



NICAO
HEAD
START

ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by: Meghan Judisch
Early Childhood Director

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MISSION

NICAO Head Start’s mission is to enrich the growth and development of children and families in a comprehensive and educational environment.

NICAO HEAD START FIVE YEAR PROGRAM GOALS 2024-2029

GOAL 1

NICAO Head Start will strengthen program foundation to enhance our ability to provide quality programming.

GOAL 2

NICAO Head Start will strengthen the quality of our monitoring and management systems.

GOAL 3

NICAO Head Start will identify and implement strategies to increase our effectiveness in addressing mental health needs and trauma affected children, families and staff.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Members,

I am honored to introduce myself as the NICA0 Early Childhood Director for having assumed the role in September 2024. My association with Head Start dates to January 2011, during which I have held various positions, most recently serving as Assistant Director. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to serve our children, families, communities, and staff while upholding our mission of enriching the growth and development of children and families in a comprehensive and educational environment.

The North Iowa Community Action Organization has proudly administered the Head Start program in North Central Iowa for 58 years. With strong roots in the community, NICA0 has played a pivotal role in preparing children and families for Kindergarten. In 2017, we expanded our services by launching Early Head Start in two communities, and we have recently added another community to serve pregnant women and children aged 0-3.

I hope this annual report proves informative and enhances your understanding of the valuable services that Head Start offers to children, families, and the community at large.

We remain committed to exploring opportunities for collaboration with our communities to strengthen our region and provide essential services to children and families.

Sincerely,



Meghan Judisch
NICA0 Early Childhood Director



GOVERNING BODIES

NICAO GOVERNING BOARD

NICAO Governing board has legal and fiscal responsibility for the agency programs including Head Start

Members include or 2023-2024:

Member Name	County Served	Member Name	County Served
Jennifer Duffield	Butler County	Wayne Dralle	Butler County
Tim Latham	Cerro Gordo County	Lori Ginapp	Cerro Gordo County
Evie Ocheltree	Cerro Gordo County	Michael Herman	Cerro Gordo County
Sam Offerman	Floyd County	Bill Carlson	Floyd County
Lori Nettleton	Floyd County	Chris Vanness	Franklin County
Stacy Olmstead	Franklin County	Florence Greiman	Hancock County
Erika Elbert	Hancock County	Carter Nath	Kossuth County
Joel Voaklander	Mitchell County	Michael Mayer	Mitchell County
Jami Kite	Winnebago County	Linda Vaudt	Winnebago County
Susan Smith	Winnebago County	Donna Orton	Worth County
Heather Krauth	Worth County		

POLICY COUNCIL

Policy Council is responsible for the direction of the Head Start program, including program design and operation, and long and short-term planning goals and objectives, considering the annual community wide strategic planning and needs assessment and self-assessment.

Members in 2023-2024 School Year:

Member Name	School or County Served	Member Name	School or County Served
Eliezer Velez	Charles City	Stephanie Quario	Clarksville
Keianna Cobbs	Clear Lake HS/EHS	Nicki Cooper	Manly HS/EHS
Heather Krauth	Manly HS/EHS	Beanna Hedegard	Mason City Hoover
Anahi Romo	Mason City Hoover	Aleah Harris	Mason City Hoover
Katie Friesenborg	Mason City Hoover	Shandy Hansen	Parkersburg
Brooke Wooldrik	Parkersburg	Beth Waldon	Butler County
Jessica Rodriguez	Floyd County	Erika Elbert	Hancock County
Jenna Heiar	Cerro Gordo County	Jim Davies	Franklin County
Ryan Strom	Winnebago County	Paulette Webb	Worth County
Sherri Penney	Mitchell County		

OVERVIEW



NICAO Head Start serves nine counties, Kossuth, Winnebago, Hancock, Worth, Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Floyd, Mitchell, and Butler County.

SITE LOCATIONS

Algona Head Start
613 Diagonal Street
Algona, IA 50511

Aplington Parkersburg HS
602 Lincoln St.
Parkersburg, IA 50665

Charles City HS & EHS
404 N Jackson St.
Charles City, IA 50616

Clarksville HS
221 N Mather St.
Clarksville, IA 50619

Clear Lake HS & EHS
1304 4th Ave. S
Clear Lake, IA 50428

Forest City HS
1405 West I Street
Forest City, IA 50436

Hampton HS
1405 North Federal Street
Hampton, IA 50441

Manly HS & EHS
209 N Broadway
Manly, IA 50456

Mason City HS (Hoover Elementary)
1123 8th St. NW
Mason City, IA 50401

General Information

Address

218 5th St. SW. Ste. 102

Phone

641-494-1891

Fax

641-494-1894

Early Childhood Director

Meghan Judisch

Agency Website

www.nicao-online.org

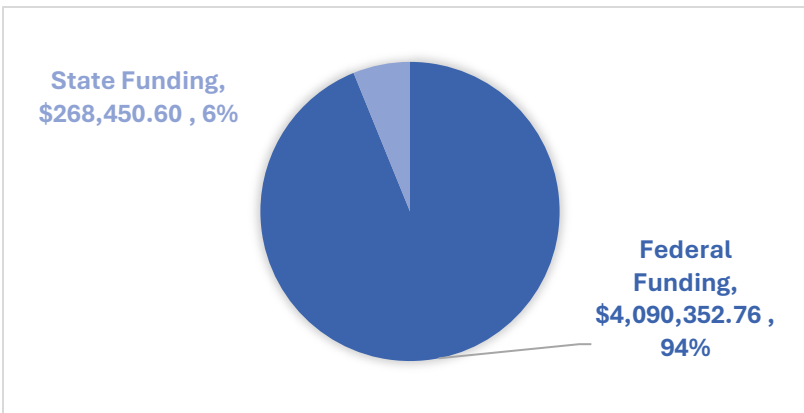
Facebook Page

North Iowa Community
Action Organization

PROGRAM BUDGET & EXPENSES



INCOME



NICAO Head Start utilizes funding from the federal government as well as state funding to support the mission of NICAO Head Start.

