WCCS Early Learning Centers

Annual Report 2020-2021

The 2020-2021 program year brought many changes and challenges as we learned new ways to provide our services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of Head Start provided flexibility to allow programs to operate with smaller class sizes to ensure the health and safety of staff and children. In spite of all these challenges, we continued to provide a high quality, comprehensive kindergarten readiness program for a total of 396 children.

- Funded enrollment was 230 children for Head Start, 60 for Early Head Start, and 70 for Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships
- A total of 396 children were served: 214 in Head Start, 86 in Early Head Start, and 96 in our Child Care Partnerships
- Average monthly enrollment was 277 out of 360 funded slots (77%)
- 364 children (92%) were from families with income at or below poverty, including 85 foster children and 52 homeless children
- 20 Head Start children and 26 Early Head Start children (11.6%) were identified with disabilities
- 68 of 109 newly enrolled Head Start children (62%) received all required screenings within 45 days of enrollment
- 182 Head Start children (85%) were up to date on all immunizations including Hepatitis A
- 92 Head Start children (43%) received a dental exam
- 8 Head Start children received needed dental treatment
- 25 Head Start children received mental health services through the TIP program
- 14 Early Head Start children received therapy through the Baby TIP program
- 327 families (96%) received family services
- 439 volunteers contributed services to the program, including 348 parent volunteers

WCCS received grants totaling $3,455,432 from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to serve 230 Head Start children and 60 infants and toddlers. An additional grant of $1,293,009 funded services to 70 infants and toddlers in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. Local volunteers and donors contributed $218,221 in donations as the non-federal match for the federal grants. We received $271,946 in child care subsidies and payments, and $122,791 in meal reimbursements from the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program. We also received $91,960 in local grants to support the Therapeutic Interagency Preschool (TIP) program.

We are ready for Kindergarten!!
School Readiness Goals

WCCS Early Learning Centers uses Teaching Strategies Gold to assess children’s learning and development throughout the year. The chart below shows the progress made by 4 year olds from fall to spring on our five School Readiness Goals.

As in past years, children entered the program with lower skills in early math and literacy. Teachers focused on strengthening these areas, and we involved parents in supporting math and literacy skills by sending home books to read and activities for parents to do with their children at home.

During this pandemic year, we focused heavily on social-emotional supports for children to increase their sense of safety and connection. Teachers used Conscious Discipline strategies to help strengthen social-emotional skills. By spring, we found that prekindergarten children had gained 21 percentage points in social-emotional skills, 19 percentage points in language and literacy and 29 percentage points in math! Overall, 91% of the four year olds were meeting or exceeding expectations for kindergarten readiness! This outcome is especially encouraging in light of the many challenges experienced in this pandemic year.

TIP Program

WCCS completed a third successful year of operating the Therapeutic Interagency Preschool (TIP) program. TIP serves Head Start children who This year we moved one TIP session to the Carlisle Early Learning Center, so the children from the Franklin/Carlisle area would not have such a long bus ride. This was a positive change for our children and families.

The TIP program serves children who have experienced trauma and abuse. Many children in the TIP program are in foster or kinship care due to substance misuse in the home. This research-based model is designed to meet the great need for trauma-focused preschool intervention services, in collaboration with Warren County Children Services and Warren County Educational Service Center (ESC). Medicaid reimbursed transportation is arranged by Warren County JFS, and TIP is also supported by generous funding from the Warren County Commissioners. Erica Ivey, the therapist with the Warren County ESC has been a great asset to our TIP program!

The goals of the TIP program are to increase child resiliency and to promote healthy social interactions which are the foundation for school readiness. We were very pleased to see the significant school readiness gains made by the children at the end of the year!
Creating a Safe Place for Children in a Difficult Year

Social-emotional development forms the foundation for successful learning and school readiness. With the many changes and difficulties children and families experienced during this pandemic year, our primary focus was on creating a safe place where teachers created connections with children to support their brain development and self-regulation. We use Conscious Discipline strategies, such as creating a School Family, teaching calming techniques like deep breathing, and providing a Safe Place for children when they experience those “big feelings.” Conscious Discipline techniques were also shared with parents so they could practice these supports at home. These strategies, along with the smaller class sizes and increased individual attention, definitely were successful in helping children reach their school readiness goals!
Successful New Baby TIP Program

We completed our first successful year of the new Baby TIP program, serving a total of 14 children and families. In response to the growing incidence of risk factors that result in child trauma, such as family violence and substance misuse, the Early Learning Centers piloted this innovative new interagency model to address these problems in the earliest years.

We greatly appreciate the strong and generous support of a grant from Warren County, and the collaboration with Warren County Children Services and Butler Behavioral Health. BBH provides an early childhood therapist who supports children and their families with supportive and integrated developmental services and family systems interventions in their home. These services are in addition to the other comprehensive Early Head Start services in either a classroom or home-based setting. This new “Baby TIP” program is one of the first of its kind in Ohio, and it is becoming a model for such services other counties.

“Our daughter has grown from her interactions with her teachers and classmates. She is more verbal, assertive, and can convey her thoughts and feelings better under their guidance. I’m very happy she joined the program. I can’t wait to see where she goes from here.”

-DJ Norton