's preferred language whenever possible or through an interpreter to ensure that our families can share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe. They work with families individually to focus on their needs and their family's needs. They encourage all families to attend events and take the time to verify attendance for those it would benefit the most.

Staff used the **Positive Solutions for Families** curriculum, which focuses on promoting children's social and emotional skills, understanding their problem behavior, and using positive approaches to help children learn appropriate behavior. The Positive Solutions for Families Parent Workshops help parents to promote positive and effective parenting skills. For the SY24-25 this course was offered both during the day and in the evening, to accommodate all families' schedules. Meetings were held in person and via zoom according to the parent's need. Staff have condensed the sessions into four, they provided material to families ahead of time and encouraged parents in between sessions to complete the assignments and practice the skills learned in class at home. The material given to families were offered in both English and Spanish and translation was offered when needed. Family Service Coordinators provided

one-to-one information to those families who were not able to attend the sessions but benefited from the information. There were 37 families who participated in the in-person and virtual Curriculum Meetings.

Staff provide families with opportunities to also participate in other social groups and/or evidence-based curriculums with our partners such as the Family Resource Center, the Spanish American Center and House of Peace & Education Inc (HOPE). Curriculums such as Father’s Support Groups, Women’s Wellness Café, Parenting Journey and many more. Families are encouraged to attend the ones that are right for them. Monthly Parent Meetings are held at each site, many of which include visits from our partners. Topics for our Parent Meetings are guided by parent interest and parent needs.

The Parent Satisfaction Survey for 2024-2025 was given to all families. Families had the option to select a response of All the Time, Most of the Time or Sometimes to the questions shown in the graph below. There were 219 surveys completed with most of the responses selected as All of the Time. All sites had parent comments with positive feedback. Overall, families identified that they felt their child was safe and were in an environment where their child could learn, have fun and have a meaningful connection with at least one staff member. These results reflect how well staff connect with families and provide positive family engagement.



Parent Comments: “Staff is great!” “Feels welcoming to walk in and be greeted!” “Staff is great, they know you by name and greet you.” “Always greeted with a smile and friendly.” “Thanks for all that you do!” “MOC Child Care is one of the most caring and helpful places, highly recommend.” “My child has learned a lot in the past couple of months.” “I can’t recommend your program enough.” “Everyone from teacher to supervisors are amazing. Thank you so much for all you do.” “We are on our 3rd kid here and we couldn’t be happier.” “Love the team, so helpful. “Love MOC.” “Staff go above and beyond for my family.” “Best program around.”

“Family Service Staff give lots of guidance and resources.” “We love Head Start!! The teachers are the best!!” “MOC has always been great with me and my son!”