Funding for the state level is to support a Mental Health Consultant and Transportation for some of our locations. Without the assistance of state funding, we would not be able to provide these valuable resources for our children and families.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Fund Name	Annual Budget
Dept. of Health and Human Services/Head Start	\$ 3,427,311.00
Dept. of Health and Human Services/EHS	\$ 479,909.00
Child and Adult Care Food Program	\$ 183,132.76

STATE FUNDING

Fund Name	Annual Budget
ECI Parkersburg	\$ 19,421.00
FMC ECI	\$ 15,100.00
T4F ECI Mental Health	\$ 14,577.00
Mental Health Consultant	\$ 7,105.60
HS Transportation ECI Cerro Gordo	\$ 60,950.00
ECI CGHW	\$ 45,097.00
EHSV	\$ 106,200.00

EXPENDITURES

NICAO Head Start budgets in nine categories to support both direct and indirect costs, ensuring comprehensive services are provided to eligible children and families. The largest expense is salary and fringe benefits which include health insurance and IPERS for 64 staff members.

The other categories are as follows:

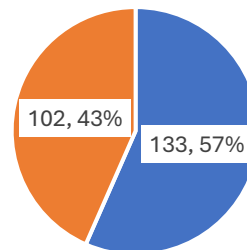
- **Travel:** This includes registration, mileage, per diem, and hotel stays for trips outside of the service area by staff and parents. Staff members travel to attend conferences and trainings related to their content area.
- **Supplies:** This includes office, classroom, custodial, kitchen, printing, computer, and postage supplies.
- **Contractual:** NICAO Head Start contracts with Forest City schools to provide transportation to our students.
- **Other:** Includes everything else needed to operate a quality program including health care for children, staff physicals, telephone, utilities, rent, liability insurance, bus maintenance and gasoline, staff mileage reimbursement, printing, and copy costs.
- **Indirect funds:** Provide human resource services, a payroll system, accounting, and reporting services and general administrative oversight.
- In addition, we receive training funds to allow us to be able to provide training to all staff and give families an opportunity to enhance their skills in curriculum, health and safety, parent engagement, mental wellness, technology, and other regulatory requirements.

ENROLLMENT

In 2024-2025, NICAO Head Start was funded to enroll 211 Head Start children (3–5-year-olds) and 20 Early Head Start (pregnant women and children 0-3). NICAO Head Start also served 4 Early Head Start children under state funding.

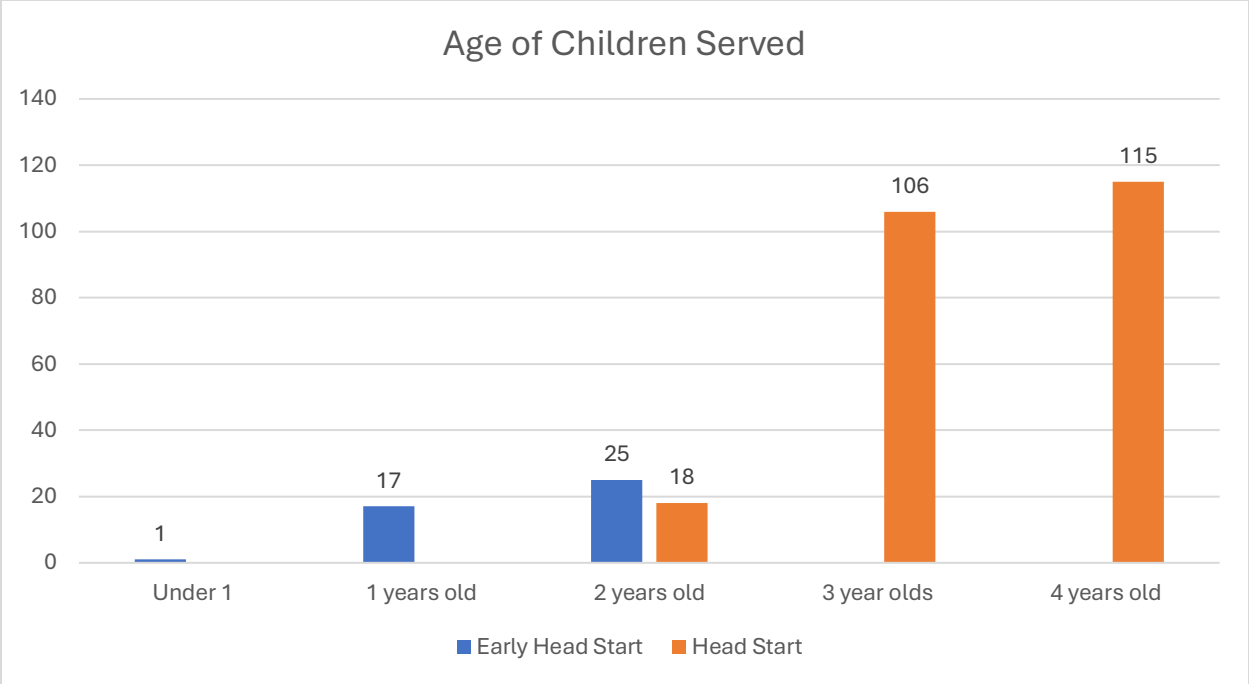


Number of Children Receiving Early Childhood Education Services



- Equal or greater than 1,020 hours
- less than 1,020 annual hours

*20 of those children are in EHS with 1,350 hours



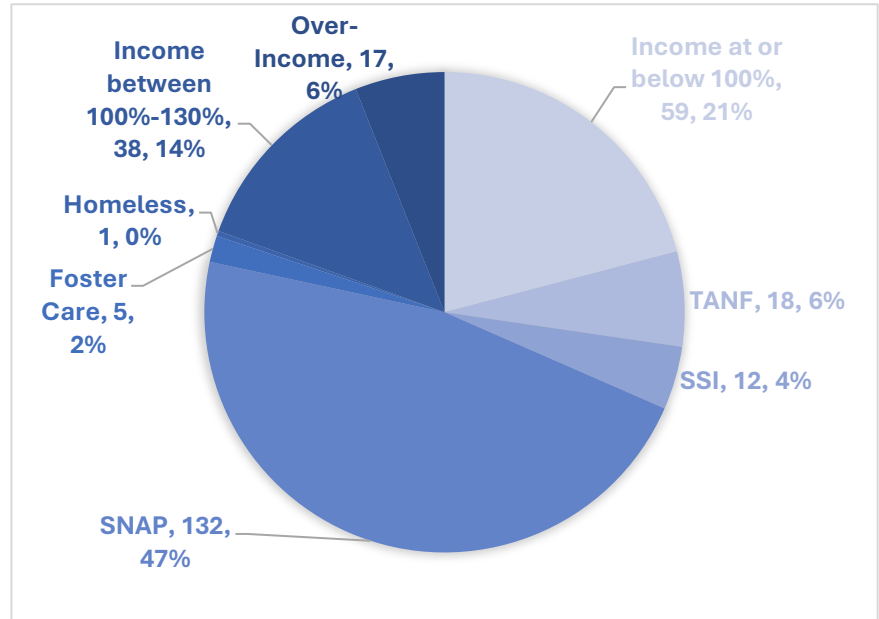
*Head Start can serve children once they turn three. They are still considered two in our counts, and we will determine eligibility during their third year in Head Start.

Total amount of children served was 239 Head Start students, and 43 Early Head Start students. Some children leave our program throughout the school year and NICAO Head Start is required to fill that vacancy within 30 days of the opening.

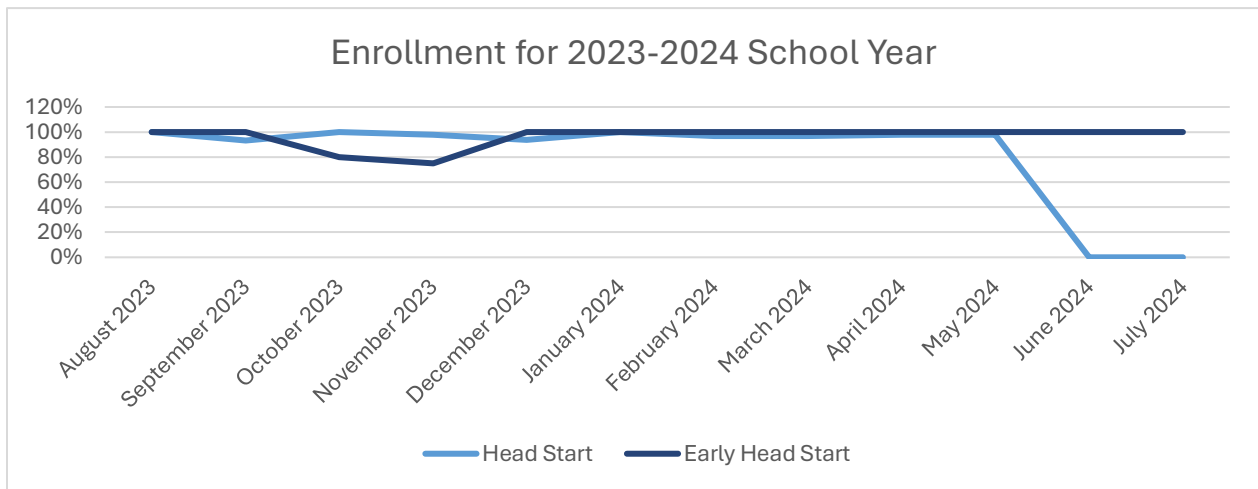
ELIGIBILITY



Families can qualify for our program in a variety of ways. We see a significant number of families qualifying for our program due to them being on SNAP.



ENROLLMENT



*June and July 2024 include only Early Head Start as our center-based Head Start program is closed during those months.

During this year, we converted Head Start slots to Early Head Slots due to school districts no longer having space for our program in CAL and eliminating a classroom in Mason City due to lack of space available.

Region 7 recently hosted a Head Start Caucus, which was attended by representatives from the Office of Head Start. During the meeting, it was communicated to the attendees that if we face staffing shortages, we should not compromise our quality by assigning the education support team to long-term substitute roles. Additionally, frequent substitutions by Family Advocates detracted from their ability to support families effectively.

With the approval of the Policy Council and the Governing Board, we instituted a policy outlining the circumstances under which classrooms would be closed and enrollment would be paused. At that time, the Office of Head Start was not prioritizing programs that maintained an enrollment rate above 85% of their funded capacity.

FEDERAL REVIEW & FINANCIAL AUDIT

FEDERAL REVIEW

In 2023-2024 school year, NICAO Head Start had an incident that was reported to Office of Head Start Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a monitoring review of NICAO Head Start and it was closed as it had been corrected.

AUDIT

North Iowa Community Action Organization was audited in September 2023 for our 2022 and 2023 fiscal years. The latest audit can be found on our website at <https://nicao-online.org/reports/>

HEALTH SERVICES

Children’s health plays a significant role in their ability to learn. Essential health care services encompass dental care, mental health support, nutrition, and physical activities.

ORAL HEALTH

Below you will see specific data on children attending well child exams as well as preventative oral health care.

Oral Health Care	Head Start	Early Head Start
Receiving Oral Health Care	234	37
Oral Treatment Needed	51	2
Received Oral Treatment	24	0

Reasons for not receiving treatment:	Head Start	Early Head Start
Health Insurance not covering	1	0
Parents did not keep/make appointment	5	

Appointment is scheduled for future date	21	2
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WELL CHILD CARE

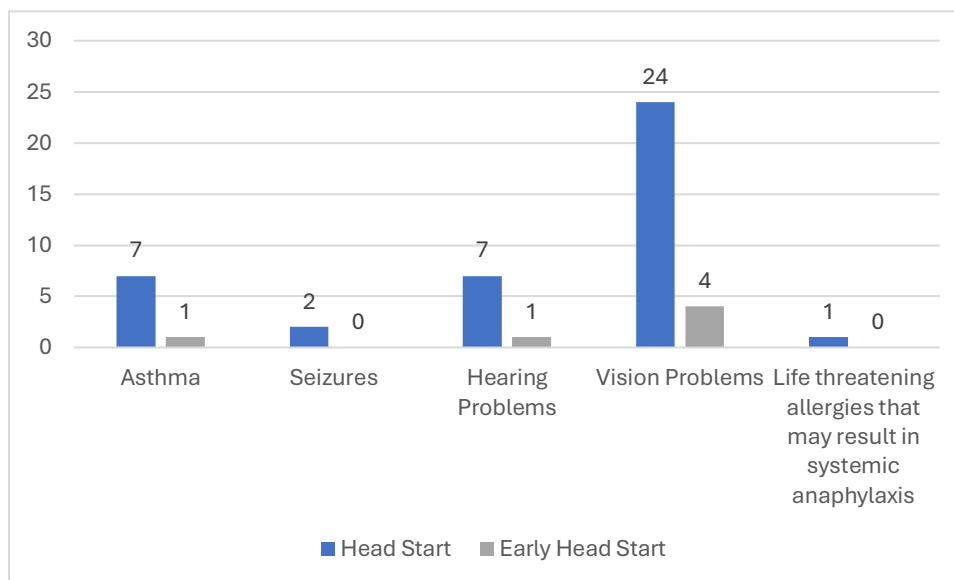


NICAO Head Start adheres to the EPSDT recommendations for well-child checks. Children under 30 months receive more frequent well-child examinations to ensure they are developing normally and maintaining good health. Family Advocates from NICAO Head Start reach out to families to confirm that they have scheduled appointments with their medical homes and assist in overcoming barriers to attending these visits.

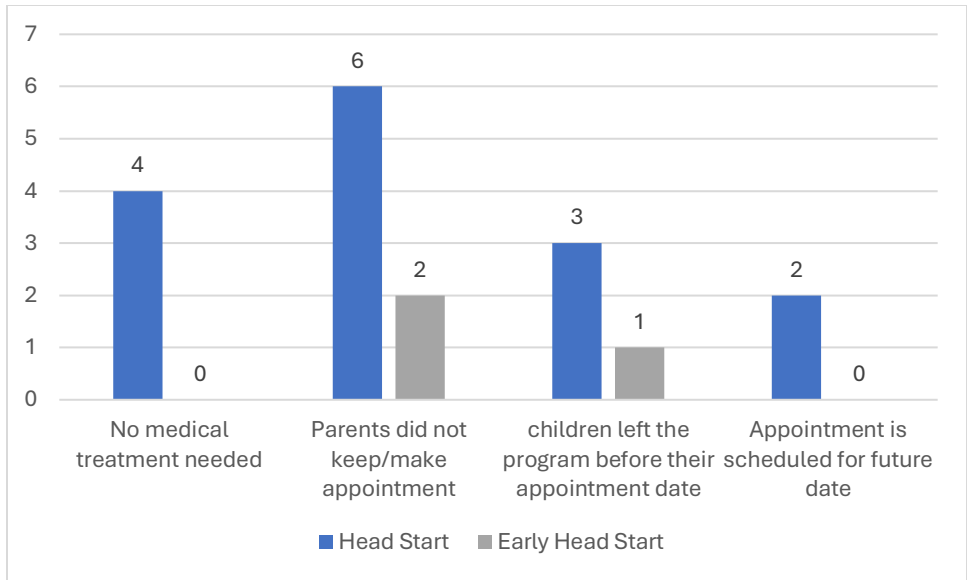
In our Early Head Start program, 100% of children received their preventative healthcare. For the Head Start program, 99% of children obtained their preventative healthcare.

During these preventative healthcare appointments, 25% of children were diagnosed with chronic health conditions. Notably, 25% of those diagnosed did not receive medical treatment. The subsequent graphs illustrate the types of medical conditions identified and the reasons for the lack of treatment.

TYPES OF MEDICAL CONDITIONS



REASONS FOR NO MEDICAL TREATMENT



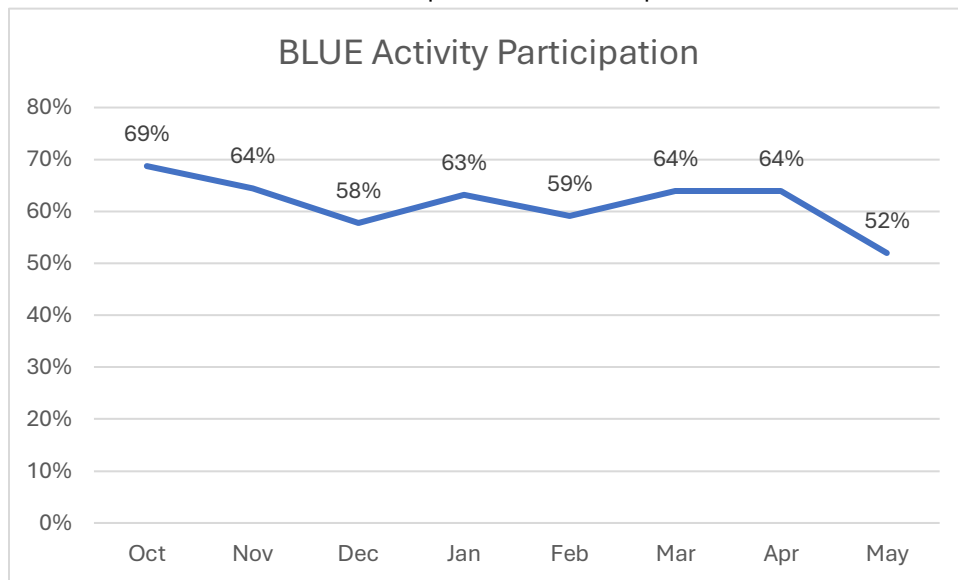
The Head Start Nurse and Family Advocates maintain regular communication with families to emphasize the importance of children attending medical appointments for necessary care related to their health conditions. During these discussions, barriers to access are identified, and collaborative strategies are developed with families to mitigate these obstacles.

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Every family is assigned a Family Advocate who provides essential support. At the start of the year, families convene with their Family Advocate to discuss strengths and areas for growth, establishing a family goal to pursue throughout the year. Collaboratively, Teachers and Family Advocates create opportunities for families to engage in their children's education. This marks the fourth year of utilizing the Nurturing Families parenting curriculum, and we have also introduced the Positive Solutions for Families program this year.

BLUE (BUILDING LEARNING UNDERSTANDING ENGAGING)

One effective method for engaging families in their child's education is by distributing a monthly BLUE (Building Learning Understanding and Engaging) activity. These activities are designed to align with our school readiness goals and are informed by the previous year's readiness reports, highlighting areas where our children require further development.



STUDY CELEBRATION



As a second initiative, we invite family members into our classrooms to celebrate their child's completion of a study. This provides families with the opportunity to witness their child's learning progress and engage in related activities together. A total of 58 study celebrations were conducted, either in person or through at-home activities sent home. Specifically, 29 in-person events took place in our classrooms, with a remarkable attendance of 351 families at these celebrations.

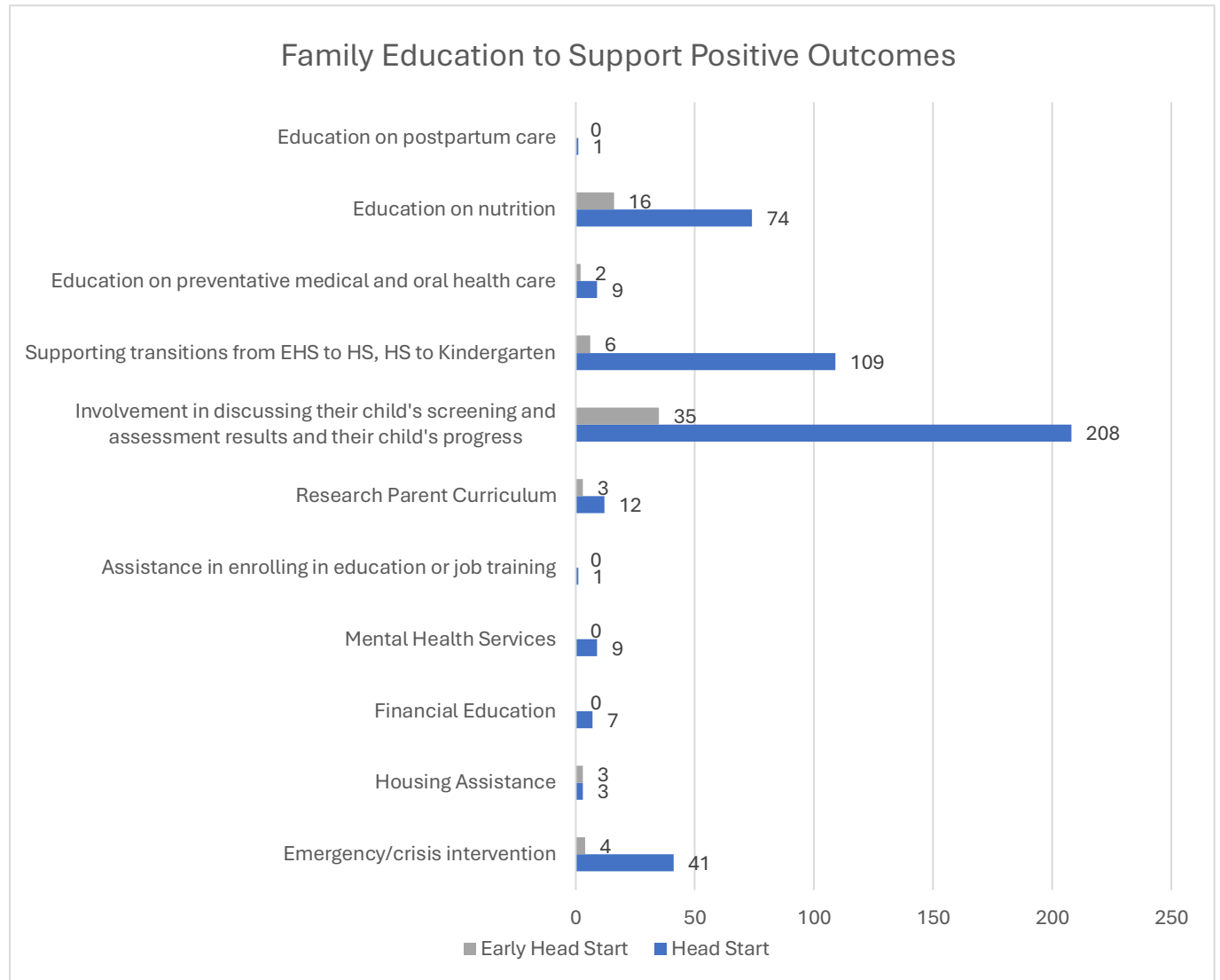
FAMILY ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Families collaborate with teachers to establish a specific goal for their child to focus on throughout the school year. Subsequently, the Teacher distributes a family enrichment form that outlines activities designed for the family to engage in with the child. Each month, a new form is sent home to help families monitor their frequency of participation in these activities. This year marks our initial effort to track family involvement in their child's learning experiences.

162 Family Enrichment activities were turned in during the 2023-2024 school year.

PARENT EDUCATION

Throughout the academic year, Family Advocates engage with families to monitor their identified goals and needs. They offer referrals, resources, and support in these areas. Notably, 86% of our families actively seek assistance from Family Advocates. The table below illustrates the educational resources requested by families.





NICAO Head Start has utilized two parent curriculums this year. Nurturing Families and Positive Solutions for Families. During the 2023-2024 school year, we had 14 families participate in the Nurturing Families sessions. These are held virtually from January to May. This year we held a celebration at the end of the year to celebrate their commitment and growth in the program.

This year we started a pilot program of Positive Solutions for Families in our Charles City location. Our Mental Health Consultant facilitated this group. We are excited to expand this opportunity to other regions. This curriculum is an evidence based, family friendly workshop consisting of seven sessions. This workshop provides information for families on how to:

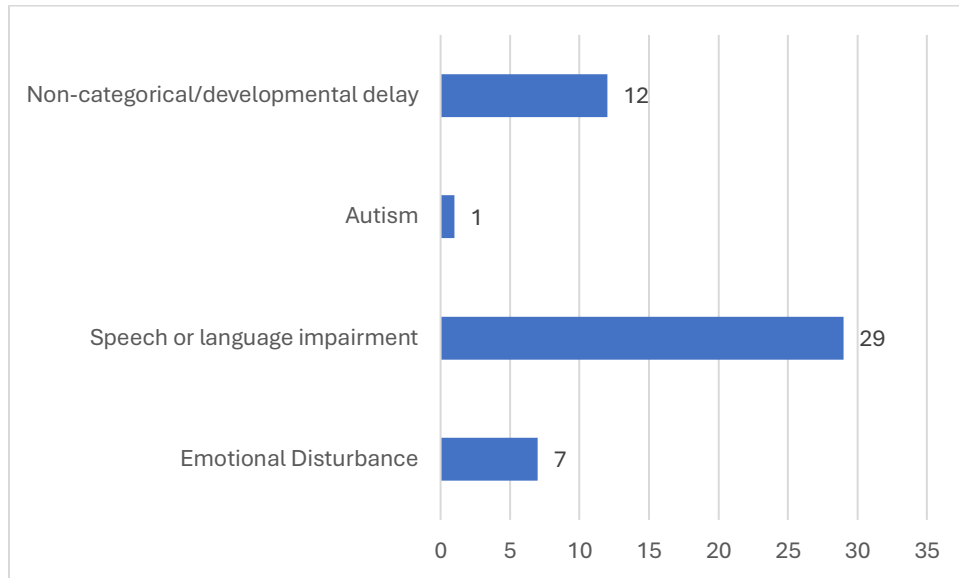
- Promote children’s social and emotional skills
- Understand their child’s challenging behavior.
- Use positive approaches to help children learn appropriate behavior.

SCHOOL READINESS

The school readiness goals were formulated with contributions from various school districts, including input from Principals, Teachers, and AEA staff members. These goals provide educators with clear guidance on the expected developmental milestones for children upon completing their final year of preschool. Prior to adding Early Head Start, we collaborated with Preschool Teachers, AEA staff, and School Districts to determine where children should be for them to enter preschool. In doing so, we develop Early Head Start School Readiness Goals.

Teachers utilize Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD to identify where the child is at and create an individualized plan for children to continue to make gains in their development. Teaching Strategies GOLD has checkpoints which allow teachers to communicate with families the progress the child is making. We have aligned our School Readiness goals to Teaching Strategies GOLD as well as ELOF (Early Learning Outcome Framework) and Iowa Early Learning Standards.

In 2023-2024, we served 49 children that were on an IEP (Individual Education Plan). The following chart shows the primary disability.



When reading data regarding widely held expectations, keep in mind that any child that may be on an IEP may not be within their color band and interventions are being completed to support that child in getting to their color band.

The following graphs show the percentage of children that are below, meeting, or exceeding in their widely held expectation for their age group.

Widely Held Expectations: 3 Years Old Spring 2024			
	Below	Meeting	Exceeding
Social Emotional	7%	84%	10%
Physical	1%	81%	18%
Language	13%	86%	1%
Cognitive	7%	85%	9%
Literacy	13%	76%	11%
Mathematics	7%	81%	13%

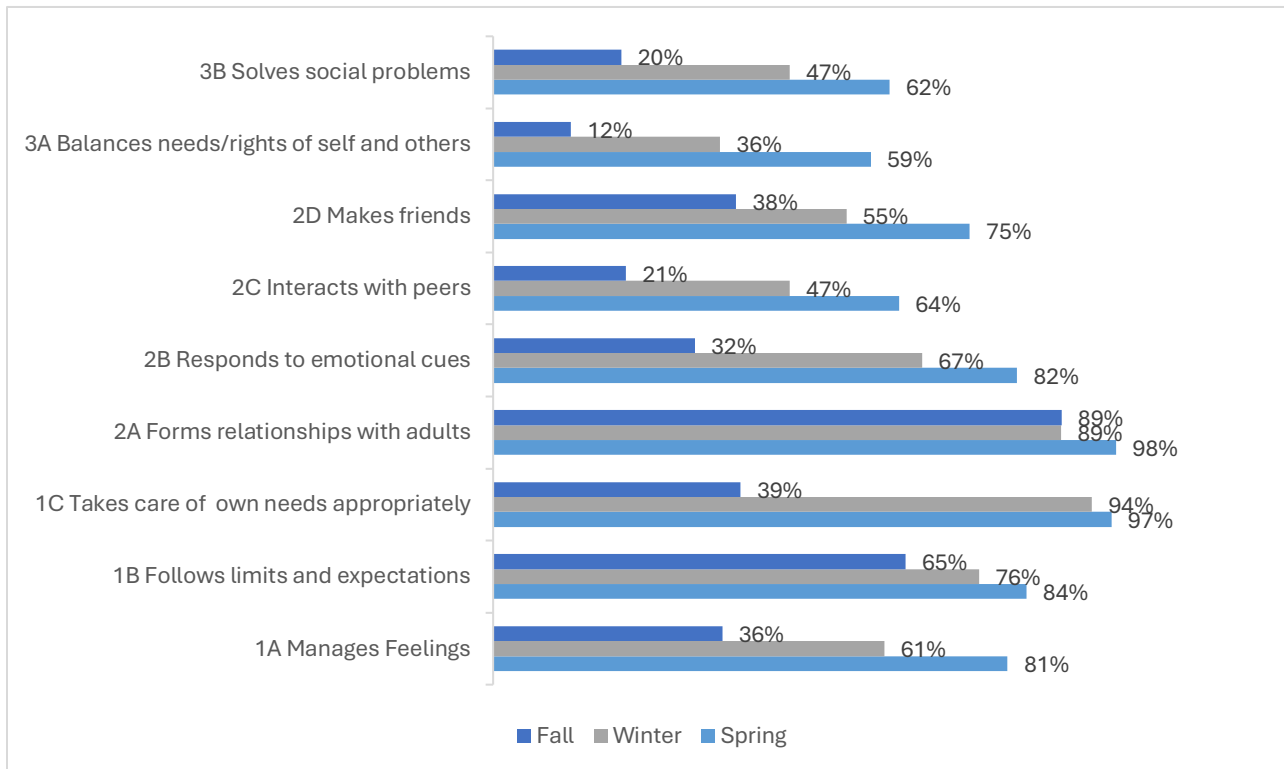
Widely Held Expectations: 4 Years Old Spring 2024			
	Below	Meeting	Exceeding
Social Emotional	10%	69%	21%
Physical	4%	85%	11%
Language	9%	88%	3%
Cognitive	7%	86%	7%
Literacy	5%	76%	19%
Mathematics	13%	76%	11%

SCHOOL READINESS REPORT

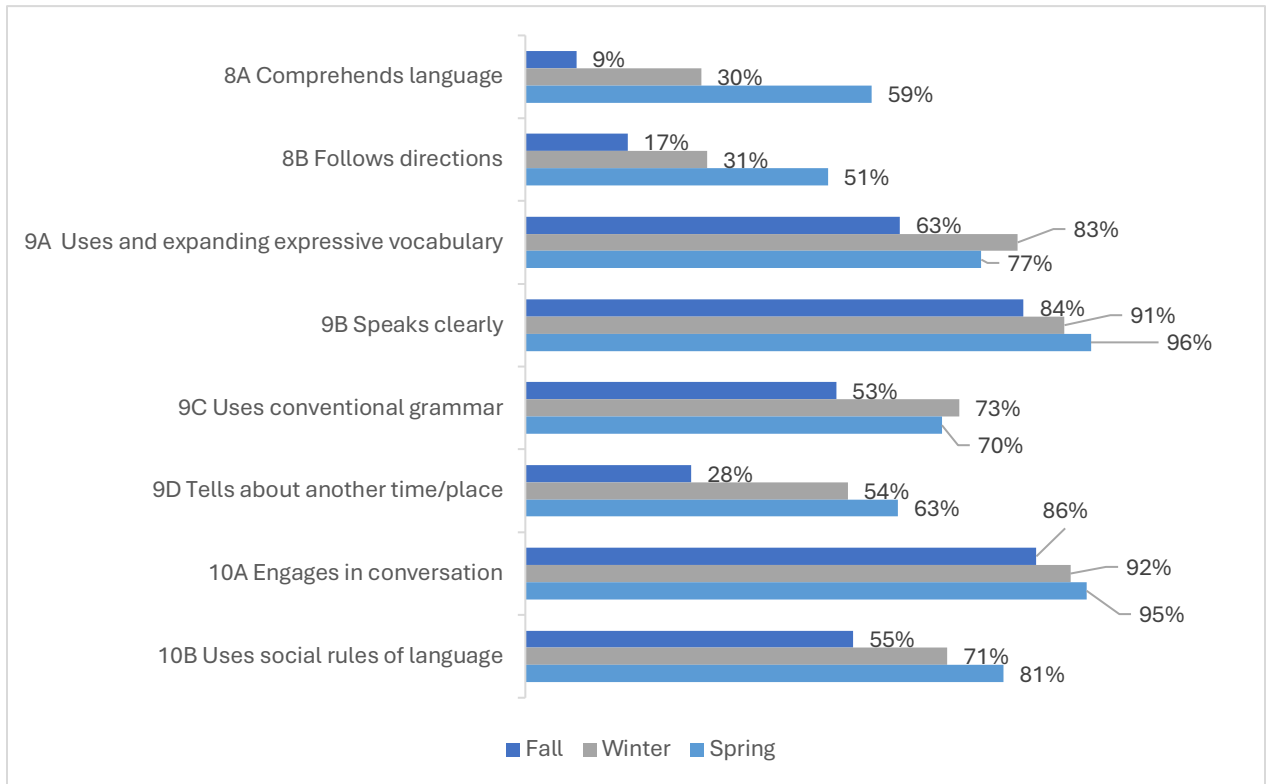


In reviewing this data, it is important to understand that we had **139 children in the fall**, **101 children in the winter**, and **138 children in the spring**. The fluctuations are due to children dropping from the program as well as children turning four, they then move to the next color band.

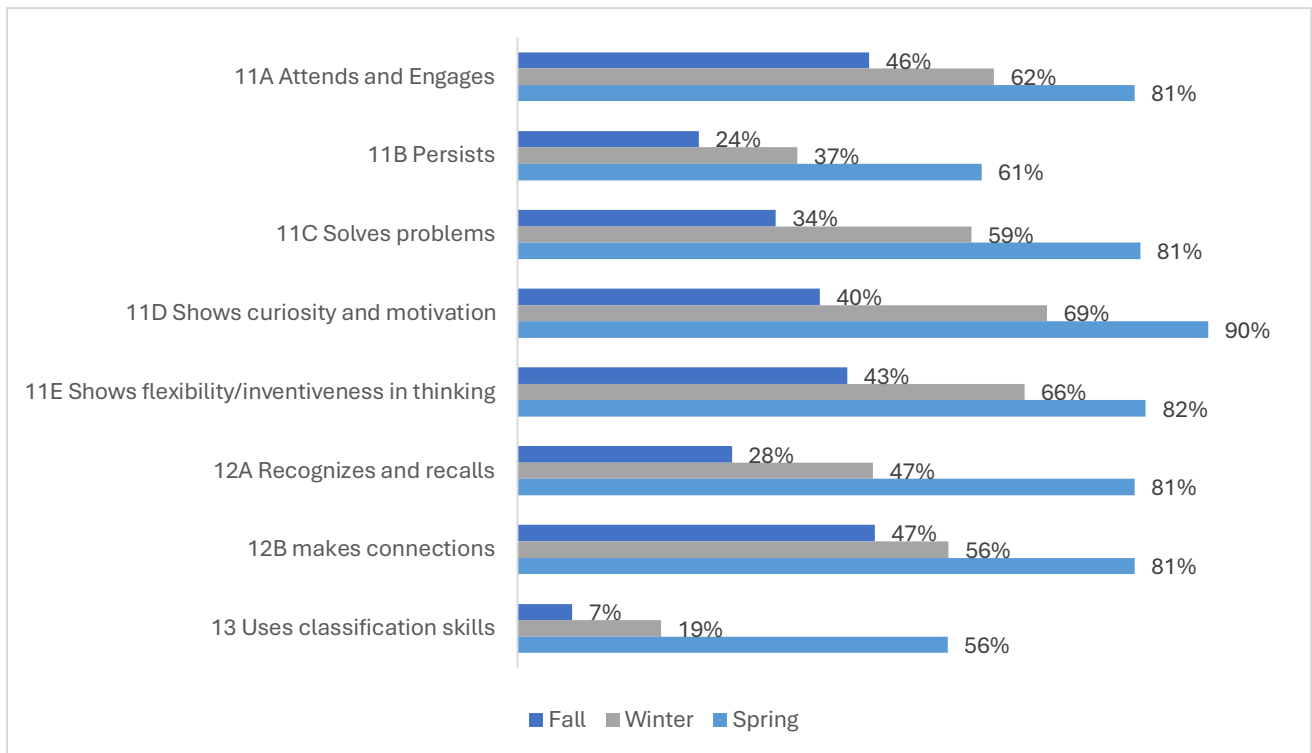
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS GOALS



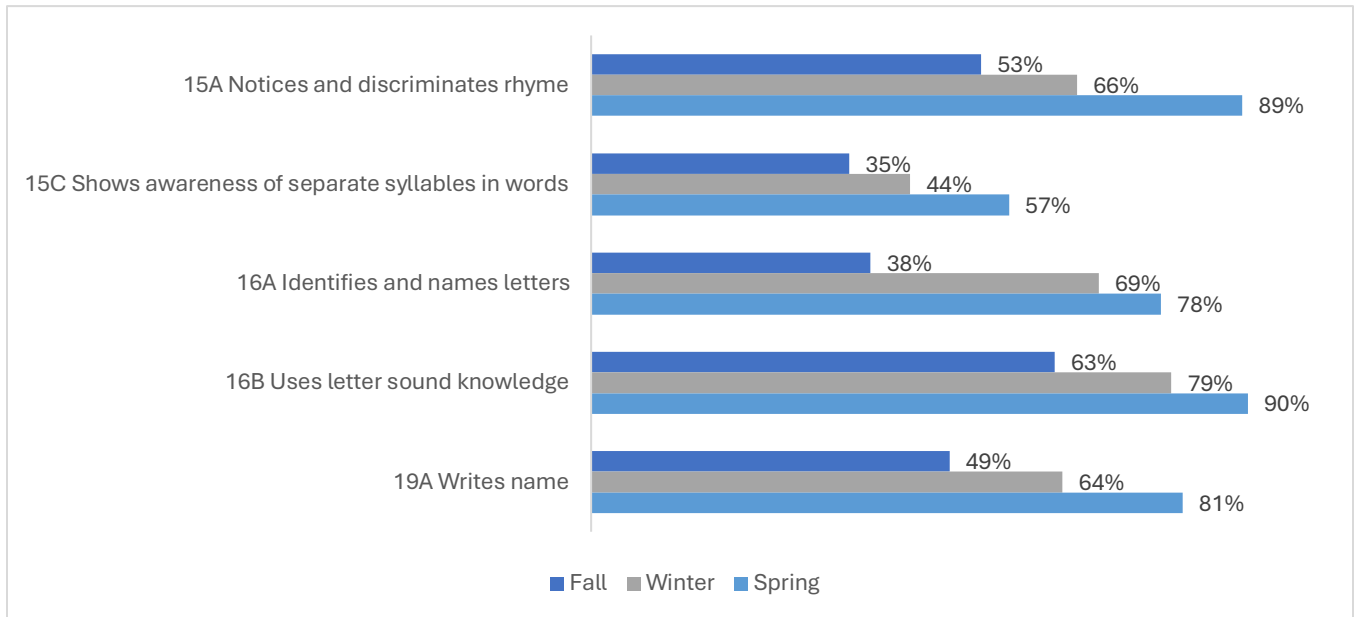
LANGUAGE SCHOOL READINESS GOALS



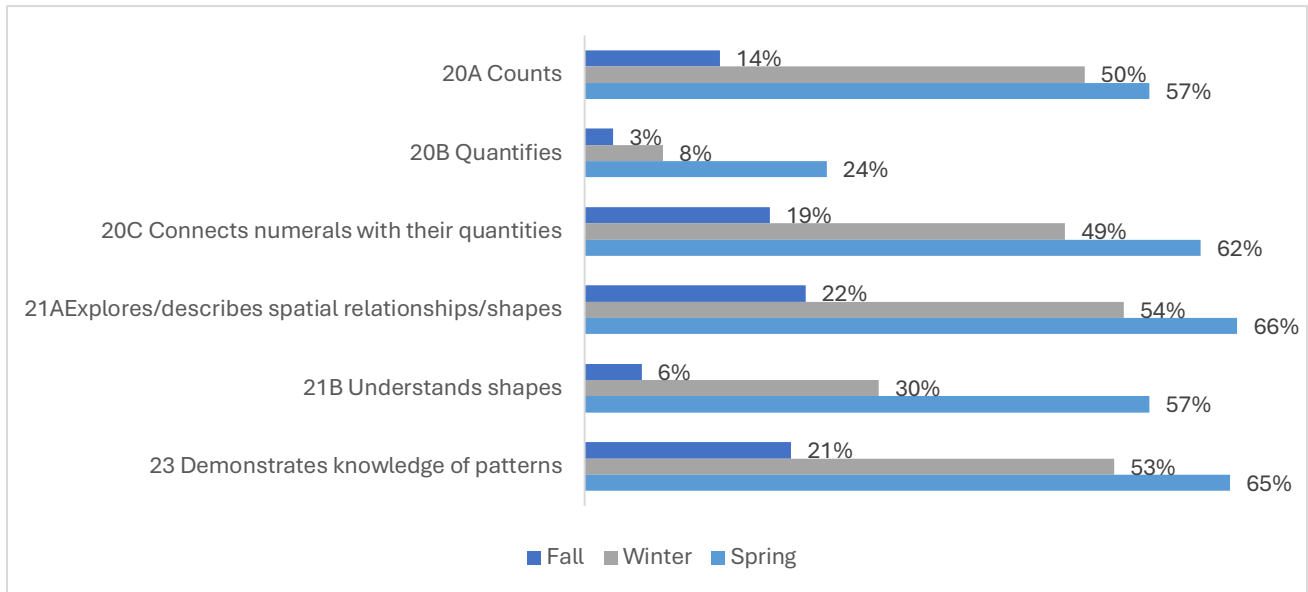
COGNITIVE SCHOOL READINESS GOALS



LITERACY SCHOOL READINESS GOALS



MATH SCHOOL READINESS GOALS



SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE ARTS SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

